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CHINA DAILY

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RCEP seen as key anchor for Asian growth

Agreement set to help global economy cope with geopolitical shifts, growing challenges

By **MA SI, WANG KEJU** and **CHEN BOWEN** in Haikou

As the world's largest free trade agreement, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership is set to play an even more prominent role in anchoring Asian economic integration and helping the global economy navigate geopolitical shifts and mounting challenges, officials and experts said.

Highlighting the RCEP's role as a powerful counterweight to trade unilateralism, they called for it to evolve from one of "scale advantage" to one of "functional and quality enhancement" — while also urging greater efforts to leverage Hainan Free Trade Port as a key gateway connecting China with other RCEP member economies.

The remarks were made at the 2026 RCEP Media and Think Tank Forum, which opened on Saturday in Haikou, Hainan province. With the theme of "Working Together to Address Challenges and Promote Development", the forum was hosted by China Daily and the China Institute for Reform and Development.

Liu Xiaoming, governor of Hainan, said covering 30 percent of the world's population and economic output, the RCEP is the free trade agreement with the greatest potential. It has played an irreplaceable role in maintaining global economic stability and has also become a key driver of Hainan's export-oriented economy.

"Hainan Free Trade Port demonstrates China's resolve to expand opening-up and advance economic globalization. We stand ready to work with all RCEP parties to jointly forge a new pattern of regional development through closer coordination," Liu added.

The governor said that Hainan has seen growing economic vitality since the island-wide special customs operations were launched in December, offering favorable trade policies such as tax reduction and duty-free measures.

Qu Yingpu, publisher and editor-in-chief of China Daily, said that over the past year, Asia has contributed over 60 percent to global economic growth, a result of joint efforts by China and other Asian nations.

"China has always championed open regionalism and true multilateralism, and the construction of the Hainan Free Trade Port stands as a vivid example of this commitment," Qu said.

He said that China Daily has been deeply engaged in the building of the Hainan Free Trade Port International Services portal.

"Confronted with high walls of trade barriers, what we need is not to build walls to protect ourselves, but to pave roads and build bridges," he said, calling on media and think tanks to use professional insights to dispel misinformation and to tell authentic stories of regional economic cooperation.

Qu also highlighted the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, which, for the first time, includes emerging areas such as digital economy, green economy, and industrial and supply chain connectivity. "With everyone's efforts, I believe the fruits of technological innovation will cross borders and benefit all."

The RCEP, which is aimed at gradually eliminating tariffs on over 90 percent of goods traded among its 15 members, has delivered tangible results since coming into effect in 2022. Intra-regional trade surged from $4.9 trillion in 2021 to $6.1 trillion in 2025, a 24 percent increase, while its share of global trade rose from 27.2 percent to 29.1 percent.

Yose Rizal Damuri, executive director of the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Indonesia, said: "Geopolitical competition is becoming more intense and more varied. Emerging industries are reshaping global landscapes, and contradictions in energy and food markets are worsening.

"This means that regional integration — such as the RCEP — is precisely what the current moment calls for. The institutional framework is providing member economies with a combination of growth opportunities, policy predictability and supply chain resilience."

Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development, said, "China's vast market has become the largest source of certainty for RCEP's development."

"The next five years are crucial for China to build a strong domestic market. The efforts to accelerate China's tariff reduction commitments under the RCEP framework, especially on intermediate goods, and to further open up services trade will provide enormous new growth engines for RCEP cooperation," Chi added.

Chi also highlighted the strategic role of the Hainan Free Trade Port. "As a major gateway, Hainan is well-positioned to pioneer breakthroughs in finance and data flows, and serve as a vital platform linking the Chinese market with ASEAN, thus better safeguarding regional industrial and supply chain stability."

Lyu Bin, president of the China Oceanic Development Foundation, said, "Most RCEP members are ocean-based economies, and the ocean plays a vital role."

He called for more efforts to expand RCEP cooperation in mariculture, marine ecotourism and disaster prevention, as well as leveraging digital technologies to build smart ports and offshore new energy supplies.

Contact the writers at masi@chinadaily.com.cn

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Guests attend the 2026 RCEP Media and Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province, on Saturday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Passengers evacuated



Passengers carrying their belongings in plastic bags are evacuated from the hantavirus-hit cruise ship MV *Hondius* at the Granadilla Port in Tenerife, Spain, on Sunday. The passengers, none of whom were showing symptoms of the virus, were taken to Tenerife airport in military buses to be evacuated from the island in government planes sent by their respective countries. CHRIS MCGRATH / GETTY IMAGES **See story, page 5**

Deep-sea mission marks intl advance

By **LI MENGHAN**
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The Chinese scientific research vessel *Tansuo 1* arrived in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Sunday after completing the first China-Chile joint manned deep-sea expedition to the Atacama Trench off the coast of Chile, marking a major step forward in international marine scientific cooperation and China's active participation in global ocean governance.

The hadal trench — the ocean's deepest layer below 6,000 meters — is one of the least understood scientific frontiers, but it is key to studying life under extreme conditions, uncovering the mechanisms of earthquakes and tsunamis, and identifying unique genetic resources.

The 156-day expedition, led by the Institute of Deep-Sea Science and Engineering of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, set sail from Sanya, Hainan province, on Dec 6. It covered more than 40,000 kilometers — equivalent to circling the Earth — and involved 83 researchers from China, Chile, Germany, Denmark, Canada and Spain.

The expedition focused on the Atacama Trench — which reaches depths of over 8,000 meters and holds significant scientific value for biodiversity and geology — and the largely unexplored Mussau Trench in the western Pacific, an area key to understanding tectonic plate formation.

During the mission, China's domestically developed manned submersible *Fendouzhe*, carried by *Tansuo 1*, completed 63 dives, 50 of which exceeded 6,000 meters. The team collected a large number of biological and geological samples, as well as high-definition underwater footage, laying a solid foundation for multidisciplinary research in deep-sea geology, biology and environmental science.

In a breakthrough, scientists identified for the first time the deepest chemosynthetic ecosystem in the Southern Hemisphere — a system sustaining life on the seafloor without sunlight or photosynthesis — providing crucial evidence for the hypothesis of a global chemosynthetic corridor on Earth.

Additionally, researchers discovered several species of deep-sea snailfish and captured numerous images of benthic animals, most of which were identified as new species, highlighting the region's rich fish biodiversity. They also identified fault ruptures on the seafloor caused by historical major earthquakes, offering valuable evidence of how seismic activity shapes deep-sea geomorphology and affects biological habitats.

Due to ultrahigh pressure, extremely low visibility and frigid temperatures, deep-sea exploration is considered even more challenging than space exploration. However, China's homegrown submersible *Fendouzhe* has addressed many of these challenges, enabling operations at full ocean depth.

Building on this capability, the Institute of Deep-Sea Science and Engineering launched the Global Hadal Exploration Programme in 2022 to bring together global expertise to explore, understand and protect deep-sea environments.

The program was officially endorsed by the United Nations Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development (2021-2030), marking significant recognition of China's leadership in international deep-sea cooperation.

As a flagship operation of the program, the joint expedition has provided valuable experience in global deep-sea scientific data sharing, talent cultivation and long-term seafloor observation.

The mission aligns with China's emphasis on fundamental research, deep-sea exploration and global scientific cooperation outlined in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), demonstrating the country's commitment to active participation in global ocean governance and international mega-science cooperation.

HENAN THEATER CLUSTER REVIVES HISTORY

Immersive storytelling transcends language to thrill audiences

By **LI LEI** in Beijing
and **SHI BAOYIN** in Zhengzhou

A general swears an oath to his troops: anyone who tramples the wheat will die. Moments later, his own horse bolts, flattening the precious stalks. The stage — dark, charged — holds its breath. To honor his word without sacrificing his life, the warlord Cao Cao draws his sword, seizes his hair, and slices. In ancient China, cutting one's hair was almost as shameful as losing one's head. With that single gesture, 1,800 years collapse. For a moment, the boundary between stage and history blurs. The field beneath Cao Cao's feet is no longer a set; it feels real.

This is *Echoes of Guandu: Where Wheat Whispers History*, a 35-minute play staged on the very battlefield where history once pivoted. It's one of nearly 800 minutes of back-to-back daily performances at "Unique Henan: Land of Dramas", a dizzying complex of 21 theaters and 56 interlocking spaces in Zhengzhou, the capital of Central China's Henan province. This is the kind of place where stories don't simply unfold — they sit down beside you and stay with you forever.

Outside the entrance, visitors first encounter a seven-hectare field that changes with the seasons — red sorghum one season, golden wheat the next — stretching before a 328-meter-long rammed-earth wall. Walk through the gate, and the theater's grid spaces open up. Inside, history does not sit quietly behind glass. It erupts from the stage, rises from the earth and whispers from the seat beside the viewers.

Performers shout in Chinese, and few foreign visitors follow every word. Yet many walk out with tears in their eyes.

"It's difficult for overseas students to fully understand the performances, but they really put thought into following the stories," said Bian Ting, a Chinese-Spanish educator who runs a Mandarin language school in Spain.

*See **Theater**, page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

WORLD WATCH
By Lawrence Loh

Sustain momentum of triumph over poverty

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the monumental declaration by President Xi Jinping, in February 2021, of China's complete victory in the fight against absolute poverty. The country's alleviation of the poverty problem over its recent history is nothing short of a miracle that holds valuable lessons for all countries.

The victory was the culmination of an eight-year campaign that lifted nearly 100 million rural residents out of absolute poverty across the entire country. It came on the heels of a critical turning point in 2012, when targeted poverty alleviation became a central political priority.

The phenomenal triumph over poverty is a most dramatic transformation of the mass poverty situation since the founding of the People's Republic of China.

*See **Poverty**, page 3*

China visit

US President Donald Trump will pay a three-day state visit to China from Wednesday, a Foreign Ministry spokesperson announced on Monday.

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INDEPTH

Access to Chinese EVs drives debate in US

Unavailability of vehicles stokes frustration as free market tested

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston, Texas
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Visitors view the models of Chinese EV brand XPeng at the 2026 Brussels Motor Show in Belgium on Jan 10. PENG ZIYANG / XINHUA





Left: Visitors learn about a Geely electric car during an event in Madrid, Spain, on March 25. CHENG MIN / XINHUA **Right:** A woman tries a Xiaomi SU7 in Barcelona, Spain, during Mobile World Congress on March 5, 2025. YONHAP NEWS AGENCY

Jose, a landscape worker in Houston, Texas, recently visited his grandparents and cousins in Mexico.

"I am a little jealous of my cousin's truck," Jose told China Daily. "He's driving a Changan Hunter. It feels so luxurious."

Jose said he's amazed by the standard features packed into the Hunter truck imported from China. They include a tailgate that converts into a step to make it easier to get into the truck bed, a bed cover to secure items, a large touch screen, a 360-degree camera with a backup camera view, and heated seats. The vehicle is also marketed as an extended-range electric vehicle, a groundbreaking achievement in the pickup truck category.

"My cousin paid about $30,000 for that truck. Here, that's barely enough for a base model of a similar truck," Jose said. "I wish we had prices like that here."

Those features that Jose covets can be obtained on a similar United States-made truck through premium packages and aftermarket additions. The caveat lies in the price: similar US trucks with similar features would cost around $45,000 to $50,000, an amount Jose said he can't afford.

Following Mexico, Canada recently opened its market to Chinese EVs and lowered the tariff from 100 percent to 6.1 percent.

Tesla announced it is launching its China-made Model 3 in Canada at a record low price of C$39,490 ($29,040). In the US, the same car is priced at $42,490, according to electrek.com, making it $13,450 cheaper in Canada.

In February, The Wall Street Journal's senior personal technology columnist Joanna Stern wrote a report titled "I test drove a Chinese EV. Now I don't want to buy American cars anymore".

She drove a Xiaomi SU7 Max for two weeks in New Jersey, borrowed from a friend who got a temporary permit to drive it in the US.

The opening of Stern's report sounded like a love letter: "Now, every time I climb back into my Ford Mustang Mach-E, I can't stop thinking about you — your long range, your modular interior, your absurdly large infotainment screen," she wrote. "Please come back to America ... for me."

It's the same car that Ford CEO Jim Farley tried for at least half a year, and loved.

"I don't like talking about the competition so much, but I drive the Xiaomi," he said on "the Fully Charged podcast" over a year ago. "We flew one from Shanghai to Chicago, and I've been driving it for six months now, and I don't want to give it up."

Praising the Xiaomi SU7 as a "high quality, great visual experience", Farley said he drove it "because of the competition". "To beat them, you have to know them," he said.

Strong appeal

Chinese EVs are known for their innovation, competitive pricing, and advanced software integration.

While consumers in many other countries have embraced them, people in the US — consumers, analysts, elected officials, and auto industry figures — are still debating whether or not to let them into the country.

The biggest group wanting Chinese imports are consumers, most of whom, unlike Stern and Farley, haven't had a chance to lay their eyes on a Chinese EV.

But they are aware of them, and many want to buy one, according to a consumer survey released in February by Cox Automotive, a global leader in auto service and technology.

Roughly 47 percent said they'd buy a Geely Xingyuan over Tesla's Model Y, while 38 percent would opt for a BYD Seagull over the same Tesla.

Overall, 38 percent of those surveyed said they are very likely to consider a Chinese brand in the US. Among Gen Z, the percentage was as high as 69 percent — their enthusiasm largely due to their embrace of new technology and green energy, experts said.

The 2025 Dave Cantin Group Market Outlook Report showed that 40 percent of US consumers would consider buying a Chinese-made vehicle.

In April, the WSJ reported about people with dual citizenship driving Chinese EVs bought in Mexico into El Paso, Texas, for their daily cross-border commutes. The article drew almost 2,000 comments from readers.

A sample analysis of the comments using artificial intelligence showed those favoring an open market outweighed those wanting a ban for "national security" reasons.

The "most liked" comment said: "Sure. Let's prohibit imports instead of building better cars. American cars are not only more expensive; they are actually worse quality."

The reason is straightforward: no new car sold in the United States today has a sticker price below $20,000, while Chinese brands sell capable EVs in Mexico and elsewhere starting around the same price.

The average new car in the US had a list price of $51,456 in March, according to the vehicle valuer Kelley Blue Book.

"If US automakers aren't going to make small, affordable cars, why shouldn't we consumers be able to buy imported Chinese cars? I don't want an SUV or truck," said one of the most liked comments.

US automakers have relied heavily on expensive models to make profits in recent years. Yet, "we've reached peak truck, as consumers finally push back and demand more vehicle options, particularly sedans, that are more affordable, leaving some dealers struggling with their product mix," the 2025 Market Outlook Report said.

Affordability a key factor

Auto affordability has become a serious issue in the US. A modeling study by Plante Moran found that a third of the US population can't afford new vehicles, CNBC reported in January.

"Affordability is reshaping purchase decisions, driving interest in cheaper Chinese vehicles," Dave Cantin Group President Brian Gordon said when the 2025 Market Outlook Report was released in August.

However, US automakers are not willing to give US consumers the options to buy Chinese EVs.

"We should not let them into our country because (of) the economic impact," Ford CEO Farley said in a Fox TV interview in mid-April. "Manufacturing is the heart and soul of our country, and for us to lose that to those exports would be devastating for our country."

Many readers of the WSJ article said that banning Chinese EVs undermines the principle of a free market and the competitiveness of the US auto industry.

"Let's see ... should we protect a handful of billion dollar corporations (the US automakers) or should we protect millions of US citizens who want/need an affordable car? I favor the little people but I'm pretty sure Congress does not," wrote Simon Smith in the comments section.

"Let them in! If US automakers can't build a quality, affordable product, they deserve to lose the market. What happened to free markets?" asked Claude Whitworth.

Noah Smith, an economic analyst, former assistant finance professor and Bloomberg economic columnist, argued that the presence of Chinese EVs will benefit the US overall.

"The main reason to let in Chinese EVs is that the United States needs to embrace EVs in general," Smith said in a January blog.

He argued that if the US keeps driving combustion cars while the rest of the world switches to EVs, its automotive technology "will be orphaned from the rest of the world".

"One way Chinese EVs would benefit America is by forcing Detroit to compete," Noah Smith wrote, reasoning that competition would force US automakers to make big investments in EV innovation and technology and "keep doing this until it worked".

> Let them in! If US automakers can't build a quality, affordable product, they deserve to lose the market. What happened to free markets?"
>
> **Claude Whitworth,** a reader of Wall Street Journal

The US is not in a good position when it comes to EV innovation and production. According to analysis from E2's Clean Economy Works tracker, US companies announced just $12.3 billion in new clean-energy and battery investment in 2025 — the lowest annual figure since the project began.

Meanwhile, cancellations and downsizing reached $34.8 billion, with the EV battery sector losing $21 billion in committed capital.

The contraction was, to a great degree, due to domestic policy changes with tax credits for solar, wind and EVs compressed or rolled back.

Meanwhile, China is forging ahead with new EV technologies.

At the 2026 Beijing Auto Show that ended on May 3, CATL unveiled six new battery technologies in a single day, including a third-generation Qilin cell rated for more than 1,000 kilometers of range, a Shenxing fast-charging cell that reaches 98 percent of a full charge in six minutes and 27 seconds, and a 350 watt-hour-per-kilogram condensed-state cell that is good for 1,500 km.

BYD founder Wang Chuanfu, while launching the second-generation Blade Battery, put the design philosophy plainly: "The only way out is to make charging as fast and convenient as refueling a gas car."

Protectionism vs practicality

While the US public is warming toward Chinese EVs, some US politicians want a complete ban on them.

On April 29, Republican Senator Bernie Moreno and Democratic Senator Elissa Slotkin introduced a bipartisan bill — the Connected Vehicle Security Act — that would ban vehicles, connected vehicle technologies such as software and data systems made by China or in partnership with China from the US. They cited national security and job protection as the primary reason for this bill.

The bill has been endorsed by the United Auto Workers union. "Our national and economic security relies on a strong US auto industry," said UAW President Shawn Fain.

"General Motors supports policies that protect and strengthen American manufacturing and the global competitiveness of US automakers," GM said in a statement.

Job security is sometimes at odds with innovation, some investment analysts said. New technology means disruption, and disruption means changes to existing orders.

Many experts agree that China's EV advance has been driven primarily by competition.

However, American consumers may not be able to get what they want, at least in the short term, the 2026 Market Outlook Report from Dave Cantin Group predicted.

"While a highly limited, regulated and negotiated entry remains a small possibility in 2026, we don't see this impacting the retail landscape for another three to five years in the US," the report said.



A driver presents a newly launched Chinese-made new energy bus in Copiapo, Chile, on Oct 16. A fleet of more than 120 Chinese-made new energy buses were deployed. XINHUA

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TOP NEWS



First responders and residents search through rubble on Saturday at the site of an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese village of Saksakieh. At least 15 people were killed in a series of Israeli airstrikes in southern Lebanon, including one child, and several children were among the injured. AFP

Iran sends response to US peace proposal

The only path to ending the war is Washington's retreat, expert says

By CUI HAIPEI in Dubai, UAE
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Iran has sent its response to a United States proposal aimed at ending the war in the region, the Islamic Republic News Agency said on Sunday. The response, details of which are awaited, was sent to mediator Pakistan, and will focus at this stage on ending the war, IRNA said.

Earlier on Sunday, Iran reiterated that any attack on its oil tankers or commercial vessels would be met with attacks on US bases in the region and enemy ships. The warning came after US forces struck two Iranian oil tankers, claiming the vessels were trying to breach the US blockade of Iran's ports — while insisting a fragile month-old ceasefire remains in effect.

"Any aggression against our vessels will be met with a heavy and decisive Iranian response against American vessels and bases," Ebrahim Rezaei, spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, wrote on social media, saying that as of Sunday, Tehran's "restraint is over".

On Sunday, a bulk carrier reported being struck by a projectile off Qatar's coast, the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations said. Also, the United Arab Emirates' air defenses dealt with two drones coming from Iran on Sunday, the latest in renewed attacks on the oil-rich Gulf country.

Since the US and Israel launched military strikes against Iran on Feb 28, Iran has largely blocked the Strait of Hormuz to global energy shipments. Saudi Aramco, a majority state-owned petroleum and natural gas company, said in a statement on Sunday that the world has lost around 1 billion barrels of oil over the past two months. Before the conflict, the narrow waterway carried one-fifth of the world's oil supply.

In another development, Iranian officials signaled an elevated strategic status for the strait, one that could rival the significance of Iran's nuclear program.

"In reality, it is a capability on the level of an atomic bomb, because when you have a capability that can affect the entire global economy with a single decision, that is an enormous capability," Mohammad Mokhber, who served as the acting president of Iran in 2024, told state-linked Mehr News Agency on Friday.

A Qatari liquefied natural gas tanker was sailing toward the strait on Saturday en route to Pakistan, according to LSEG shipping data. Sources said the move was approved by Iran to build confidence with Qatar and Pakistan, both mediators in the ongoing conflict. A Panama-flagged bulk carrier bound for Brazil passed through the Strait of Hormuz using a route designated by Iran's armed forces, Iran's semi-official Tasnim News Agency reported on Sunday.

Meanwhile, a CIA assessment indicated that Iran would not suffer severe economic pressure from the US blockade for about another four months, Reuters reported.

Separately, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that Moscow is ready to transport and store Iran's stockpile of enriched uranium, adding that he hopes the conflict will end "as quickly as possible". There was no immediate comment from Iran.

The war will likely end in Washington's retreat, said Jeffrey Sachs, director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University, as the US cannot continue the conflict without triggering disastrous consequences.

"A renewed escalation would likely lead to the destruction of the region's oil, gas and desalination infrastructure, causing a prolonged global catastrophe. Iran can credibly impose costs that the US cannot bear and that the world should not suffer," he wrote in a commentary, coauthored with analyst Sybil Fares, for Al Jazeera on Saturday.

"The only path, and the one the US seems to be taking, is a retreat, with Iran in charge of the Strait of Hormuz, and with none of the other issues between the US and Iran settled," they added, calling it "neither a war of necessity, nor a war of choice — it was a war of whim. The underlying premise was hegemony".

Vast potential seen in blue economy cooperation

By ZHANG CHENXU in Beijing, **MA SI** and **CHEN BOWEN** in Haikou

There is immense potential for China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations to deepen cooperation in the blue economy sector and build a more integrated common market, a move that will strengthen regional resilience against external shocks and inject fresh momentum into regional growth, officials and experts said on Sunday.

Speaking at the China-ASEAN Blue Economy Cooperation Dialogue in Haikou, the capital of Hainan province, they said that rising geopolitical uncertainties, growing protectionism, and mounting energy and supply chain risks have underscored the need for both sides to further explore cooperation potential in the areas of marine energy, port logistics, shipping, marine tourism and coastal industries.

Against this backdrop, the Hainan Free Trade Port, with its unique location and policy advantages, is expected to serve as a strategic hub for deeper China-ASEAN blue economy cooperation, they added.

According to the World Bank, the blue economy, also known as the marine economy, refers to the "sustainable use of ocean resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods and jobs, while preserving the health of ocean ecosystems".

Wang Bin, a member of the Standing Committee of the Hainan Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China and head of the provincial Party committee's Publicity Department, said that Hainan serves as an important gateway for China's opening-up to ASEAN.

"Hainan is making every effort to promote high-quality marine development and play an active role in China-ASEAN cooperation," Wang said.

Sharing a similar view, Lyu Bin, president of the China Oceanic Development Foundation, said the Hainan FTP offers a rare opportunity to address bottlenecks that have constrained China-ASEAN blue economy integration, thanks to its unique opening-up arrangements and policy environment.

Chi Fulin, president of the China Institute for Reform and Development, said that such foundational strengths allow Hainan to function as a strategic hub for the emerging China-ASEAN blue economy common market.

"A common market for China-ASEAN blue economy would put the region in a stronger position to weather external shocks and sustain stable growth," Chi said. "It would also open up new room for cooperation and promote closer integration of industrial and supply chains."

Hainan's burgeoning marine economy is also bolstering confidence in the push for deeper regional cooperation. The province's gross ocean product rose 7.9 percent year-on-year last year, making it one of the mainstays of local growth, official data showed.

Emerging sectors are driving the expansion, with the deep-sea oil and gas industry posting robust gains in reserves and output. The independently developed Deep Sea No 1 gas field, China's first ultra-deepwater project, recently completed its 100th crude oil shipment since its commissioning in 2021.

That optimism over the common market on the blue economy was also shared by officials and experts from ASEAN countries.

Unny Sankar Ravi Sankar, minister of economic affairs at the embassy of Malaysia in China, said the blue economy offers one of the most promising pathways for China and ASEAN to build a more integrated common market.

"The blue economy will transform the development landscape of the entire region," Sankar said.

China and ASEAN together form one of the world's most dynamic maritime regions, creating vast room for deeper blue economy cooperation and regional integration, said Rokhmin Dahuri, former minister of Marine Affairs and Fisheries of Indonesia.

Yet the promising outlook also underscores the need to address the structural challenges facing the blue economy.

Dahuri said the sector is still confronted with pressing challenges, including overfishing, marine pollution, habitat degradation and biodiversity loss.

To deal with these challenges, he said, there is a need to strike a balance between economic growth and environmental protection.

"China can play an important role in cutting-edge technologies, including artificial intelligence, smart digital applications, drones and robotics," Dahuri said, adding that such technologies could help countries tap the potential of the blue economy in a more sustainable way.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Poverty: China achieves UN goal a decade before deadline

From page 1

The hallmarks of the targeted poverty alleviation approach are the precision data-centric emphasis on six areas — accurate identification of poor households, targeted projects, efficient capital use, household-specific measures, appropriate cadre deployment, and goal fulfillment.

In addition, the operational focus is built on a model that covers industry-led poverty alleviation, relocation from uninhabitable or ecologically fragile areas, compensation for ecological protection, education to break intergenerational poverty, and social security for those unable to work.

The success of the national poverty alleviation plan is due to a unique dual-pillar model of growth plus governance.

The critical impetus is built on economic growth in agriculture and industry, as these areas have created jobs that in turn generated income opportunities.

In parallel, a well-coordinated system was fostered to implement the desired agenda under which millions of grassroots cadres were coordinated and mobilized to reach out to the highly localized grassroots levels.

The entire setup has been rooted in a people-first, livelihood-centered governance philosophy.

Even five years down the road since the announcement of victory over absolute poverty, the strong dual-pillar fundamentals have served well to sustain the momentum of income progress for those lifted from poverty. In the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, regular mechanisms will be developed to prevent relapses into poverty. The possibility of poverty relapse will also be avoided through increased development-based assistance, rather than one-off subsidies, to assure long-term growth capacity in formerly poor areas. In addition, key rural counties will continue to be revitalized to mitigate any reversion to the former situation.

The five-year plan specifically considers employment as the first line of defense, whereby high-quality, full employment is front and center for improving livelihoods. Furthermore, skills upgrading is a central focal point that will link job quality with job security, as jobs are indeed the best buffer for sustainable poverty alleviation.

Yet another major stipulation of the plan is to refine income distribution, which will shrink the extremes of wealth and poverty alike.

This reframes poverty as an issue of income distribution and not as a separate "silo" policy matter. The integrated thinking has signaled that poverty, as a resolved problem, is being mainstreamed into the broader economic policy framework, thus institutionalizing its place in the overall national strategic blueprint.

The Chinese development story has thus moved from a "war on poverty" to an "enhancing social harmony and sustainable development" narrative, in which the social sustainability aspects of employment and empowerment, as well as prosperity with protection, are the mainstay. The major recognition is that humans will be a core capital that is crucial for national advancement. This recasting consolidates all previous poverty alleviation efforts into forces that will eventually turn China into a great modern socialist country.

Indeed the complete victory in the fight against absolute poverty has enabled China to achieve the no-poverty goal set by the United Nations in its 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. And China has done so a full decade before the deadline. The speed and scale of China's poverty reduction are probably unparalleled in world history.

A famous proverb says that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link. The human society of China has resolutely resolved one of its weakest links, poverty, and is on track in its quest for high quality of life for all.

Victory is sweet, and China will probably not rest on its laurels. Achieving a miracle may be easier than sustaining the miracle. But with the current leadership's resolve and the people's determination, poverty may well be relegated to a chapter in the Chinese history book.

The author is director of the Centre for Governance and Sustainability as well as professor in practice of strategy and policy at National University of Singapore's Business School. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Theater: Overseas Chinese reconnect with roots



An aerial drone photo taken on May 1 shows "Unique Henan: Land of Dramas", a large immersive theater complex in Zhengzhou, Henan province. GUAN YANGYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

From page 1

She visited the Unique Henan theater complex for the second time after having brought her students there last year. "It makes history come alive for them," she said.

Bian was part of a group of 40 overseas Chinese school leaders on a weeklong inspection of international study travel offerings.

The group visited the theater complex and other cultural sites to explore potential study-tour collaborations.

Opened in 2021, the Unique Henan theater complex is unlike most attractions that draw overseas visitors. In the interlocking grid spaces and theaters — one of the largest theater clusters in China — wheat seeds rain down as villagers tell stories of famine and survival, while railway workers sprint across tracks that seem to extend into the audience. In one theater, visitors sit in a classroom where chalk dust hangs in the air, as actors playing teachers turn the story into a lesson in entertainment.

Many described it as a place where they feel history rather than simply learn it.

This captivating world was brought to life by Wang Chaoge, a director known for creating immersive performances across China. By the end of 2025, the complex had logged more than 58 million visits.

Liu Kaipeng, the complex's brand director, said that more than 80 percent of visitors come from outside Henan, and people from over 50 countries and regions have visited the site.

Currently, no simultaneous translation is provided, yet the set design and emotional performances largely transcend language.

"We now offer multilingual directional signage and optimized payment systems. Next, we will work with overseas influencers to help visitors from all cultural backgrounds understand Central China's culture," Liu said.

For now, overseas Chinese visitors are spreading the word themselves.

"This theater truly provides an immersive experience. It has deepened my affection for Henan," said Apple Rouse, vice-president of the US-based Chinese American Youth Association, who returned to Henan after more than two decades. "As an overseas Chinese, I feel deeply proud of how China has developed."

Chen Shuo, who runs several Mandarin language schools in Italy, said during his first trip to Henan: "I didn't think much when I first arrived, but the moment I stepped through the gate and saw that wheat field, something changed. Walking through the field into the city, passing every theater — I wanted to explore each one."

For Hardy Wang Haoyu, vice-president of the Canada-based North American Youth Federation, the experience reshaped his thinking about identity.

"After three decades overseas, I've come to see China not just as our path back, but sometimes as our way forward. Some of the answers we're looking for may actually lie in China," he said. "For those of us living in the West, China can be a solution to the challenges we face."

Qi Xin in Zhengzhou contributed to this story.

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RCEP MEDIA & THINK TANK FORUM



Liu Xiaoming, governor of Hainan province, addresses the 2026 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou on Saturday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

RCEP gearing up for bloc's next phase

Forum explores ways to improve world's largest free trade pact amid challenges

By WANG KEJU in Haikou
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The world's largest free trade pact is gearing up for its next phase amid growing protectionism and other challenges, a forum in Hainan heard.

Experts weighed in, calling for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership to expand its membership, focus more on the service industry and keep pace with other trade agreements.

They discussed the present and future of the agreement at the 2026 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum held in Haikou, Hainan province, over the weekend. The event was hosted by China Daily and the China Institute for Reform and Development.

The sustained efforts of China, as a key player of the bloc, to advance high-standard opening-up, they say, would allow other member economies to share in its massive market for inclusive development.

RCEP economies are projected to grow at a rate of about 4.5 percent this year, with their contribution to global economic growth expected to remain at over 32 percent, according to the RCEP Industry Cooperation Committee.

By contrast, the IMF in April cut its global growth forecast for 2026 to 3.1 percent, citing the severe disruptions caused by conflicts in the Middle East.

RCEP members are looking at how to improve the pact amid a worsening external environment as the trade agreement enters its next phase following a general review in 2027, according to experts.

It will be the first time for such a review since the agreement came into effect in 2022.

Expanding RCEP membership is high on the agenda, as it will not only broaden the pact's footprint, but also strengthen its resilience against rising protectionism, said Wang Yiming, former deputy director of the Development Research Center of the State Council.

The RCEP opened its doors to welcoming new members since July 2023. China's Hong Kong, Sri Lanka, Chile and Bangladesh have expressed their interest in joining the RCEP.

"The RCEP's attractiveness and influence are continuously increasing. More and more economies are submitting applications," Wang said. "We need to actively respond to these applications and push for the expansion of RCEP membership."

But growing membership cannot address the pact's structural weaknesses, said Zhao Jinping, vice-president of the China Association of Trade in Services.

The agreement faces a significant gap in services trade, where RCEP commitments lag behind those of other major trade pacts, he said.

In 2024, services accounted for 26.4 percent of total cross-border trade worldwide, a historic high, according to WTO data. Yet the share of services in RCEP's total trade remains relatively lower.

The scheduled general review could serve as "a critical window" to expand commitments to the service industry, expanding intra-regional trade and investment, Zhao said.

Digital transformation

Lee Hee-sup, secretary-general of the Trilateral Cooperation Secretariat, said that digital commerce, cross-border data flows, green development and innovation-driven industries are emerging as new growth drivers.

The pact should actively promote digital transformation to stay relevant in a fast-changing global landscape, he added.

The China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, signed last October, could provide experience that the RCEP can draw from, observers note. The China-ASEAN agreement has incorporated the digital economy, green economy and supply chain connectivity into its framework — areas that are also at the forefront of the RCEP's next phase.

China, with its continuous efforts to advance high-standard opening-up and open its door wider, will enhance market connectivity, factor mobility and regulatory alignment between China and other RCEP economies, said Guo Da, executive president of the Hainan Institute for Free Trade Port Studies.

Data from the RCEP Industry Cooperation Committee showed that in the first quarter, China's trade with other RCEP members surged 20.2 percent year-on-year to 3.73 trillion yuan (about $515 billion), with imports jumping 25 percent.

Hainan seen as gateway to regional markets

By MA SI and **CHEN BOWEN** in Haikou

The Hainan Free Trade Port is set to play an increasingly pivotal role in linking China with the vast markets of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, injecting fresh impetus into global economic growth amid rising trade headwinds, experts said.

Underscoring Hainan FTP's role as a key gateway advancing China's opening-up drive in the new era, they said the island's strategic geographic position at the center of the RCEP region and preferential trade policies will create new opportunities for cooperation in supply chains and services trade.

The remarks were made at a sub-forum of the 2026 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province.

Zhao Jinping, vice-president of the China Association of Trade in Services, said Hainan FTP will serve as a stress test field for China's high-level opening-up, against the backdrop of escalating global geopolitical uncertainties and rising trade protectionism.

"As its institutional and policy frameworks continue to improve, Hainan will evolve into a crucial hub enabling enterprises to tap into new investment and trade opportunities across the bloc of RCEP, the largest free trade agreement in the world," Zhao said.

Tu Xinquan, director of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics, said the RCEP has become a vital force in sustaining global trade. For instance, direct China-US economic ties have weakened due to geopolitical factors, while the indirect trade links, especially through the RCEP, are on the rise, he said.

"As a frontier and test bed for China's reform and opening-up, Hainan can act as a core hub connecting the Chinese mainland with other RCEP members, much like Singapore and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region have facilitated exchanges between the Chinese mainland and Western countries," Tu said.

Bigger role

Guo Da, executive president of the Hainan Institute for Free Trade Port Studies, said high-level free trade ports such as Hainan can play a bigger role as the RCEP cooperation deepens. Currently, about 40 percent of Hainan's foreign trade flows to RCEP member economies, he noted.

Driven by unified RCEP rules and Hainan's free trade port policies, trade between Hainan and RCEP members has grown at an annual average rate of over 20 percent in recent years, he said.

Nicholas Kwan, deputy head of the chief executive's policy unit of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, said: "Hong Kong has long aspired to join the RCEP and looks forward to cooperating with Hainan to achieve a 'one plus one greater than two' effect.

"Hong Kong can be a great partner for Hainan. For instance, in the commercial space sector, Hong Kong's financial and service strengths can be effectively aligned with Hainan's Wenchang commercial space launch site to facilitate cooperation," Kwan said.

Kim Do-hoon, former president of the Korea Institute for Industrial Economics and Trade, said that to give full play to Hainan's potential, more efforts are needed to cultivate local industries such as transport, and attract more big companies to invest in the island.

Zhu Jianmin, chairman of Oxiranchem Group, said: "The Hainan FTP's tax policies, unique geographic location and logistics advantages have enabled us to source raw materials globally and target ASEAN markets effectively."

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What they say



Geopolitics is the occasional typhoon outside. RCEP is not the roof — it is the room where neighbors keep talking positively and trading while the storm passes ... That is the accumulated wisdom of Asian diplomacy.
Wilson Lee Flores, *columnist for The Philippine Star*



As a frontier and test bed for China's reform and opening-up, Hainan can act as a core hub connecting the Chinese mainland with other RCEP members, much like Singapore and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region have facilitated exchanges between the Chinese mainland and Western countries.
Tu Xinquan, *director of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics*



The RCEP upgrade could have big goals, but not too many. It should avoid turning into a wish list. Before piling on new issues, member economies must first resolve existing pain points: improving the utilization of rules of origin, addressing disparities in implementation capacity, and tackling nontariff measures. These may sound technical, but they are extremely practical and fundamental to the agreement's effectiveness.
Yose Rizal Damuri, *executive director of Center for Strategic and International Studies, Indonesia*



Hong Kong has long aspired to join the RCEP and looks forward to cooperating with Hainan to achieve a "one plus one greater than two" effect. Hong Kong can be a great partner for Hainan. For instance, in the commercial space sector, Hong Kong's financial and service strengths can be effectively aligned with Hainan's Wenchang commercial space launch site to facilitate cooperation.
Nicholas Kwan, *deputy head of the chief executive's policy unit of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region*



In a world where geopolitical events unfold almost every day, the RCEP has emerged as a vital anchor for multilateralism, proving that despite political differences and uneven levels of development, regional economic cooperation and integration remain not only possible but essential.
Yu Hong, *senior research fellow at the East Asian Institute of the National University of Singapore*

From durian to cars: Partnership tells success stories of agreement

By CHEN BOWEN and **MA SI** in Haikou

From duty-free durian to new energy vehicles, real-world stories prove the value of the world's largest trade pact, speakers said at an event in Hainan on Saturday.

The panel on the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership was part of the 2026 RCEP Media & Think Tank Forum in Haikou, Hainan province.

Supachai Wuthichuwong, a member of the editorial board of Thailand's MGR Online, offered concrete evidence of those benefits.

"Taokaenoi, the largest seaweed manufacturer in Thailand, has been importing seaweed from South Korea and benefited from RCEP rules' zero tariff," he said. "It processes the raw material and makes popular seaweed snacks that are sold globally."

China has imported durian from Thailand duty-free, while Thailand has imported new energy vehicles from China duty-free, which are the kinds of examples the media should use in the RCEP region, he added.

Ko Ko Maung, executive board member of the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies, called RCEP "a strategic framework for shared prosperity".

Participants challenged the view that the RCEP is a conventional trade deal in the discussion.

"That is technically correct but analytically incomplete," said Wilson Lee Flores, columnist for The Philippine Star. "RCEP is better understood as an institutional stress test — can 15 economies with different political systems, income levels, legal traditions and strategic cultures cooperate without a centralized authority?"

Flores contrasted Europe's model of treaties, courts and bureaucracy with Asia's approach of flexibility, gradualism, consensus and patience.

"When we ask why progress on rule upgrades, a secretariat or membership expansion seems slow, we must first ask: slow by whose clock?" he said.

"In the Philippines, many small farmers still ask, 'Where do I even find the tariff schedule?' That is not ignorance. That is infrastructure — digital, logistical, educational — still being built."

Inclusive growth

He said gradual pace is "the price of inclusive growth" and that the existence of RCEP reveals a "quiet resilience".

Flores said RCEP offers a separate track for cooperation even when political temperatures rise.

"Geopolitics is the occasional typhoon outside. RCEP is not the roof — it is the room where neighbors keep talking positively and trading while the storm passes," he said. "That is the accumulated wisdom of Asian diplomacy."

With RCEP's general review approaching in 2027, Flores called for a regional public education initiative over the next two years: multilingual media campaigns, university partnerships, youth exchanges, journalist fellowships and digital storytelling focused on practical success stories.

"Not theory. Not jargon. But examples," he said. "If the people themselves feel included in the journey of regional development, then the foundations of RCEP will become far stronger, more stable and more enduring for future generations."

Xing Haiming, former Chinese ambassador to South Korea, described RCEP as a flag — "a flag that everyone in our region can see and touch, a flag that brings tangible benefits to ordinary people, enterprises and countries".

The panel agreed that the pact's ultimate measure is not bureaucratic milestones but whether farmers, entrepreneurs and consumers see better lives. RCEP's benefits are already on store shelves and dinner tables — stories, speakers said, that deserve to be told.

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WORLD

ASEAN vows to strengthen energy shield

Leaders seek quicker regional power links, renewable rollout amid oil shocks

By **PRIME SARMIENTO**
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Leaders of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations have vowed to strengthen collaboration in energy security and renewable energy development amid the escalating Middle East crisis, with analysts calling for swift actions in that direction.

ASEAN leaders have agreed to expedite the ratification of the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Petroleum Security and promote energy transition and operationalize the ASEAN Power Grid.

The bloc's initiatives on energy security were among the highlights in the statement issued on Friday at the conclusion of the 48th ASEAN Summit in the central Philippine province of Cebu.

The summit was held as rising oil prices weigh on regional economies. The Asian Development Bank forecast inflation in developing Southeast Asia to rise from 2.3 percent in 2025 to 3.2 percent in 2026 on the back of upward pressures from higher energy and food production costs if the Middle East conflict is prolonged.

Analysts said that with most Southeast Asian countries dependent on energy imports, ASEAN must be able to expedite policies on regional energy cooperation as the war with Iran enters its 11th week.

"This turned out to be a very specifically themed summit, reflecting the acuteness of the repercussions of the Middle East crisis on ASEAN countries," said Oh Ei Sun, a senior fellow at the Singapore Institute of International Affairs.

Lavanya Venkateswaran, a senior economist for ASEAN at Overseas-Chinese Banking Corporation in Singapore, said the bloc's commitment on regional energy reflects a collective concern over the current situation in the Middle East.

However, these commitments "must also translate into swift actions considering the foreboding downside risks from geopolitics", she said.

ASEAN leaders committed to strengthening regional energy security and resilience through enhanced regional cooperation and coordination. They are looking to diversify the supply of energy through measures, such as developing renewable energy, strengthening intra-ASEAN energy trade, accelerating biodiesel and bioethanol blending, and promoting the adoption of electric vehicles.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, this year's rotating chair of ASEAN, said on Friday that the bloc's energy initiatives have to be enforced as soon as possible, but that the energy ministers are yet to meet and lay down a timetable.

Yeah Kim Leng, a professor of economics at Sunway University in Malaysia, told China Daily that the ASEAN leaders' responses to energy security and financial resilience are fitting but their effectiveness depends on timely and implementable regional cooperation and coordination frameworks.

The ratification of the petroleum security agreement is crucial but it may not be achieved in time to cope with the current crisis, Yeah said.

"This framework would have enabled member countries to supply 10 percent of their domestic petroleum needs to members facing supply crisis, a stark reality confronting several member countries during the current global energy crisis," he said.

Cooperation urged

Chan Wai-Shin, director of research at the Singapore-based Asia Research and Engagement, said ASEAN economies cannot optimize the energy transition in isolation, especially in light of the Middle East crisis.

Regional cooperation "makes much more sense economically", Chan said, adding that the abundance of solar and wind throughout the region is complementary.

Meanwhile, strengthening power trade, cross-border interconnections and financial investment across the region would reduce overall system costs, enhance regional self-sufficiency and accelerate renewable deployment, he said.

Jayant Menon, a visiting senior fellow at ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute in Singapore, said the urgency of moving forward on renewable energy is the "only silver lining to come out of this whole crisis".

"Renewable energy is not shock-proof, but it creates some kind of national independence, because it can be nationally generated. This will be the positive legacy of this crisis," he said.



Russian servicemen march on Red Square during the Victory Day parade in Moscow on Saturday, amid a three-day ceasefire between Russia and Ukraine, which runs through Monday. KREMLIN VIA NEWSCOM

Russia, Ukraine trade accusations of violating US-brokered ceasefire

KYIV — Russia and Ukraine on Saturday traded accusations of violating a three-day US-brokered ceasefire but no major strikes were reported by the warring sides so far.

United States President Donald Trump initially announced on Friday the surprise truce, which runs through Monday and coincides with Russia's World War II victory celebrations, along with an exchange of 1,000 prisoners from each side that is set to take place in the coming days.

"I'd like to see a big extension," Trump told reporters on Friday evening. "It could be."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres welcomed the ceasefire and planned exchange of prisoners between Ukraine and Russia, his spokesman said on Saturday.

"The secretary-general reiterates his call for an immediate, full, unconditional and lasting ceasefire, as a first step toward a just, sustainable and comprehensive peace, in line with the UN Charter, international law and relevant UN resolutions," Stephane Dujarric said.

However, the Russian Defense Ministry said on Sunday that Ukraine had violated the ceasefire by launching drones and artillery strikes against Russian troops, Interfax news agency reported.

Over the past 24 hours, Russia has shot down 57 Ukrainian drones, the ministry said, adding that Moscow was observing the ceasefire.

Also on Sunday, Ukrainian officials reported Russian drone strikes and nearly 150 battlefield clashes over the past 24 hours.

In the northeastern Kharkiv region, Governor Oleh Syniehubov said eight people, including two children, were wounded in drone attacks on the regional capital and nearby settlements.

In its morning report, Ukraine's General Staff said 147 clashes had taken place along the front line.

Casualties were still reported on both sides, as Moscow and Kyiv continued to exchange drone strikes.

Russian drones killed two people and wounded three in the Zaporizhzhia and Dnipropetrovsk regions, local authorities said.

In Russia's western Belgorod region, three people were wounded by Ukrainian drone strikes, said Governor Vyacheslav Gladkov.

Meanwhile, Russian President Vladimir Putin said on Saturday that he thought the conflict was coming to an end.

"I think that the matter is coming to an end," Putin told reporters of the four-year conflict.

Putin was speaking in the Kremlin after setting out his view of the causes of the special military operation. He blamed "globalist" Western leaders, saying they promised NATO would not expand eastward after the 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall, but then tried to draw Ukraine into the European Union's orbit.

His statement came just hours after the parade on the May 9 national holiday celebrating the Soviet Union's victory over Nazi Germany in World War II. The annual event pays homage to the 27 million Soviet citizens who perished in that war.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Briefly

HUNGARY

Magyar sworn in as prime minister

Peter Magyar was sworn in as Hungary's prime minister on Saturday after winning a parliamentary vote at the inaugural session of the new National Assembly, pledging to "change the system". A total of 195 of the 199 members of parliament cast votes, with 140 in favor, 54 against and 1 abstention. Magyar, leader of the Tisza Party, secured the required majority to be elected prime minister, marking the start of his four-year term.

PAKISTAN

First 'Panda bond' to be issued within week

Pakistan is expected to access Chinese capital markets for the first time through a renminbi-backed bond this week, Finance Minister Muhammad Aurangzeb said on Saturday. "God willing, next week you will hear good news that for the first time, we will be accessing Chinese capital markets through Panda bond," he said at a news conference. The $250 million issue, the first of a planned $1 billion program, will be backed by the Asian Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

ISRAEL

Detained aid flotilla activists deported

Israel deported two activists, Saif Abu Keshek, a Spanish national, and Brazilian Thiago Avila, on Sunday after arresting them aboard a Gaza-bound flotilla in international waters, the foreign ministry said. The activists were part of a second Global Sumud Flotilla launched from Spain on April 12 to try to break Israel's blockade of Gaza by delivering aid to the enclave. They were detained by Israeli authorities on April 29 and brought to Israel.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Evacuation of hantavirus-hit cruise ship begins off Spain's Canary Islands coast

GRANADILLA DE ABONA, Spain — Occupants of a cruise ship struck by a deadly hantavirus outbreak that has sparked international alarm began leaving the vessel for their repatriation in Spain's Canary Islands on Sunday.

Three passengers from the MV *Hondius* — a Dutch husband and wife and a German woman — have died, while others have fallen sick with the rare disease, which usually spreads among rodents.

No vaccines or specific treatments exist for hantavirus, which is endemic in Argentina, where the ship departed in April.

However, health officials have emphasized that the risk for global public health is low and played down comparisons to a repeat of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The final flight to evacuate most of the ship's nearly 150 passengers and crew would leave for Australia on Monday, before the ship continues to the Netherlands, Spain's Health Minister Monica Garcia said.

Passengers wearing blue medical suits began disembarking the Dutch-flagged vessel onto smaller boats to reach the port of Granadilla on Tenerife, Agence France-Presse journalists saw.

The evacuees then boarded a bus for their transfer to Tenerife South Airport, where their repatriation flights were due to take off.

"The disembarkation of the passengers and the Spanish crew member has started," the Health Ministry confirmed on Telegram.

The evacuees changed into new protective equipment before boarding their repatriation flight, the first of which left carrying 14 Spaniards who will observe quarantine at a military hospital in Madrid.

"The operation is going very well," World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told reporters at the port.

Separate flights for Canadian, Turkish, French, British, Irish and United States citizens were also planned for Sunday, Garcia said.

Regional authorities have warned that the operation must be completed by Monday, when adverse weather conditions will force the ship to leave.

The Canary Islands' regional authorities have consistently resisted taking in the ship, which was only authorized to anchor offshore instead of docking in the port.

However, all passengers are asymptomatic and underwent a medical assessment before their disembarkation, Garcia told reporters shortly before the operation began.

Spanish authorities have insisted there will be no contact with the local population in Tenerife.

AFP journalists at Granadilla saw white tents erected along the quay and that the police, some in protective medical suits, had sealed off part of the small industrial port.

Spain "is doing what it must do, with technical and scientific rigor and full transparency, with institutional loyalty and with international cooperation", Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez said on Sunday.

The only hantavirus type that can transmit from person to person — the Andes virus — has been confirmed among those who have tested positive, fueling international concern.

The WHO said on Friday that it had confirmed six cases out of eight suspected ones. There are no suspected cases remaining on the ship.

The agency believes the first infection occurred before the start of the expedition, followed by transmission between humans onboard the vessel.

Health authorities in several countries have been tracking passengers who had already disembarked and anyone who may have come into contact with them.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



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COMMENT

Editorials

Tokyo should heed the call of the times for peace and cooperation

Under the leadership of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi, Japan is charting a perilous course that threatens to destabilize the Asia-Pacific region. The nation's renewed push for constitutional revision, military expansion and strategic alliances under the guise of safeguarding a "free and open Indo-Pacific" is not only a departure from its post-World War II commitment to peace but also a dangerous revival of the country's militaristic tendencies.

Takaichi's advocacy for amending Japan's Constitution is a concerning development that signals a significant shift in the nation's defense posture. The country's pacifist Constitution stipulates that Japan should commit to peace and nonaggression. Takaichi's push for constitutional change is not merely a legal reform but a strategic maneuver to break free from the restrictions on Japan's military development. This move is deeply disturbing, as it indicates a willingness to abandon the principles of peace that have guided Japan since the end of World War II.

This concern is compounded by her government hyping up a "free and open Indo-Pacific" as a means for bloc confrontation.

During her recent visits to Australia and Vietnam, Takaichi promoted an updated version of the "free and open Indo-Pacific" vision, which serves as a pretext for building "small circles" that undermine the strategic security and interests of other nations. By framing this vision as a response to perceived "threats", Japan is effectively creating an environment of tension and confrontation, rather than fostering cooperation and dialogue.

Tokyo's "free and open Indo-Pacific" narrative is particularly problematic, as it is being used to justify military collusion and the formation of alliances that exclude and target specific nations, as Jiang Bin, a spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, said at a news briefing on Saturday. He pointed out that Tokyo is undermining the strategic security and interests of other countries, by creating excuses for Japan to break free from the restrictions on its military development.

"The call of our times is for peace and cooperation rather than war and confrontation," he said, urging Japan and the countries it has been stepping up military collusion with "to do more things that are truly conducive to regional peace and stability", which is in line with the common aspiration of their peoples.

The joint statement issued by Japanese and Philippine defense officials, "opposing any unilateral attempts to change the status quo by force or coercion in the East China Sea and the South China Sea", is a baseless accusation that serves to highlight Tokyo's attempts to create camp confrontation. The statement, while claiming to uphold regional security, is little more than a thinly veiled attempt to shift the blame onto China for the region's tensions.

The international community must view these developments with concern, as they signal a dangerous shift in Japan's military posture.

This is reinforced by Takaichi's actions, such as kneeling at the Tomb of the Unknown Australian Soldier during her visit to Australia, which was a calculated bid to curry favor with Western allies. However, Japan's Asian neighbors, which suffered immensely under Japanese imperialism, have yet to receive a formal apology for Japan's historical aggression.

The lack of genuine atonement is a significant barrier to reconciliation and further isolates Japan within the region.

The militaristic resurgence of Japan, coupled with a disregard for historical accountability, is deeply disturbing in a region that suffered immensely from Japan's past aggression.

The consequences of Japan continuing on its militaristic path will be far-reaching. The international community must recognize the dangers of Japan's current trajectory and hold Tokyo accountable for its actions. Only through sincere reflection on its past aggression and a sincere commitment to peace can Japan hope to rebuild trust with its neighbors and contribute positively to regional stability.

Openness a viable path for shared prosperity

The resilience and vitality of the world's second-largest economy are once again drawing wide attention as fresh data show China's foreign trade maintained double-digit growth in the first four months of 2026.

According to data released by the General Administration of Customs, China's total goods trade reached 16.23 trillion yuan ($2.39 trillion) in the first four months of the year, up 14.9 percent year-on-year. Exports climbed 11.3 percent to 9.33 trillion yuan, while imports surged 20 percent to 6.9 trillion yuan year-on-year. In April alone, total trade expanded 14.2 percent year-on-year, underscoring the continued momentum of China's foreign trade.

Behind the impressive figures lies a more diversified and resilient trade structure. Trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the European Union grew by 15.7 percent and 13.2 percent respectively year-on-year, while trade with Belt and Road partner countries increased 13.5 percent. Trade with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership members rose 20 percent in the first four months year-on-year, showing that the trade agreement continues to inject new impetus into regional integration.

Such trends highlight that China's trade is becoming less dependent on any single market and increasingly embedded in broader regional and global networks. In an era marked by supply chain disruptions and geopolitical uncertainty, diversified partnerships are enhancing China's ability to withstand external risks while contributing stability to global industry and supply chains.

Equally noteworthy is the growing role of the services trade in China's trade structure. Data released by the Ministry of Commerce showed that China's total services trade reached 1.82 trillion yuan in the first quarter, with exports of services rising 11.2 percent year-on-year.

The effectiveness of China's high-level opening-up policies is highlighted by the robust growth of travel-related services. As China continues to expand its visa-free "circle of friends" and optimize departure tax refund policies, more foreign visitors are being drawn to the country for tourism, business and cultural exchanges. Travel service exports surged 32.3 percent in the first quarter year-on-year, the fastest among all service sectors.

What foreign visitors increasingly see is not merely a vast market, but an open, dynamic and confident China. From efficient digital payment systems and convenient transportation to thriving cultural consumption and modern urban landscapes, China's development is becoming ever more defined by innovation, green transformation and inclusiveness.

Meanwhile, the rise of new growth drivers in high-end manufacturing, artificial intelligence and new energy sectors is reshaping the global perception of China's economy. Exports of electric vehicles, lithium batteries and wind turbine units jumped by 68.1 percent, 43.2 percent and 40.7 percent respectively year-on-year in the first four months. China's robot industry also accelerated its overseas expansion, with exports reaching 11.32 billion yuan in the first quarter and products shipped to 148 countries and regions.

Reflecting both the booming global investment in AI and China's increasingly important role in global technology supply chains, exports of integrated circuits surged 78.3 percent year-on-year. As industry experts noted, China has become a key supplier of AI-related infrastructure, mature-process chips and supporting industrial components.

Some in the West have recently hyped up the notion of a so-called "China Shock 2.0", alleging that China's rapid advances in new energy and artificial intelligence rely excessively on overseas markets and create "overcapacity" that threatens developed economies. Yet such narratives ignore the reality of China's innovation-driven development and the benefits it brings to the world economy.

As Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian pointed out, China has genuine innovation capabilities that create tangible opportunities for global cooperation. The country has evolved from being "the world's factory" to being "a global market and innovation hub". China's exports, he stressed, have served to stabilize global supply chains, eased inflationary pressures, lowering living costs for consumers worldwide, and contributed to closing the world's green development supply gaps and accelerating the world's energy transition and low-carbon transformation.

More importantly, China's high-tech products are breaking technological monopolies and barriers, enabling more countries and people to access and afford emerging technologies.

Openness brings progress, and cooperation delivers mutual benefit, as Lin said. China's development is not a threat to any country, but an increment for common global development.

By steadfastly advancing high-level opening-up, promoting balanced trade development and fostering innovation-driven growth, China is providing the world economy with much-needed certainty and new momentum.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Museums have evolved to be carriers of historical continuity

In contemporary cultural policy, museums are often described as repositories of artifacts, or guardians of the past. Yet this definition increasingly lags behind the times. In China, official discourse has moved toward a more expansive understanding of museums in which they are no longer static containers of history, but dynamic imparters of knowledge.

This shift is clearly articulated in statements by the central authorities that emphasize that every museum is a big school. A university does not merely display knowledge; it interprets, transmits and shapes understanding. To define a museum in these terms is to assign it a civic function: it becomes a place where individuals encounter a shared narrative.

This reconceptualization also explains a second, equally important point. The central authorities have cautioned that museum development should avoid uniformity: museum construction should not be one model for all, nor should it pursue superficial scale; exhibitions must highlight distinctive content. What matters is not how many museums exist, but whether they offer distinctive cultural experiences that invite engagement. Exhibitions that draw on local history, traditions and material culture are more likely to resonate with surrounding communities, while also offering visitors a clearer sense of China's regional diversity and the varied roles different areas played in shaping its development.

For example, by foregrounding classical painting, garden culture, literati traditions and refined crafts such as silk weaving and embroidery, the Suzhou Museum has placed Suzhou within the cultural world of Jiangnan — the prosperous region south of the Yangtze long associated with commerce and artistic life. Suzhou's local heritage thus becomes a lens through which China's long engagement with the wider world can be understood.

In 2023, the Cleveland Museum of Art presented a major exhibition, "China's Southern Paradise: Treasures from the Lower Yangzi Delta", which examined the Lower Yangzi (Yangtze) region as both a cultural center and a conduit of exchange between China and the wider world. Drawing extensively on loans from Chinese museums, the exhibition traced how Jiangnan's economic vitality — rooted in silk production, commerce and urban culture — enabled sustained interaction with global trade networks and artistic currents. In doing so, it echoed the approach seen in Suzhou: local history was not treated as self-contained, but as part of a broader narrative of circulation and encounter. Presented on an international stage, such exhibitions demonstrate how regionally grounded cultural histories can illuminate China's long-standing engagement with the world.

Chinese museums can also draw lessons from international institutions, which often possess a sharper awareness of how to engage their audiences. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Metropolitan Museum of Art presented "Companions in Solitude: Reclusion and Communion in Chinese Art", an exhibition that explored the long-standing tension in Chinese thought between withdrawal from society and connection with others. Bringing together over a hundred works of painting, calligraphy and decorative arts, the exhibition framed Chinese aesthetics around a universal human dilemma — how to balance solitude and social life — in a moment of global isolation.

This curatorial approach continued in the museum's 2025 exhibition "Recasting the Past: The Art of Chinese Bronzes, 1100–1900", which demonstrated how later Chinese artists reinterpreted antiquity, emphasizing that tradition in China is dynamic rather than fixed. Taken together, these exhibitions suggest a clear trajectory: moving beyond presenting China as an object of external curiosity toward articulating its internal artistic logic and historical continuity.

In describing cultural relics as those that "embody a rich civilizational legacy, transmit history and culture, and sustain the collective spirit", and in calling for them to "come alive", the central authorities capture a fundamental transformation in the role of museums. Objects are no longer treated as static artifacts, but as carriers of continuity — linking past and present, individual and collective identity. This shift is increasingly reflected in more open exhibitions, expanded digital access and interactive formats that extend cultural experience beyond the museum itself.

Emphasizing participation over instruction allows culture to be encountered rather than imposed. Ultimately, it reflects a broader rethinking of culture itself: not merely as heritage to be preserved, but as a shared resource to be experienced. In an age of increasing fragmentation, the capacity to bring people into common cultural spaces may be among the most effective ways to sustain social cohesion.

— ZHAO XU, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

AI in filmmaking cannot replace human emotions

Editor's note: *Artificial intelligence is reshaping a broad range of industries, including the film industry. During the 16th Beijing International Film Festival, various insiders of AI, the film industry and scholars shared their insights on AI's role in filmmaking and how professionals should respond to the trend of AI. Below are excerpts from their comments as reported by Xinhua News Agency. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

AI can assist film producers in collecting and summarizing data and information. It can also help film directors visualize, while also assisting them in character design and casting.

Large AI models are able to create B-roll footage and scenes featuring animals. Footage that once took a week and cost hundreds of thousands of yuan to shoot can now be produced efficiently at low cost.

Currently, films that have powerful visual effects, such as *The Wandering Earth 3*, still rely on motion capture and modeling for previsualization of action and performance, as AI is as yet unable to achieve the same results. The smaller the screen, the wider the application of AI. The larger the screen, the more limited its application becomes.

AI technology is applied to only part of the production process of theatrical films, and has not yet been used to generate all the scenes in them. In AI-generated scenes, rendering human skin texture and subtle facial expressions remains a challenge.

The iteration of generative AI has drastically changed the underlying logic of audio-visual content creation. The production pattern of movies and television shows is shifting from one that features a clear division of labor and collaboration of multiple sectors to one that is highly creative, agile and involves human-machine cooperation.

AI technology is able to combine different kinds of media. Its "real-time generation" capability has greatly enhanced the interaction between products and their users, blurring the boundaries between animated films, live-action films and video games, and boosting the integration of films and video games. This will give rise to new patterns of consumption.

Films need a dose of human warmth to strike an emotional chord with the audience. For example, films such as *Dead to Rights* and *Her Story* have won praise mainly because they showcase genuine emotions, making audiences shed tears or smile.

The memorable parts of many classic film scenes are actors' impromptu performances inspired by directors. Algorithms cannot replicate this aspect of movies.

In an era when more and more people have gained access to tools for audio-visual creation, filmmakers need to make greater efforts in polishing their products, including the way a story is told, the aesthetic quality of the film and the audio-visual experience it provides, so as to make watching films in cinemas an irreplaceable choice for the audience.

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VIEWS

Roman Novozhilov and Yuan Zheng

Nature-based solutions to climate challenges

Climate change is no longer a distant warning. Melting glaciers, dying coral reefs and collapsing ecosystems are racing toward dangerous tipping points, posing significant risks to both people and nature.

Many countries, including China, are responding to the alarming signals. China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) focuses on developing river-basin economies, highlighting a powerful idea: nature is part of our infrastructure, and investing in it could strengthen resilience.

Nature-based solutions (NbS) could turn this idea into practice.

NbS involves actions that protect, restore and manage ecosystems so that they continue to provide essential services for people and businesses.

Forests regulate water and stabilize slopes, wetlands store floodwater and filter pollution and mangroves shield coasts from storms and erosion. Urban trees and parks cool streets and reduce heat stress.

In these ways, nature delivers essential ecosystem services — flood protection, water security, coastal defense and urban cooling — that make existing "grey" infrastructure more resilient.

By viewing nature as a form of infrastructure, we recognize that, unlike roads, dams or drainage systems, natural systems can renew themselves and deliver multiple benefits simultaneously.

Trees or mangroves, for example, could regulate water, store carbon, support livelihoods and enrich communities with cultural and recreational spaces.

Thus, nature is no longer external to socio-economic development, but a core asset that generates goods and services essential for sustaining other economic activities. Our long-term prosperity depends on protecting nature.

In a warming world with more frequent hazardous weather events, the capacity of ecosystems to absorb climate and disaster shocks is one of the most cost-effective ways to adapt.

Yet, investment in nature still falls short. Global estimates indicate an annual biodiversity finance gap of around $700 billion between now and 2030.

One major barrier is that many of nature's benefits — such as a stable climate, or cleaner air — are not properly valued and priced in project appraisals or national accounts.

Tools and outcome metrics to measure and quantify the socioeconomic gains from NbS are still developing, making these benefits easy to overlook.

Also, data on nature remain fragmented, standards on nature finance are still evolving, and many public NbS projects have to coordinate across multiple agencies and ministries.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

All this can make nature-positive investments look risky, hard to structure and difficult to implement, even when they make strong economic sense.

As climate impacts intensify, building resilience is no longer a choice but a necessity. Investing in nature can change how we design infrastructure, plan cities and shape our economies for the long term.

A holistic approach is needed to align policy, project preparation and finance, so that NbS are systematically built into decisions rather than added on later.

First, efforts could focus on bringing nature into the mainstream of project finance. This entails developing and using simple methods to identify nature-related risks and opportunities early in project preparation, so that suitable NbS measures can be built into the design from the very start.

This work can build on the environmental and social safeguard reviews that many financial institutions carry out for the projects they finance, making such standards easier to apply and institutionalize.

In parallel, a practical "menu" of NbS options can be compiled for key investment areas, offering project teams a set of tried-and-tested measures for climate-resilient infrastructure that can then be tailored to local conditions.

Second, financial markets need to deepen and continuously innovate to better support investment in nature, including NbS. For NbS that are integral to climate-resilient infrastructure, more adaptation finance could be directed to these activities as part of core project funding.

Some NbS can also generate high quality carbon credits, drawing on existing accounting methodologies used in some global and national voluntary markets.

Moreover, new types of labeled sustainable finance instruments can be piloted to channel capital into nature-positive projects.

Emerging nature-finance taxonomies from international institutions, such as the one recently launched by multilateral development banks, could offer a useful starting point for defining qualifications and guiding the design of such instruments.

Furthermore, a portfolio approach could bundle NbS projects that would otherwise be too small or fragmented, helping to overcome bankability challenges and attract larger-scale investment.

Third, to support the endeavors mentioned above, cross-sector policy making needs to be strengthened so that clear, consistent guidance comes from the top. A country's climate strategies — especially adaptation plans — should be aligned with planning for biodiversity conservation and natural resource management, and coordinated across ministries.

This is crucial when setting strategic targets and designing financial and economic incentives, so that NbS are encouraged and enabled in a coherent way across different sectors and levels of government.

Last but not least, capacity building also needs sustained attention across all key stakeholders, including financial institutions, governments, contractors and regulators, so they know why and how to integrate NbS into major decisions in the first place.

This will be a gradual process, and expand as more data, practical tools and financial instruments become available, tested and ready to scale up.

Across emerging markets and developing countries, strong examples of NbS are already emerging, including in China, where rivers, grasslands and coasts are often being used to support development and resilience.

Picture a solar farm spread across once-degraded land, with panels raised just high enough for sheep or goats to graze in their shade: the panels help slow down wind erosion, the ground cover restores biodiversity and stores carbon, and local herders earn steadier incomes while clean power feeds nearby towns.

Such vivid combinations of clean energy, healthier ecosystems and stronger rural livelihoods show how emerging markets and developing countries can pioneer NbS at scale and play a leading role in advancing climate-resilient, nature-positive growth.

As the world looks toward the 31st United Nations Climate Change Conference, the focus is shifting from high-level commitments to concrete implementation.

Now is the right moment to bring NbS out of the margins into the mainstream of climate and development plans.

Countries and other stakeholders can arrive at the upcoming conference with real projects underway — restoring rivers, forests, coasts and city landscapes that protect people and the planet.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of the New Development Bank and China Daily.

Wu Ruijun

Investing in education brings talent dividend

In the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), China has emphasized the importance of investing in both physical assets and human capital, with education playing a vital role in enhancing the well-being of its people.

Education should be seen not just as an expense, but as a long-term investment that transforms human resources into core capital for future growth.

Human capital investment views the population as a dynamic and evolving resource. By improving the allocation of educational resources and strengthening policy design, it enhances people's knowledge, skills, health and innovative capacity.

Through upgrading the labor force's skill structure, strengthening intergenerational development capacity, and promoting population mobility and integration, education investment improves both the quality and structure of the population.

This facilitates a shift from reliance on a traditional demographic dividend toward a more sustainable talent dividend that supports long-term economic transformation.

Such investment should be precise and consider the entire life cycle to address major demographic changes such as declining birth rates, population aging and the demand for quality improvement. To counter falling fertility, it is essential to expand child care services and optimize basic education resources, thereby reducing the cost of raising children.

For an aging population, education for older adults and vocational training can unlock the potential of the elderly workforce and extend productive working lives.

We also need to forecast demographic trends, ensure a balanced regional distribution of educational resources, and coordinate education with fertility, employment and elderly care policies.

We have to shift from expanding scale to improving quality, building a resilient education system that can better deliver a talent dividend.

With increasing population mobility between urban and rural areas and across regions, migrant children often struggle with educational integration.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence can be used to recommend personalized learning pathways and improve accessibility.

Breaking institutional barriers, such as those related to the household registration system, is essential to ensure educational equity based on the principle of equal rights within the same city.

This involves easing or even abolishing school enrollment thresholds linked to social insurance contributions or residence permits, and removing household registration restrictions for senior high school admissions so that migrant children can compete fairly for quality educational opportunities.

On the fiscal side, funding mechanisms should be improved through transfer payments to support destination areas in providing public education.

Educational process equity has to be promoted through teacher rotation, mixed classes and integrated support systems that combine academic assistance, psychological counseling and social integration services.

Building a lifelong education system requires strong institutional safeguards, open resource sharing and technological empowerment.

Developing a national qualifications framework and a credit bank system can enable mutual recognition among academic education, vocational training and lifelong learning outcomes, lowering barriers to participation.

Universities, enterprises and social organizations can work together to build digital learning platforms offering blended online and offline courses for people of all ages, with particular emphasis on skills training for career transitions and community-based education for older adults.

Technologies such as artificial intelligence can be used to recommend personalized learning pathways and improve accessibility.

Closer integration between industry and education is also essential to deliver training aligned with industrial upgrading and ensure a continuous appreciation of human capital.

Nudging families toward a more rational approach to educational investment requires policy guidance and effective public communication. They need to shift from traditional attitudes that overemphasize academic credentials.

The role of skilled professionals in economic and social development needs greater recognition. A diversified talent evaluation system can be established by combining academic diplomas with vocational skill certificates and improving the national qualifications framework.

Also, the remuneration, social status and career prospects of skilled workers should be enhanced, helping families recognize vocational education as a viable pathway for upward mobility. Better alignment between skills training and the demand in the labor market, along with the promotion of successful role models, can help alleviate education-related anxiety.

Governments can strengthen career guidance services to help families make informed choices based on children's interests, abilities and market trends.

It is crucial that governments anchor education policy in the goal of high-quality population development, ensure balanced provision of inclusive educational resources, fulfill fiscal responsibilities and address gaps in underdeveloped regions and among vulnerable groups.

Sound regulatory mechanisms are also needed to standardize the education market and improve coordination among education, population and employment policies.

The market, in turn, is expected to respond to diversified educational demands by providing differentiated services, deepening cooperation between schools and enterprises and leveraging digital technologies to enhance quality and efficiency.

Families too should make rational choices that align with their children's strengths and social needs, prioritize moral education and holistic development and work in coordination with national population and education strategies.

The author is a member of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference National Committee and the director of the Institute for Talent Development Strategy at East China Normal University.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Qu Yue

Enduring protection for workers in emerging fields

On April 26, the Chinese government issued a document offering guidelines on strengthening services and management for workers in new forms of employment — such as food delivery riders, couriers, ride-hailing drivers, and live-streamers who make a living through digital platforms.

It is China's first national-level policy document of its kind to focus specifically on the needs of this emerging workforce.

As China's social security and public service systems were developed alongside industrialization and are largely based on the work unit model, traditional workers are tied to a fixed employer, sign formal labor contracts, contribute to social insurance and receive corresponding benefits.

But workers engaged in new forms of employment have to face ambiguity.

Their flexible arrangements, often involving platforms, outsourcing firms and franchisees, create complex employment relationships.

As a result, these workers often lack clear legal protection and institutional support in areas such as pay, work injury insurance, rest rights and social security.

China's population service system requires that everyone, regardless of age, occupation, household registration status or employment type, be included.

Workers in new forms of employment, however, represent a large blind spot in this system. They often work away from their place of household registration, don't have stable employment and live in a dispersed manner.

The guidelines are meant to close that institutional gap by formally bringing this group into the national services and governance system, safeguarding their rights and providing tailored support.

The guidelines take into account the realities of the new forms of employment and clarify the responsibilities of all parties involved so that rights protection is based on clear and enforceable standards. This is essential to achieving high-quality and full employment.

Platform companies and courier firms are required to improve their management systems, use labor contracts or written agreements suited to the sector, and define rights and obligations in a lawful and reasonable way based on actual working arrangements.

The guidelines also urge platform companies to set remuneration in line with the workload, pay wages in full and on time and ensure workers' right to rest. They call for enhanced protection in special conditions such as extreme weather.

To ensure that the concerns of workers are heard, mechanisms will be established for consultation and dialogue on matters affecting their rights, with transparent outcomes.

Practices, such as unreasonable fees or commissions, unfair traffic allocation and abuse of market dominance, are expected to be investigated and punished. The protection of workers' rights may also be included in corporate social responsibility assessments.

To address a long-standing concern of workers, the guidelines have also tackled algorithm-related issues.

Platform companies must improve transparency and guarantee workers' rights to be informed about, participate in and make choices regarding algorithmic rules.

When adjusting algorithms, platforms should consult labor unions and worker representatives, and reasonably set rules on task allocation, pricing and time estimation, while strictly complying with filing requirements.

The guidelines call for measures to curb excessive competition, prevent harm to workers' rights, protect personal data and privacy, and crack down on fraud, predatory lending and other crimes targeting this segment of the workforce.

On the public services front, basic services need to be provided based on place of residence rather than household registration, a principle firmly upheld to allow services to follow the flow of workers.

Measures include improving social security systems suited to flexible employment, facilitating the transfer and continuation of social insurance, expanding pilot programs for occupational injury protection, enabling direct settlement of cross-regional medical expenses and exploring the inclusion of flexible workers in the housing provident fund.

The guidelines call for multi-party coordination mechanisms led by townships and communities to address practical issues such as access to residential compounds, parking areas, meals, rest areas and restroom facilities.

Community service centers and union stations are to be used to build service hubs such as "driver homes" and "rider stations", offering basic amenities including drinking water, charging facilities, hot meals and emergency supplies.

Outstanding workers are to be recognized and rewarded while regular skills competitions are to be organized to enhance professional pride.

Targeted support is also emphasized. Workers financially impoverished are to receive social assistance in accordance with regulations, while support is to be provided to the families of workers injured or killed on the job.

The guidelines highlight the importance of psychological services in easing work-related stress, expanded vocational training, improved systems for skill certification and professional evaluation, and clearer pathways for career advancement.

The guidelines come at a time when there are new changes in China's population structure and the platform economy is reshaping employment patterns.

The social security system is shifting from one centered on work units to one centered on society at large, extending protection from "employees of units" to "members of society."

By standardizing employment practices, safeguarding entitlements and opening pathways for career development, the guidelines lay a foundation for the long-term, healthy development of new forms of employment.

With the help of the guidelines, jobs that were once temporary stopgaps can be transformed into viable, stable careers, unlocking the potential of tens of millions of workers as a source of human capital.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

EFEM N. UBI

Free trade milestone

China's zero-tariff treatment for the 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties is set to boost Africa's economic growth and modernization



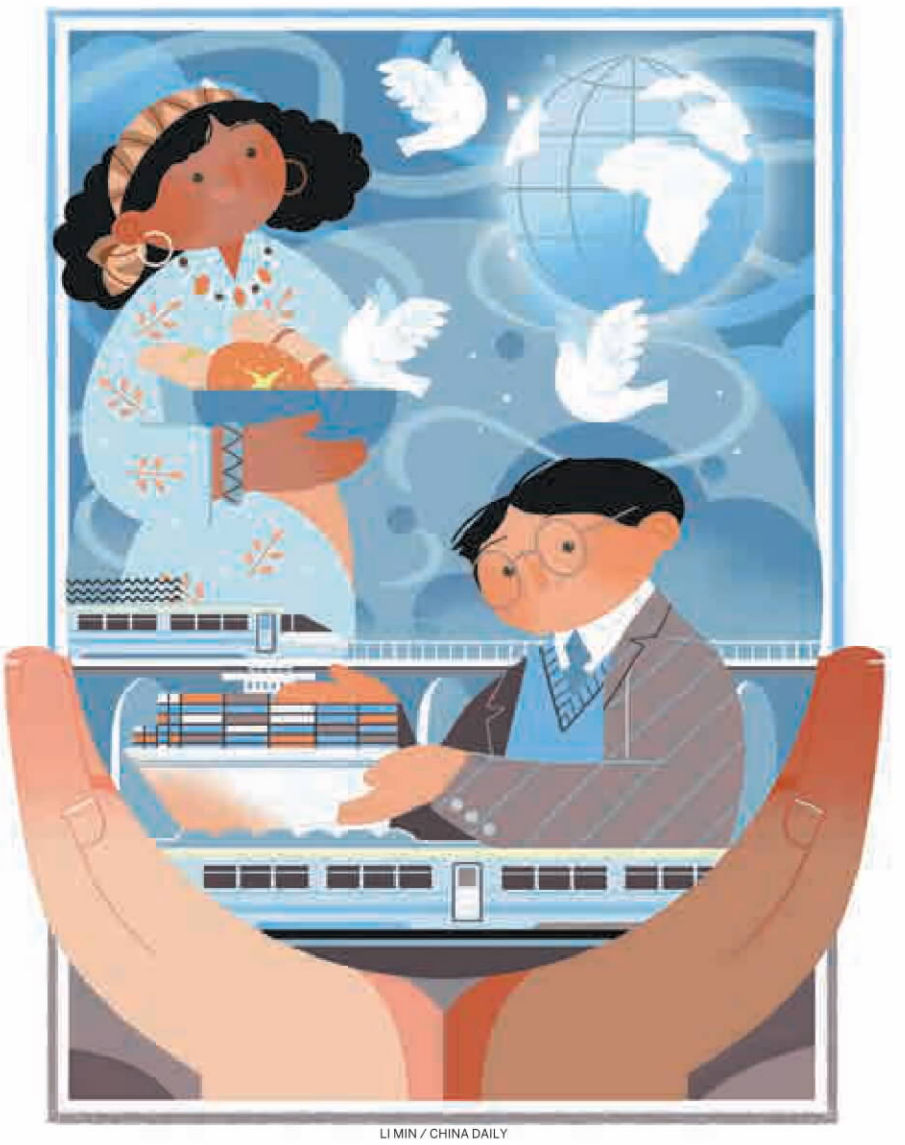
The importance of Africa's trade with China is reflected in numerous bilateral, multilateral and regional agreements. This is also indicative of the new policy of the Chinese government that, starting May 1, China fully implemented zero tariffs on all products from 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic ties.

Historically, Africa has faced significant challenges in its trade relations with Western countries. Stringent duties and high tariffs imposed by Western countries have often hindered the export of African goods. For instance, the United States administration has reignited tensions in international trade. This approach has had a negative impact on many African nations, thus making it difficult for them to compete on the global stage.

In contrast, China has offered a solution by removing trade barriers. By taking these steps, China is offering new opportunities for economic growth and prosperity across the African continent, provided these advantages are effectively leveraged by African governments.

The trade relationship between China and Africa has been highly significant. In light of this situation, implementing a zero-tariff policy can help boost trade with China, reduce trade imbalances, support Africa's manufacturing growth, and encourage trade and development within Africa itself.

Data released by China's General Administration of Customs indicate that China has become Africa's largest trading partner, with trade totaling $348 billion in 2025. However, it is estimated that Africa's trade with China accounts for 4.5 to 5.5 percent of China's global trade. Thus, with a zero-tariff policy now in place, Africa will gain wider access to China's vast and promising market. This initiative also indicates that China is readily attuned to the concerns expressed about trade imbalances with Africa, extending beyond traditional diplomatic and soft-power considerations. This significant policy will gradually enable Africa to increase production and expand trade, thereby increasing revenue and competitiveness while also lowering production costs.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

One barrier to the effective participation of some African nations in international trade is the persistent lack of robust industrialization. Across the continent, numerous countries are struggling with insufficient infrastructure, outdated production techniques, and limited manufacturing capacity. According to the African Trade Report 2024 released by the African Export-Import Bank, the African continent accounts for about 2 percent of global trade. And some African nations rely heavily on exporting unprocessed raw materials such as crude oil, copper, cobalt, coffee, cocoa and lithium, while importing finished goods, machinery and technology.

This situation compromises their ability to compete globally, preventing them from fully exploiting the opportunities that international markets offer. The implementation of a zero-tariff policy could catalyze the growth of a more dynamic and resilient industrial sector in Africa. By eliminating tariffs, some African nations can reduce costs for manufacturers, encourage foreign investment and promote local production. This shift could lead to increased manufacturing output and innovation, which are crucial for fostering competitive industries. This comprehensive approach can pave the way for economic development that ultimately benefits not only the individual countries but the entire continent.

Some African countries can fully leverage this opportunity by combining their comparative advantages with efforts to improve logistics and standards systems. This will further boost export growth and diversification, which many African nations have been grappling with over the years.

The policy can also boost agriculture and food security. The zero-tariff policy is expected to enhance the agricultural sector across the African continent. Also, by promoting the processing and packaging of agricultural goods, some African nations can create a spectrum of jobs that range from farming and harvesting to manufacturing and distribution. These African nations can expect an increase in employment opportunities within local communities. This is particularly crucial, as the agricultural sector serves as one of the largest sources of employment in Africa, providing livelihoods for millions of people. In fact, China's zero-tariff policy for Africa has the potential to uplift rural economies and empower communities throughout the continent.

The landmark zero-tariff policy will also have positive effects on boosting intra-African trade and, importantly, the African Continental Free Trade Area. This policy will encourage intra-African trade by enabling some African nations to capitalize on their comparative advantages. As a result, countries will not only trade raw materials and commodities among themselves, but also exchange finished or value-added goods. Furthermore, it can incentivize the development of regional supply chains in Africa to meet China's growing demand.

In conclusion, China's zero-tariff policy for the 53 African nations with which it has diplomatic ties could not have come at a more opportune moment for Africa, as the world grapples with uncertainty, trade wars and conflicts that threaten the stability of developing countries. This effort offers opportunities for Africa's modernization through industrialization and manufacturing, aiming to realize a shared future for both parties.

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STEPHEN NDEGWA

Companions in modernization

China's tech push is also helping expand Africa's digital footprint with high-impact projects that are reshaping the continent's technological landscape



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY



In global economic debates, innovation is often framed as a competitive race among major powers. Headlines tend to focus on who leads in artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing or green technology. The narrative is usually about who is ahead, who is falling behind, and who will dominate future industries.

But for much of the developing world, the real question is whether innovation expands opportunity beyond the traditional centers of power. For Africa, China's growing push for technological innovation is increasingly providing that opportunity. And as articulated during this year's two sessions — the annual meetings of the National People's Congress and the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference — this partnership is entering a more mature, policy-driven phase focused on shared modernization.

For Global South nations, China's modernization drive is not an isolated project, but an open one. The two sessions were charged with a focus on new quality productive forces, driven by digitalization and AI. This is a signal of where China is investing in its immense research and development capacity and, crucially, what it is willing to share with partners such as Africa.

One of the most striking moments came during Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's news conference on the sidelines of the NPC session. When a Nigerian journalist was given the opportunity to ask a question, the gesture stood as a small but powerful symbol of the importance China places on its African partnership. Wang's response was a reaffirmation that China's path to modernization is intrinsically linked to Africa's — a sentiment that resonates deeply from the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to the tech hubs of Nairobi and Lagos.

This commitment was given strategic depth by Wang during his visit to three African countries in January, during which he laid out a comprehensive vision for the future. His message moved beyond simple infrastructure development to a holistic partnership for the 21st century, built on several key pillars that will directly impact Africa's digital future.

The first is the principle of prioritizing development as companions in modernization. This is backed by the implementation of zero-tariff treatment for 100 percent of taxable imports from the 53 African countries that have diplomatic ties with China, starting May 1. This policy is a game-changer. It is designed to boost African exports, and crucially, it fosters the development of local industries and technological capacity, giving African innovators a direct pathway to the huge Chinese market.

Second, Wang emphasized promoting mutual learning in national governance. This means creating platforms such as the China-Africa knowledge network for development to share expertise. For Africa's digital transformation, this is vital. It is not just about receiving technology, but about understanding the policies, regulatory frameworks and innovation ecosystems that allow technology to thrive. It is a direct channel for African engineers, entrepreneurs and policymakers to learn from China's development.

Third, Wang called for upholding openness and inclusiveness as partners with a shared future. This stands in direct contrast to the trend of technological protectionism elsewhere. By strengthening coordination in international forums, China and Africa can jointly advocate a global governance system that gives developing nations a greater voice in making the rules for emerging technologies such as AI, ensuring these technologies serve the shared interests of all humanity.

This policy alignment is already translating into tangible, high-impact projects that are reshaping Africa's technological landscape. The focus is shifting from basic connectivity to intelligent infrastructure. A landmark example is the 2026 strategic memorandum of understanding between MTN Group and Huawei, signed to accelerate Africa's digital and intelligent transformation.

This partnership is a blueprint for the future. It leverages AI as the core driver to build "agentic networks", the next-generation infrastructure that evolves from automation to true autonomy. By targeting Level 4 autonomous networks, where AI handles most network management, this collaboration aims to dramatically improve efficiency and unlock new possibilities for service innovation. In addition to enabling faster internet traffic, it is about creating an AI-ready digital backbone that can support everything from smart agriculture and telemedicine to fintech and logistics, powered by innovation labs based in Africa.

This builds on a long history of cooperation where companies such as Huawei have been instrumental in building the continent's digital skeleton, contributing to constructing a large share of Africa's 4G networks and deploying hundreds of thousands of kilometers of fiber-optic cables. Now, with AI integration, we are moving from building the skeleton to wiring the nervous system of a digital economy.

For Africa, the convergence of its youthful population is obvious, with more than 60 percent of the total population in the sub-Saharan region being under the age of 25, and these technological investments create unprecedented potential. The continent is already the world's fastest-growing mobile internet market, gaining 1.5 new users every second. Young developers in Africa's Silicon Valley are building solutions on this foundation — mobile payments that expand financial inclusion, platforms connecting farmers to markets and digital health services reaching rural patients.

The pieces are coming together. China's renewable energy push, another pillar of its innovation drive, is also making solar power more affordable, helping power this digital ecosystem and address the electricity gap that affects 600 million Africans, according to the International Energy Agency.

As Chinese companies invest in solar farms, hydropower and minigrids across the continent, they are providing the clean and reliable electricity needed to keep data centers running, charge millions of new mobile devices coming online every day and power the small businesses that form the backbone of Africa's digital economy.

Ultimately, the narrative is no longer simply about China's tech push. It is about a strategic partnership that is actively co-creating Africa's digital future. Innovation delivers its greatest value when it spreads, and in this partnership, there is a clear path for the technological breakthroughs of the 21st century to truly transform economies far beyond the traditional centers of power.

The author is the executive director of South-South Dialogues, a Nairobi-based communications development think tank. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

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Research points to innovation depth

Foreign-funded R&D centers expand quantitatively and qualitatively

By ZHONG NAN
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Multinational companies once measured their presence in China by the number of factories they operated and the scale of their supply chains. Today, those metrics no longer fully capture their footprint.

The number of research and development centers has emerged as a more telling indicator of how deeply foreign businesses are embedded in the Chinese market and how committed they are to long-term innovation.

As of March this year, Beijing had 332 foreign-funded R&D centers, with 55 newly established this year, while Shanghai had 647 such centers, including 15 new additions this year, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

That shift is also becoming more evident in capital flows. The actual use of foreign direct investment in China's high-tech industries rose 30.7 percent year-on-year to 102.73 billion yuan ($15.05 billion) in the first quarter of 2026, accounting for 41.2 percent of the country's total FDI, according to the ministry data.

Of this, the actual use of FDI in R&D and design services rose by 127.8 percent on a yearly basis.

Zhao Yang, an official with the Ministry of Commerce's department of foreign investment administration, said China's industrial and innovation strengths are translating into tangible advantages.

Foreign-funded R&D centers are entering a phase of both quantitative expansion and qualitative upgrading, shifting from local adaptation hubs to integral nodes in multinational companies' global innovation networks, said Zhao.

Yin Zheng, executive vice-president of China and East Asia operations at Schneider Electric, said that running businesses, especially in the manufacturing sector, is no longer about simply taking orders and scaling up production in China.

"For many multinational corporations today, the country has evolved from a cost-efficient production base into a critical hub for innovation, market expansion and long-term strategic positioning," Yin said.

The French industrial group is currently building two new plants in Xiamen, Fujian province, and Wuxi, Jiangsu province, while upgrading its Beijing R&D center, focusing on energy management, optimization, efficiency and digitalization.

Bai Ming, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said the trend reflects growing confidence among foreign investors in China's economic resilience and its capacity for sustained innovation.

As a result, investment decisions that were once seen as optional are increasingly being elevated to strategic imperatives, particularly in high-tech and consumer goods sectors, Bai said.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said the shift is evident.

"Twenty-five years ago, no one came to China to do R&D. Now, what I am seeing is that the best companies are doing some of their most important R&D in China," said Stein.

For example, US cosmetics group Estee Lauder is tailoring products for Chinese consumers, not only in packaging, but also in formulations and research and development. Tapestry Inc, the parent company of US fashion brands Coach and Kate Spade, has established an R&D center in Dongguan, Guangdong province, he added.

As part of its expansion in China, Estee Lauder launched two projects in Shanghai in late March — the China Fulfillment Center and the Group Open Innovation Center — to boost its research and development and intelligent supply chain operations.



Visitors experience cosmetics from Estee Lauder during the eighth China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 9. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A visitor checks out products from Danfoss during a machinery exhibition in Shanghai on Nov 28, 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Visitors get to know information at Schneider's exhibition stand during the eighth CIIE in Shanghai on Nov 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "For many multinational corporations today, the country has evolved from a cost-efficient production base into a critical hub for innovation, market expansion and long-term strategic positioning."
>
> **Yin Zheng,** executive vice-president of China and East Asia operations at Schneider Electric

"China is more than one of the world's largest beauty markets. It is a global leader in shaping consumer trends, digital innovation and the future of our industry," said Stephane de La Faverie, the group's president and CEO.

Similar momentum is seen in other sectors. Louis Dreyfus Company, a Rotterdam-headquartered multinational trader and processor of agricultural commodities, has continued to expand its footprint in China, investing in four greenfield projects to strengthen processing capabilities.

James Zhou, LDC's chief commercial officer, said his group has already set up a global R&D center in Shanghai and launched two production lines for specialty feed ingredients in Tianjin, aiming to translate research into commercial applications.

"We are looking to expand our integrated specialty phospholipid production model — pioneered through innovation and advanced oilseed processing capabilities in China — to other LDC plants worldwide," said Zhou. "Meanwhile, we have launched various plant-based food and feed ingredients and solutions, tailored to evolving needs in China."

Pan Yuanyuan, deputy director of the international investment unit at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said foreign investment is becoming an increasingly important driver of employment and services sector development in China.

"In high-tech areas such as advanced manufacturing, green and low-carbon development, digital infrastructure and scientific research, multinational companies are increasingly leveraging China's industrial and supply chains to scale up innovation and accelerate its commercial application, integrating the country more deeply into their global production and innovation networks," she added.

Seeing great growth potential in the Chinese market, German anchoring system manufacturer Fischer expanded and upgraded its existing production base in Taicang, Jiangsu province in March.

Its new heavy-duty anchoring and structural reinforcement product lines have been put into operation, with products set to be supplied to the Chinese market from this month and expanded to cover the broader Asian market from November.

Alexander Bassler, CEO of Fischer, said that the Chinese market is one of the most dynamic and forward-looking globally for the group, with the speed at which innovations emerge and are implemented at scale standing out in particular. The company also sees new growth opportunities in areas such as digitalization, smart infrastructure, sustainable construction and high-tech industries, Bassler added.

"At the same time, demand is rising for high-quality, durable and technologically sophisticated solutions. This opens up excellent prospects for our company. Our fastening and system solutions are used in many modern-day industrial and construction projects and make a valuable contribution to efficient and sustainable solutions," he said.

Kim Fausing, president and CEO of Danfoss Group, said the Danish industrial conglomerate aims to deploy more resources in China's data center sector, drawing on its global expertise and technologies to support scalable, energy-efficient infrastructure for artificial intelligence-led digital expansion.

"China has become a key player in global digital and energy transitions, as data centers play a growing role in the energy system, driven by rising electricity demand from artificial intelligence and cloud computing," said Fausing.

As its sales in China more than doubled over the past decade to exceed 10 billion yuan, Danfoss, which operates 12 manufacturing bases and four innovation facilities across the country, posted a 13 percent sales growth year-on-year in 2025, driven by strong momentum in sectors such as data centers and marine industries, where demand for energy-efficient solutions is rising.

As China strives to drive high-quality economic development through higher-level opening-up, this year's Government Work Report called for steadily expanding institutional opening-up, promoting the reinvestment of foreign capital and the expansion of localized production, and improving services for foreign-funded enterprises.

More than 6,200 foreign-invested enterprises were registered with customs authorities in the first quarter, while the number of such companies with import and export activity rose by more than 1,000 from a year earlier to reach 69,000, statistics from the General Administration of Customs showed.

These companies recorded 3.47 trillion yuan in trade between January and March, up 16.1 percent year-on-year, marking the eighth consecutive quarter of growth.

"Multinational companies are playing a key role in driving new quality productive forces, and their trade outlook in China remains strong," said Wang Jun, GAC's vice-minister, adding that stable policy expectations and an open business environment are helping them select more trading partners and tap into more markets.

Wang said global businesses' integration with China's manufacturing sector is deepening.

In China, foreign-invested firms accounted for more than 30 percent of each sector's total trade in industries such as automobile manufacturing, instrumentation and pharmaceuticals during the January-March period, according to the GAC.

Meanwhile, these companies accounted for more than 30 percent and 60 percent of China's industrial robot and 3D printer exports, respectively, with growth in both categories outpacing the national average.

Trade ties depend on reliable partners

REPORTER'S LOG
By Zhong Nan

I have been covering the China Import and Export Fair (Canton Fair) for years, and every time I walk into its vast venue in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, my first instinct is to scan the crowd. It is a habit that comes naturally — reading the market through the density of people, especially foreigners, the pace of movement, and the hum of conversations across the halls.

That instinct still worked for me at the fair's 139th edition this year, but only up to a point. The crowds are there, the booths are busy and the noise level remains high. Yet, after a few hours on the floor, the feeling shifts. The signals are familiar, but the story behind them is not.

What has changed most is not the scale, but the substance of interaction. Buyers still stop, take photos and ask questions, but their questions have become more layered and more cautious. Conversations move quickly beyond product specifications and pricing, shifting toward delivery reliability, cost stability and the ability to manage unexpected disruptions.

In other words, customers today are not just buying products, but the ability to deliver with certainty.

Several exhibitors told me that decision-making cycles have lengthened compared with previous years. Buyers are taking more time to evaluate options, often revisiting the same supplier multiple times before moving forward. The process feels less transactional and more like risk assessment.

People can feel the contrast across the venue. The fair appears energetic and crowded, reinforcing the impression of strong demand. Yet the mood is more restrained, as both buyers and sellers deal with a more uncertain external environment shaped by cost pressures, supply chain disruptions and geopolitical considerations.

The mix of buyers is another sign of that shift. Visitors from emerging markets remain highly visible, but participation from Europe, the United States and South Korea has not faded. Instead, demand is spreading across regions rather than relocating, creating a more complex landscape for exporters trying to serve multiple markets at once.

That complexity is also reflected in what is being displayed. In newly expanded sections dedicated to drones, service robots and smart technologies, price is no longer the primary narrative. What stands out instead is application — how products are used, how systems are integrated, and how reliably they can be delivered at scale.

The fair itself is evolving alongside these changes. For many companies, it is no longer just about what happens on the exhibition floor, but part of a longer process. Leads are identified before arrival, conversations are structured during the event, and follow-ups begin almost immediately after. The physical interaction remains important, but it is no longer the starting point.

This shift is quietly redefining what success looks like. Counting visitors or collecting business cards is no longer a big deal. What matters more is how many of those contacts turn into real conversations, and how many of those conversations translate into actual orders over time.

All this points to a broader transformation in China's foreign trade model. Competitive advantage is moving away from simple cost competitiveness toward something more complex — the ability to deliver consistently, respond quickly and remain reliable when conditions become uncertain.

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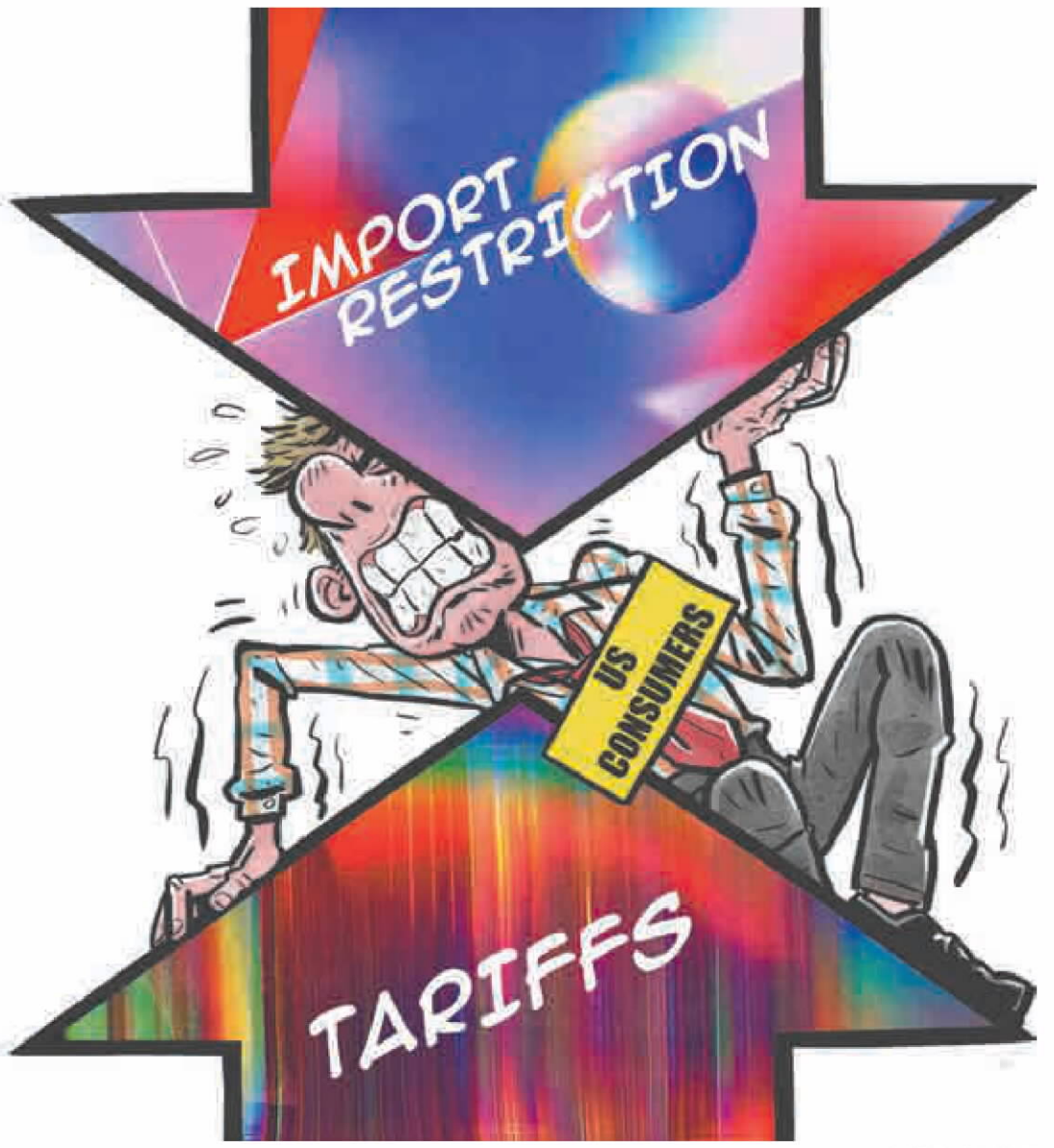
BUSINESSINSIGHT

How trade policy shapes consumer outcomes in US

EAGLE EYE
By John Quelch



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

In recent years, the United States has placed increasing emphasis on trade policies that prioritize national security, supply chain resilience and economic growth. In an era of global volatility and technological rivalry, these may be real and relevant policy objectives. However, it is equally, if not more, important to consider how such measures affect markets and, ultimately, the daily lives of US consumers.

Tariffs and import restrictions are two types of trade barriers that directly affect household well-being. First, such policies can reduce diversity in the domestic market by making it more difficult for consumers to access high-quality, lower-cost imports. A second effect concerns competition. When foreign firms face barriers to entry, domestic firms may encounter less competition, resulting in higher prices and reduced incentives to innovate over time. Together, these factors can make it more difficult for families to make ends meet, particularly for lower and middle-income households that are more sensitive to changes in the cost of goods.

The electric vehicle sector provides a useful example of how these dynamics play out. As part of its broader climate and industrial objectives, the US has set ambitious targets for deploying sustainable energy technologies, including EVs. At the same time, levies on imported EVs have increased significantly in recent years, in some cases by more than 100 percent. As a result, vehicles that are competitively priced at the point of production may end up costing significantly more by the time they reach US consumers, once taxes, tariffs and distribution costs are factored in.

In other major markets, including Europe and Canada, similar models — with a range of high-tech features such as advanced driver-assistance systems and integrated digital platforms — are often available at lower prices. Of course, cross-market comparisons are shaped by multiple factors, including government subsidies, regulatory frameworks and shipping costs. Nonetheless, the effect of current US trade policy is to make it more difficult for US consumers to access lower-cost alternatives at a time when affordability remains a pressing concern.

Survey data suggest that many US households are increasingly focused on value for money and would welcome a wider range of EV options. Expanding the variety of available vehicles could accelerate adoption, support environmental goals and ease financial pressures on households. However, current policies limit the availability of such options.

There is substantial empirical research on how tariffs affect consumers. Studies by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York indicate that US consumers and businesses, rather than foreign producers, have borne most of the costs of tariffs imposed since 2018. Similarly, the Kiel Institute for the World Economy found that tariffs function much like a consumption tax, with the burden falling largely on domestic consumers.

Industry projections provide further insight into how trade policies may affect consumers. According to the National Automobile Dealers Association, trade-related costs could raise vehicle prices by several thousand dollars. For many households, a car represents the second-largest expenditure after housing, meaning even modest price increases can significantly affect affordability and access.

As former White House economic adviser Gary Cohn has observed, tariffs can have regressive, tax-like effects, as lower-income households tend to spend a larger share of their income on goods.

At a macroeconomic level, tariffs can also contribute to higher prices. Several analyses suggest that recent trade restrictions have added upward pressure to the cost of various consumer goods, compared with historical trends. Tariffs are only one of several factors influencing inflation, including supply chain disruptions, energy prices and monetary policy, but they remain a policy tool with clear and measurable effects. Goldman Sachs, for example, has estimated that tariffs have had a modest but noticeable impact on inflation, with some effects likely to persist.

At the same time, tariffs have generated substantial government revenue, estimated to have exceeded $200 billion in 2025. This underscores the trade-offs involved in their use.

Trade barriers affect not only prices, but also the way firms compete. In more open markets, companies tend to improve efficiency, invest in innovation and adapt to evolving consumer preferences. When access to international competitors is constrained, these incentives may weaken. Over time, this can lead to higher prices, slower technological progress and fewer choices for consumers.

This raises important questions about how to balance short-term support for the domestic EV industry with long-term competitiveness. Policies that strengthen domestic production capacity can be valuable, particularly in emerging sectors. However, sustained success overseas often depends on the ability to compete on both quality and cost.

Trade policy discussions frequently emphasize the importance of safeguarding national interests, supporting job creation and strengthening industrial capacity. These are important objectives. It is equally important to consider the perspective of consumers, who bear much of the cost of these policies.

A well-designed trade strategy seeks to balance multiple objectives: safeguarding national security, supporting domestic industry and promoting consumer well-being. Achieving this balance is complex and requires ongoing adjustments as economic conditions evolve. Policies that preserve a degree of openness and competition — while advancing strategic priorities — are more likely to support innovation, efficiency and broad-based growth.

In this context, careful consideration of the long-term effects of trade policies can help inform better decisionmaking. By weighing impacts not only on industry, but also on prices, consumer choice and household purchasing power, policymakers can better align trade strategies with the broader goal of sustainable and inclusive economic development.

Ultimately, trade policy should be evaluated not only by how effectively it advances national objectives, but also by how it shapes everyday economic experiences of consumers. Ensuring that markets remain dynamic, competitive and responsive to consumer needs is an essential part of that broader goal.

The writer is the executive vice-chancellor, American president, and distinguished professor of social science at Duke Kunshan University in Kunshan, Jiangsu province. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Demographics, urbanization changing housing market

MAIN STREET
By Sheng Songcheng

China's real estate sector is undergoing a historic transition. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), the industry entered a phase of deep adjustment after more than two decades of rapid expansion. The development model that once powered growth — characterized by high leverage, rapid turnover and heavy borrowing — has over time become difficult to sustain.

The structural conditions underpinning the market have also changed. China's demographic profile is shifting, urbanization is slowing as it approaches maturity and the marginal contribution of property investment to economic growth has diminished.

Recognizing these shifts, policymakers have begun outlining a new direction for the sector. Since mid-2023, policy discussions have repeatedly emphasized a consistent approach: strictly control new supply, optimize the existing housing stock and improve the quality of housing. Most notably, central authorities have explicitly prioritized the goal to halt the decline and move toward stabilization in the property market, elevating its stabilization to a strategic level vital for the broader macroeconomy.

As China enters the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), the policy framework has become increasingly clear. The half-decade has a distinctly layered objective. First, it seeks to address risks that accumulated during earlier phases of rapid growth, including risks related to real estate, local government debt and smaller financial institutions. At the same time, it aims to establish a new institutional foundation for the housing sector — reforming systems governing property development, financing and sales, while expanding the supply of affordable housing.

Guided by this shift in thinking, China's real estate industry may undergo a fundamental transformation, gradually returning to its core purpose: providing housing rather than serving primarily as a vehicle for financial expansion.

The most urgent task in this transition is risk management and reduction. Since China launched its market-oriented housing reforms in 1998, real estate has played an essential role in improving living conditions and driving economic growth. Yet the current challenges facing the sector are not simply cyclical fluctuations. Rather, they reflect deeper balance-sheet pressures emerging across the economy.

Over the past two decades, China's property sector developed a distinctive high debt-high growth model. Developers expanded aggressively using leverage; households increased borrowing through mortgage lending; and local governments relied heavily on land-transfer revenues to support fiscal spending. Together, these dynamics pushed up property prices while accumulating financial vulnerabilities.

Today, the situation has reversed. As housing and land prices enter a downward cycle, the liabilities associated with those assets — bank loans, bonds issued by developers and other forms of debt — remain rigid. This mismatch between declining asset values and fixed debt obligations has weakened balance sheets across the sector. Faced with such pressure, economic actors tend to shift their priorities from maximizing profits to minimizing risks. Income that might otherwise be used for investment is instead directed toward debt repayment. At the same time, falling property values reduce household wealth, which in turn dampens consumption and weakens domestic demand.

Managing this process requires caution. During periods of market stress, developers may attempt to sell assets quickly or slash prices in order to generate liquidity and repay debts. While such decisions may be rational for individual firms, if many companies simultaneously act in the same way, the collective effect can be destabilizing. Prices may fall sharply, liquidity may dry up and the industry may enter a negative cycle, in which declining asset values intensify debt pressures.

The appropriate strategy is therefore not a sudden correction, but a gradual adjustment — what Chinese policymakers often describe as "exchanging time for space". Real estate's share of China's GDP increased from 4.5 percent in 1998 to about 6.2 percent in 2025. The sector will continue to play an important role in the economy, but its functions can be recalibrated. By guiding key indicators such as the price-to-income ratio, rental yields and vacancy rates back toward sustainable levels, the industry can gradually shed the excessive financial and speculative functions that accumulated during the boom years.

Building a new development model requires strengthening the institutional framework governing property development, financing and sales. One important reform is the strengthening of the project-company system, ensuring that each real estate project operates as an independent legal entity and that funds raised for a project are used exclusively for its construction and delivery. Another reform involves establishing a "lead bank" system for project financing, under which a designated bank — or banking consortium — oversees financing and manages project cash flows. This mechanism builds on China's housing-project "white-list" program introduced in 2024, which has already supported financing for millions of homes.

Another significant change concerns the way homes are sold. For many years, China relied heavily on the presale of unfinished apartments. Increasingly, however, policymakers are encouraging the expansion of completed-home sales so that buyers purchase homes that are ready to occupy. This approach reduces delivery risks and helps restore confidence in the market.

At the same time, many developers are exploring asset-light business models, in which they provide development management services rather than funding projects directly. As the industry undergoes adjustment, this shift toward professionalized services may become an important path for sustainable development.

Another critical task is strengthening the affordable housing system. Housing possesses both a market dimension and a social-welfare function. International experience demonstrates the value of a dual-track system. Singapore's public housing program, administered by the Housing and Development Board, houses more than 80 percent of the city state's residents, while Germany's cooperative housing sector helps stabilize rental markets.

China faces its own structural challenges. The country's urbanization rate has surpassed 66 percent, and housing difficulties for new urban residents and young people coexist with underused housing stock. Expanding the supply of affordable housing and improving related institutional arrangements will therefore be essential to creating a tiered housing system that combines social protection with market efficiency.

Housing remains, above all, a place to live. Ensuring adequate housing for vulnerable urban households through public housing programs is therefore a core social objective. For lower-income families, shared-ownership housing and other mechanisms can help lower the threshold for homeownership. For households seeking improved living conditions, market-based housing can meet demand under appropriate policy guidance.

Better housing quality also contributes to human capital. The concept of building "good homes" — safe, comfortable, green and technologically advanced — reflects a growing recognition that housing quality matters as much as housing quantity. Large-scale urban renewal and the renovation of aging residential communities will not only improve living conditions, but also generate new investment opportunities.

Finally, housing also affects consumption through its influence on household wealth. Because more than 90 percent of Chinese households own homes, declining property prices can reduce perceived wealth and dampen spending. Policymakers are therefore exploring ways to enhance the efficiency of housing-related financial tools such as China's housing provident fund system, whose accumulated balances remain substantial but underutilized.

For all these reasons, stabilizing the housing market remains essential. Sales and investment have continued to decline in recent years, and restoring stability will be crucial for both the sector itself and the broader economy. Major metropolitan areas — where economic activity is concentrated and population inflows remain strong — will play a key role in anchoring the market. At the same time, improving housing quality, expanding affordable housing, and strengthening fiscal and financial support will help rebuild confidence.

China's real estate sector is now standing at a critical juncture between old and new development models. The path forward is increasingly clear: address accumulated risks, stabilize the market, and establish a new framework centered on quality, sustainability and housing as a basic social good. Achieving this transformation will not only determine the future of the industry itself, but also shape the stability and long-term development of China's economy.

The writer is former director-general of the Financial Survey and Statistics Department at the People's Bank of China. The article is translated from a piece originally published in Financial Market Search. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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CHINA

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

New project aids Xinjiang's energy goals

Region to leverage resources to support transition plans and boost green power

By **FANG AIQING** and **MAO WEIHUA** in Urumqi

The Dashixia Water Control Project in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region has recently completed the installation of major components for all three power-generating units and the construction of its power transmission system.

Located on the Kumarak River in Aksu prefecture, the project features the world's tallest concrete-faced sand-gravel dam, rising 247 meters high, equivalent to an 80-story building.

According to the construction team, the 750,000-kilowatt project is scheduled to reach full impoundment by the end of May, with its first unit set to be commissioned in late June. All three units are expected to become operational in August, generating nearly 1.9 billion kilowatt-hours annually — enough to power 650,000 households.

Chen Wendeng, a project leader at China Gezhouba Group No 3 Engineering Co, which is in charge of construction, said that in addition to its water conservancy and ecological benefits, Dashixia's power generation will save about 764,000 metric tons of standard coal and cut carbon dioxide emissions by 2.45 million tons annually. It will also ease demand pressure in southern Xinjiang during summer and autumn and help smooth fluctuations from wind and solar power.

The Dashixia project epitomizes Xinjiang's energy transition and sets a promising tone for the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

At a news conference in Urumqi on Saturday, regional leaders outlined Xinjiang's goal of leveraging its rich energy resources to support national energy security while boosting new energy and green power over the next five years.

Erkin Tuniyaz, chairman of the region, said Xinjiang will tap the potential of oil, gas, minerals, coal and new energy resources to foster large-scale industrial clusters, while using green electricity to accelerate industrial upgrading, develop emerging sectors such as computing power, and promote the integration of artificial intelligence with various industries.

Zhang Yingchun, the region's executive vice-chairwoman, said that during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, Xinjiang will accelerate construction of a new energy-based power system, promote local consumption of green electricity and speed up the building of outbound power transmission channels.

Official data shows that Xinjiang's installed new energy capacity surpassed 170 million kW in February, accounting for more than 60 percent of the region's total installed capacity. One-third of Xinjiang's outbound electricity, transmitted to 22 provincial-level regions, is green power.

Zhang said greater emphasis will be placed on advanced equipment manufacturing — including power transmission and transformation equipment and energy storage equipment — as well as green hydrogen.

Regarding green hydrogen, Xinjiang will pursue breakthroughs in production, storage, transportation and application technologies, build a full hydrogen energy industrial ecosystem and promote integrated development of green hydrogen, ammonia and methanol, she said.

A green hydrogen project in Yiwu county, Hami, has recently been added to Xinjiang's approved list of local new energy consumption projects. The project plans to install 690,000 kW of new energy capacity along with supporting energy storage facilities.

Using a wind-solar hybrid off-grid model, the project will rely entirely on self-generated green electricity for hydrogen production without connecting to the public power grid. It marks Xinjiang's first off-grid project directly linking green power generation with end users. Once completed, the project is expected to produce about 30,000 tons of green hydrogen annually while consuming approximately 1.65 billion kWh of green electricity each year.

A Xinjiang Daily report quoted the regional development and reform commission as saying that the project will effectively address difficulties involving grid connection and renewable energy consumption in remote areas.

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Stitches of friendship

An international visitor shops for traditional Miao embroidery products during a cultural exchange event at the Jianwai Diplomatic Residence in Beijing's Chaoyang district on Sunday. Featuring intangible cultural heritage displays, family activities and live performances, the event brings together embassy representatives, residents and inheritors of intangible cultural heritage from China and abroad.

FU TIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

SPC urges personal data infringement crackdown

By **CAO YIN**
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China's top court has emphasized the need to safeguard data security and protect individual rights in the digital age, releasing a landmark case in which two individuals were sentenced to prison for acquiring and disclosing more than 900 million pieces of personal information online.

As technology rapidly advances, criminal methods have become increasingly sophisticated and concealed. "This has resulted in the theft, leakage and sale of sensitive personal data, often due to inadequate data management by certain governments, enterprises and online platforms," the Supreme People's Court said on Friday.

It noted that some criminals exploit acquired personal data to engage in activities such as fraud, extortion and "box-opening", which severely harm individuals' personal and financial safety and pose substantial threats to public security and social order.

In the highlighted case, two defendants surnamed Lin and Wang illegally obtained personal information through encrypted communication tools and other internet channels between 2023 and 2025. Lin acquired more than 600 million pieces of personal data, while Wang obtained over 300 million pieces.

They subsequently sold the information for profit through methods including virtual currency payments. Lin also collaborated with another individual to set up an online group with more than 2,000 members, using the personal data to insult and abuse others.

After hearing the case, the Beijing Haidian District People's Court ruled that Lin and Wang were guilty of illegally obtaining and selling personal information, classifying their offense as "extremely serious".

Lin was sentenced to seven years in prison and fined 70,000 yuan ($10,287), while Wang received a prison term of five years and six months and was fined 50,000 yuan.

The Beijing court said such malicious acts of publicly disclosing others' personal information, including names, identity card numbers, phone numbers, home addresses, whereabouts and social media accounts, are known as box-opening, or doxing. The acts are often followed by inciting netizens to launch verbal attacks, harassment and cyberbullying.

"Doxing brings great physical and mental harm to victims and their families, as well as severely disrupts public order and social stability," the top court said. It underscored that the security of personal information concerns everyone, adding that cracking down on such acts is necessary to maintain order in cyberspace and foster a healthy online ecosystem.

On Friday, the top court also unveiled details of four other notable cases involving personal information infringement, calling on judges to continue intensifying the crackdown on the crime and related offenses such as extortion and fraud.

In one case, from February to July 2022, two defendants jointly funded the purchase of a Trojan program online and implanted it into an official booking website to illegally obtain more than 290,000 records of HPV vaccine appointment information stored on the site.

The pair then rented a virtual host server, uploaded the illegally obtained website source code to a domain service space and created a counterfeit phishing website. They organized a team with different assigned roles and used a platform to mass-send messages claiming successful vaccine appointments, luring recipients into clicking phishing links.

By impersonating doctors and customer service representatives, they used tactics such as price adjustments, priority appointments and reordering for discounts to defraud 51 victims of more than 580,000 yuan.

The two ultimately received prison terms of 12 years and 11 years and nine months, respectively, for personal information infringement and fraud, along with fines, according to a ruling by a court in Jiangsu province.

The top court said the criminals took advantage of women's health concerns by breaching a legitimate vaccine appointment website to illegally acquire personal information, which they then used for targeted fraud.

"Such actions warrant severe penalties due to their grave violation of personal data security and property rights," it added.

Nation to assess Beautiful China implementation

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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New measures to assess whether provincial-level governments are effectively implementing the Beautiful China initiative were unveiled recently to promote green and low-carbon development.

The Beautiful China initiative is a national development strategy aimed at fundamentally modernizing the country's ecological environment by 2035 through a comprehensive transition to green production, low-carbon lifestyles, and large-scale nature restoration.

Issued by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council on Thursday, the measures also aim to advance the initiative on all fronts and achieve a comprehensive improvement and fundamental transformation in the country's ecological environment quality.

The assessment will adopt a 100-point scoring system, with results classified into four grades: excellent, good, pass and fail, according to a document released by the central authorities.

The document said the office of the leading group for the Central Ecological and Environmental Protection Inspection and the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, together with other relevant departments, will formulate detailed scoring rules for the assessment.

The evaluation will cover the implementation of responsibilities related to the initiative, progress in achieving annual major targets and fulfilling annual priority tasks, as well as fund utilization performance and public satisfaction levels.

The annual major targets include the condition of the atmospheric environment, water and marine ecological environments, soil ecological environment and overall ecological quality, along with the prevention and control of solid waste pollution.

In a media release, the office highlighted a goal-and-problem-oriented approach as one of the key principles guiding the assessment. It said key and directional indicators will be established to address major ecological and environmental concerns strongly voiced by the public and to steadily intensify the campaign against pollution.

The document also noted that provincial-level governments that fail the assessment must take corrective measures promptly and complete rectification within the required time frame.

In addition, principal heads of provincial-level Party committees and governments may be summoned by the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee and the office of the leading group for the Central Ecological and Environmental Protection Inspection if rectification is not completed within the prescribed period.

According to the statement, China's top anti-corruption authorities, together with the Organization Department of the CPC Central Committee, will pursue accountability in accordance with regulations and laws where necessary.

The measures were made public as teams from the Central Ecological and Environmental Protection Inspection arrived in seven provincial-level regions, including Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces, for monthlong environmental inspections.

A key focus of the inspections will be whether these regions have properly implemented the Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, according to a media release from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, where the office of the leading group for the inspection is based. Inspection teams are typically led by ministerial-level officials.

The team assigned to Liaoning, for example, is headed by Cai Mingzhao, a member of the Standing Committee of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference.

Central authorities unveiled guidelines in early 2024 to comprehensively promote the development of a Beautiful China.

By 2027, China is expected to see a continued decline in the total discharge of major pollutants and further improvement in ecological environment quality, according to the guidelines.

And by 2035, green production methods and lifestyles will be widely adopted, carbon emissions will have peaked and entered a steady decline, and the country's ecological environment will have fundamentally improved.

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Visitors embrace Wuhan's tech-led factory tourism

By **ZOU SHUO** in Beijing and **LIU KUN** in Wuhan

Jia Meng's twin daughters thought they were visiting another museum during a recent outing. Instead, they walked into a room where a humanoid robot tried again and again to perfectly place a teapot in the center of a mat.

"It wasn't very good at pouring tea," said Jia, a 42-year-old freelancer from Wuhan, Hubei province. "But it's an emotionally stable perfectionist. It never got frustrated. My girls were glued to it for half an hour."

The robot in question, at the Hubei Humanoid Robot Innovation Center in Wuhan's Optics Valley, has hands that cost 50,000 yuan ($7,351) each.

It's still learning — human testers guide it, and the data is carefully selected for training. One day, the robot may teach itself, something Jia is looking forward to witnessing.

But the real jaw-dropper for Jia and her twins came later at the city's twin computing center — one of the few places in China that houses both a supercomputing center and an artificial intelligence computing center.

With 400 petaflops of computing power — one petaflop equals the combined might of 2 million laptops — the "smartest brains" of the digital age can find a specific star among 200,000 celestial bodies in just 100 seconds with 100 petaflops of power. Without that power, the same task would take over 100 days.

Jia's family was among the first wave of visitors to Optics Valley's new industrial tourism routes. Since March 12, the valley — known as one of China's tech heartlands — has launched nine themed tours, including "super factory", "AI" and "low-altitude economy".

The East Lake High-tech Development Zone, also known as the Optics Valley of China, has hosted more than 50 group tours in just a few weeks, according to the Wuhan bureau of culture, sports and tourism. "It's running smoothly, and the heat is only rising," an official with the bureau said.

The most popular stops are fully automated assembly lines, blacklight factories running without a single human worker and laser cutters that engrave metal in a flash, the official said. "Many parents and children told us it's the first time they turned textbook knowledge into real-life scenes," the official said.

Turning live production lines into tourist attractions is not easy. Factories have added glass-separated walkways, interactive screens and emergency exits. Each site pairs an engineer with a professional guide.

"Production first, safety above all," the official said. Visitors never enter the actual workshop, never touch equipment and never disturb a single bolt. "Staggered booking, capped group sizes and unified escorting — that's how we balance industry and tourism."

Asked whether visitors might one day assemble simple products or operate mini machines, the official said, "Definitely."

Plans include DIY laser bookmark-making, smart-device simulators and even a chance to try robot-like assembly tasks. "We want to move from watching to participating, from checking in to truly experiencing," the official said.

Finance professional Xiu Lei, 26, from Wuhan took his young daughter to Optics Valley expecting a quiet weekend. He left feeling like a child in a tech "wonderland". At Wuhan HGLaser Engineering Co, he saw a missile casing with a laser-welded seam — a sharp contrast to manual welding. "The guide pointed to it, and I felt a surge of pride," he said.

Then his daughter scribbled her name on a piece of paper. Seconds later, a laser engraved it onto a bookmark, and a machine automatically packed it into a gift box. "She was over the moon," Xiu said.

Next came Xiaomi's smart factory. Riding a sightseeing cart through spotless workshops, Xiu watched an air conditioner unit roll off the line every 6.5 seconds. The "lights-out factory" ran fully automated — products packed themselves, took an elevator and moved to a warehouse.

Wuhan is not alone. In Liuzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, tourists make their own snail-rice noodles. In Jiaozuo, Henan province, visitors make DIY milk tea at the Mixue factory. In Renhuai, Guizhou province, home to Moutai, industrial A-level scenic spots hosted more than 10 million visitors in 2024, generating 12.86 billion yuan in tourism revenue.

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Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Shanghai's raccoon dogs find urban coexistence 'sweet spot'

City's residents learning to live with wild animals previously thought of as pests

By **ZHOU WENTING** in Shanghai
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Wang Fang, director of the Institute of Biodiversity Science at Fudan University, announces the research team's findings in the latest annual census on wild raccoon dogs in Shanghai on Nov 30. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Human-wildlife conflict in Shanghai has dropped significantly as the city's raccoon dog population stabilizes between 3,000 and 5,000 individuals, according to the most recent survey data.

While the protected species is expanding into new districts, localized densities in residential areas have fallen to record lows, driven by improved waste management and public education, a survey published on Nov 30 by the Shanghai Forestry Station, Fudan University, and the Shan Shui Conservation Center shows.

Despite their "bandit mask" markings, raccoon dogs are not actually raccoons. Instead, they are ancient members of the *Canidae* family, making them cousins to foxes and wolves. Native to East Asia, they are the only members of the dog family that hibernate during the winter.

Though their numbers have declined in Shanghai, they are still spreading and migrating in the coastal metropolis, with the city's Putuo district recording their presence for the first time last summer, and Chongming Island recording them for the first time a year ago.

"These changes can mainly be attributed to the improvement in the ecological management, including community waste disposal and stray cat feeding over the past three years, and the deepening of public education and outreach," said Wang Fang, director of the Institute of Biodiversity Science at Fudan University.

"Also, the sense of security provided by real survey data has been key in changing the perceptions and attitudes of many in the public. A rising number of residents are adopting the mindset of coexistence, as the population of the animal is under control and poses no direct threat to humans," he said.

Raccoon dogs are generally not aggressive toward humans and do not view people as prey. In an urban environment, they are shy, nocturnal and highly conflict-averse.

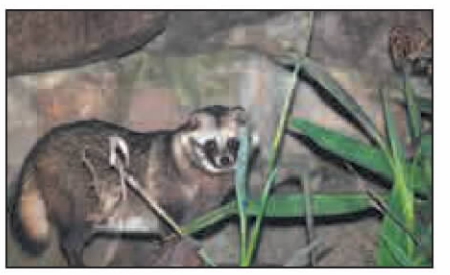
Since 2022, the Shanghai Forestry Station, the Fudan institute, and the Shan Shui Conservation Center, a Beijing-based non-profit environmental organization, have jointly conducted annual surveys on raccoon dogs throughout the city.

The results of the latest survey included public concerns such as whether raccoon dogs getting sick would have an impact on humans living in the same community.

Shanghai's urban environment has abundant habitats and food resources, and with less competitive pressure from other species, this attracts some wild animals into the city.

According to the results of the surveys, Shanghai's thousands of raccoon dogs are distributed in more than 300 areas across the city, primarily in residential compounds and urban green spaces.









Left: Researchers take blood samples from a raccoon dog on Aug 29, 2024. **Center, Right:** Raccoon dogs are found during the team's field investigations.

Based on results collected from online questionnaires and citizen hotline complaints last summer, 112 residential communities across the city reported raccoon dog activity between January 2024 and April 2025.

Over 500 citizen volunteers and professionals conducted multiple comprehensive surveys in those communities spanning nine districts. They collected transect survey data covering more than 560 kilometers and gathered 440 questionnaires regarding residents' attitudes toward raccoon dogs.

Their results showed that raccoon dogs were either sighted during field investigations or reported by residents in 102 of the communities surveyed, with the distribution density at an average of 0.41 raccoon dogs per hectare. This represented the lowest level recorded in the past four years, indicating that the issue of high raccoon dog densities in residential community environments from four to five years ago has improved.

In comparison, the density of wild raccoon dogs in areas like the Qinling Mountains in Shaanxi province, the Taihang Mountains in northern China, and Sichuan province in Southwest China is typically below 0.1 raccoon dogs per hectare. Their density in Shanghai is comparable to that in the wild.

Zhao Xi, a leading member of the research team, said residents are beginning to understand that raccoon dogs are nocturnal and have little overlap with human activity times. "They have very low proactive aggression toward people, therefore many residents have come to accept their presence in the city," Zhao said.

The latest survey indicates a shift toward positive sentiment, with residents' emotional inclination toward raccoon dogs rising to 3.06 on a 5-point scale (where 1 is least favorable and 5 is most favorable). This represents a 25 percent increase since 2022, a trend mirrored by the fact that nearly 80 percent of residents now find the animals tolerable — up from just 50 percent three years ago.

According to Li Zirong, deputy director of the Shanghai Forestry Station, such results reflected the high population densities led to increased social attention and conflict.

Experts believe that 2023 marked a turning point, with public tolerance beginning to rise due to improved ecological management and extensive public education and awareness campaigns.

Wang said that in previous years, the team had held at least 20 on-site meetings in neighborhoods with a high prevalence of raccoon dogs, involving residents and street managers. As a result, they gradually developed a feasible response plan for communities.

Efforts include distributing brochures in communities, explaining to residents which departments to contact when encountering a large number of wild animals, and what measures to take when encountering wild animals with skin diseases, said Wang.

Experts highlighted that improper kitchen waste management and cat food feeding have been identified as major factors increasing raccoon dog visibility.

The latest survey showed that in residential compounds where cat food is fed to stray cats, the number of raccoon dogs observed was 2.75 times higher than in those where stray cat feeding does not occur. In residential compounds where both issues were poorly managed, the number of raccoon dogs was 3.32 times higher than in those where both issues were well managed.

Data from all four residential compounds continuously surveyed over four years clearly reflected the importance of managing such human behaviors. In an apartment complex in Songjiang district, the raccoon dog density decreased from 5.8 raccoon dogs per hectare in 2022 to 2.22 per hectare last year.

Li Min, a resident at this apartment complex in the district's Sijing town, said she used to complain a lot about raccoon dogs rummaging through the trash around her home, but later she learned that it was because residents were feeding them cat food and were not disposing of garbage properly.

"As long as we don't feed them and keep our distance, they won't cause trouble. We can coexist peacefully," said Li.

This trend is not unique to Shanghai. Wild animals are increasingly moving into cities across China. Species such as wild boars, leopard cats, civets and otters are now frequently found in urban environments. Experts attribute this shift to the completion of major urban construction projects, which have allowed local ecosystems to recover and become more hospitable to wildlife.

As in Shanghai, there are teams in cities such as Beijing and Nanjing in Jiangsu province, among others, conducting research on the urbanization of wildlife.

"This requires both research and management, which is something that must be done for the civilized management of megacities, regardless of people's perceptions of a particular wild animal, its size, or its level of cuteness," Wang said.

Wang's team is leading a multi-year national initiative involving 10 research groups to study how wild animals like raccoon dogs, squirrels and hedgehogs adapt to city life. A critical component of the project is the development of oral vaccines to prevent the spread of animal-borne diseases. The team plans to launch a pilot program in Shanghai's Songjiang district, where they will distribute these vaccines in the environment for animals to find and consume.

"Through community co-management, government involvement and vaccine development, we aim to clarify the relationship between humans and wildlife. Shanghai's approach in this is scientific and civilized, and quite advanced on an international level," he said.

Metropolis aims to double its parks by 2036

By **ZHOU WENTING**

Following the milestone achievement of being China's first city with 1,000 parks, Shanghai authorities have announced an ambitious expansion plan to construct 100 new parks this year and 1,000 more over the next decade.

The initiative aims to bring the city's total to over 2,000 by 2036, ensuring that residents in this high-density metropolis of 25 million have greenery at their windows and parks at their doors.

Residents have praised this initiative as a reflection of the city's commitment to integrating ecological beauty and community comfort into urban planning.

Parks are an essential element in urban ecology, contributing to the city's resilience by cooling and humidifying the air, purifying pollutants, reducing noise and managing stormwater.

During the 2022 renovation of Peace Park in Hongkou district, an additional 8,700 cubic meters of temporary storage space were created to absorb and filter rainwater from the surrounding area of approximately 36 hectares, which exceeds the area's total drainage capacity.

Parks also serve as connectors for fragmented habitats. Chinese water deer have reappeared in parks in Pudong New Area and on Chongming Island in the past few years, demonstrating the ecological benefits of such green spaces.

The Shanghai Landscaping and City Appearance Administrative Bureau said that in Shanghai, where land resources are scarce, expanding urban areas to create more public spaces is not feasible. Under the dual pressures of space and cost, tapping into existing potential has become a core strategy for a new wave of park construction.

Over the past few years, the city has developed replicable strategies for expanding green spaces, with several high-quality parks serving as models for improving public well-being. As of last year, all 36 parks planned along the city's Outer Ring Road had been completed. In addition to another 14 that were previously put into operation, they form a continuous ecological corridor across the city.

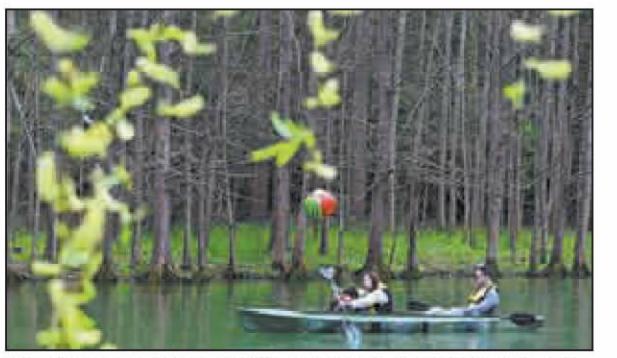
A notable example among them is the Xuhui West Bank Nature Art Park, which opened in August as Shanghai's 1,000th park. It used to be a 100-meter-wide greenbelt along the Outer Ring Road, serving as a buffer between urban and suburban areas.

Today, spanning roughly 300,000 square meters, which is equivalent to the size of more than 40 standard soccer fields, the park features sunflower fields, native vegetation, playgrounds, amenities like vending machines and accessible restrooms. It continues to serve its ecological isolation function, but has also become a popular leisure and recreational destination for residents and families.

"It was once a dense forest here that we could only look at from a distance. Now, it's a place where we can stroll and enjoy flowers anytime. I can't help but marvel at the full sense of happiness in our current lives," said 65-year-old Zuo Shuhua, a retired teacher who has lived nearby for over two decades.

To maximize existing resources, Shanghai opened 187 plots of green spaces formerly belonging to government agencies and public service units to the public by last year. The Minhang district government office complex removed its walls and barriers, transforming around 2,900 sq m of auxiliary green space into a garden that is now open to the public around the clock.

In addition to tapping into existing resources, the construction of pocket parks has made green spaces easily accessible right at residents' doorsteps. Shanghai plans to build or renovate 40 pocket parks within this year.



A family paddles at Shanghai Century Park in Shanghai on March 22. CHEN HAOMING / XINHUA

One such pocket park built in recent years is located in Xuhui district near Shanghai Stadium. Transformed from a once-neglected area, it now provides a convenient passage from the residential area to the metro station, reducing a detour of over 10 minutes to just a two-minute walk through the park. It also features flower shops and leisure seating areas, making it a recreational haven for the elderly and children.

Residents have expressed their hopes that parks can have designated areas for pets, allowing pet owners to comfortably and happily visit the parks with their furry friends.

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LIFE

Dance brings ancient war alive

Revived production tours China, blending martial arts and opera to explore conflict and power through movement, **Zhang Kun** reports in Shanghai.

Blending modern dance with Peking Opera, martial arts and traditional Chinese music, the dance theater production *Under Siege: The Full Story of Farewell My Concubine* is on a four-month tour in 23 cities around China.

Choreographed and directed by Yang Liping, the production premiered in 2015 and draws on one of the most famous battles in Chinese history.

Designed with international audiences in mind, it has since been performed more than 300 times at home and abroad, earning a reputation as a landmark in China's contemporary dance theater scene.

The show has attracted critical praise overseas, described by The Guardian as rich in "hallucinatory images", while The Times noted its "urgency, vividness and wit".

A newly revived production was launched in April. Starting with three shows in Kunming, Yunnan province, it has traveled through Shanghai, Suzhou in Jiangsu province, and Wenzhou and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

Three shows were staged at the Poly Theatre in Beijing on Saturday and Sunday. The production will conclude its tour in August in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

Yang explains why she chose to revisit the work now. "I feel there is a hunger for artworks of power and strength."

Over the past decade, she says, many dance productions in the country, including her own *Peacock*, have focused on grace and feminine beauty. Audience tastes, however, are changing.

"I think they want to see works that reflect real Chinese power," she says.

The narrative centers on the struggle between Xiang Yu and Liu Bang following the fall of the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC). Their final confrontation in Gaixia ends in tragedy, as Xiang, defeated after a tactical ambush, chooses suicide over escape.

This historic rivalry between Xiang and Liu has long been retold in Chinese literature and performance, forming the basis of the Peking Opera classic *Farewell My Concubine*. The story reached global audiences through the 1993 film directed by Chen Kaige, which won major international awards.

Yang's version, however, shifts the focus. Rather than retelling the battle alone, she explores the emotional and psychological tensions experienced by individuals caught in cycles of power, desire and fear.

"People of all times and all over the world can relate to such situations," she says.

"Dance tells stories through the body, which is universal. You don't need language to understand it."

Xiang emerges as a tragic hero with serious personality flaws that make him a great theatrical character.



The dance theater production *Under Siege: The Full Story of Farewell My Concubine*, choreographed and directed by Yang Liping, is touring the country. By blending modern dance with Peking Opera, martial arts and traditional Chinese music, it presents a unique narrative of one of the most famous battles in Chinese history. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"He is stubborn and indecisive, yet also deeply loyal and righteous, willing to break rather than bend," Yang says. "It is this roughness and authenticity about him that endears the character to audiences."

The production's visual language reinforces that intensity.

Designed by Oscar-winning artist Tim Yip, the stage features installations by Liu Beili, including thousands of suspended pairs of scissors that shift above the performers, creating a constant sense of danger.

On one side of the stage, a paper-cutting artisan remains visible throughout the performance, crafting symbolic shapes tied to the unfolding narrative. The presence of this traditional craft adds a quiet counterpoint to the larger spectacle.

In keeping with Peking Opera conventions, Xiang's concubine is portrayed by a male dancer. As the story reaches its climax, the stage fills with vast cascades of red feathers — a striking visual metaphor for blood, sacrifice and loss.

From the Chinese folk art of paper-cutting to the costume design and choreography that borrow from traditional Peking Opera, Yang "adopted wide-ranging elements of Chinese culture ingeniously, and gave *Under Siege* a strong Eastern essence and contemporary avant-garde temperament", reads a review by Xuan Jing for the Shanghai-based Wenhui Daily.

Yang has explored digital innovation, including dance video projects using artificial intelligence, but she remains firm about the value of live performance.

"Technology can create impressive effects, but real experience cannot be replaced in a live dance show," she says.

For her, the physical immediacy of dance is essential. "People want to see real combat, where each strike of the fist hits hard on human flesh."

Also, the simple and strongly expressive stage design plays an important role during international tours, Yang says.

The production has performed in theaters old and new, on stages of various sizes. The full set of props can conveniently fit into three standard container trucks, which is cost-efficient for international transportation, according to Wang Yanwu, the producer of the show.

Yang, now 67, continues to shape China's dance landscape.

Born in Yunnan province, she rose to prominence with her 1986 work *Spirit of the Peacock*.

She later created *Dynamic Yunnan*, a large-scale production featuring local folk artists such as singers, dancers, and instrumentalists, which has been performed more than 7,000 times since 2003.

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Caffeine and creativity meet along the North Bund

By HE QI in Shanghai
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During the May Day holiday, the 2.3-kilometer riverfront at Shanghai's North Bund in Hongkou district was filled with the aroma of freshly brewed coffee as crowds flocked to the 2026 Shanghai International Coffee Culture Festival.

Nathan Manfredi, marketing director of Phil & Sebastian, a specialty coffee roaster in Canada, attended the festival for the first time, and was overwhelmed by the enthusiasm.

"We're sharing coffee stories and learning about local coffee culture, and we can see people in China are crazy about coffee," Manfredi says.

Running from April 30 to May 4, the festival's main venue hosted nearly 300 brand booths and over 20 international coffee brands. The event was divided into international, industry chain, cross-border integration, and interactive experience zones.

Standout draws included a slate of Shanghai-style signature coffee creations from Jin Jiang International Holdings' luxury hotel portfolio: the Hudec Orange Sparkling Iced Americano paired with Park Hotel Shanghai's iconic palmier and the nostalgic Lacovo (Le Kou Fu) Mocha from Golden Tulip Shanghai Rainbow, both emerging as the event's most popular photo spots.



A variety of latte art is showcased at the festival.

"Shanghai's coffee festival is more than a local celebration; it serves as a global bridge, connecting the world's top coffee players with China's booming market and reflecting the city's inclusive and open character," says Xu Jian, deputy dean of the China Institute for Urban Governance at Shanghai Jiao Tong University.

Xu unveiled the 2026 China Urban Coffee Development Report at the opening ceremony.

According to the report, China's coffee industry reached 354.9 billion yuan ($52 billion) in 2025, marking a 13.3 percent year-on-year increase. Shanghai alone now has 10,336 coffee outlets, surpassing the 10,000 mark.

"In 2017, Shanghai had 5,500 coffee shops, already the highest number in the world. By 2025, the figure had almost doubled in less than 10 years, and the city has consistently remained at the top globally," Xu says.

"Coffee shops have become part of daily life in Shanghai, as common as convenience stores."

The festival has also become a core gateway for global specialty coffee brands to enter the Chinese market, attracting coffee professionals from around the world.

Oskar Garberg, co-founder and CEO of Standout Coffee and a Swedish barista champion, was among the festival's notable guests.

"I've been to numerous coffee shops, and the standards are extremely high here. People in Shanghai have grown up with a deep knowledge of tea from childhood, and they have embraced coffee remarkably well," Garberg says.

The niche Stockholm-based roaster has built a loyal following in Shanghai. "We are a small Swedish brand from the other side of the world, but people recognize us here, and I even sign autographs," he says, making no secret of his expectations for the Chinese market.

"I would love to open a shop here. We will soon have two locations in Stockholm, and Shanghai could definitely be our third."

Park Hyeri, co-founder of Aery, an 18-month-old specialty coffee brand from Busan, South Korea, made her festival debut.

"Shanghai's coffee culture is unique because every shop has its own signature pairing or combination," Park notes.

"That isn't very common in South Korea, so we introduced combo sets here to show Shanghai customers our personality, even though we don't offer them in our Korean stores."



The 2026 Shanghai International Coffee Culture Festival draws a big crowd during the May Day holiday. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Beyond industry insiders and hardcore enthusiasts, the festival drew a steady stream of casual visitors and expats.

Edvard Tadevosyan, a Swedish finance major at Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, said he was surprised by the city's vibrant coffee scene. "I never imagined Chinese people would love coffee this much. The coffee shops here are amazing."

The festival's influence continues beyond the main event, with Shanghai rolling out a "one district, one feature" coffee culture map across all 16 districts and the Lin-gang Special Area in Pudong.

Nearly 50 flagship events and over 40 international professional competitions are planned in the coming months, alongside citywide promotions at more than 6,000 merchants.

Bookstores, cinemas, museums and commercial districts are also joining the festivities with themed activities and consumer incentives.

Li Junfeng contributed to this story.

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LIFE



Taki Li presents a selection of limited-edition cocktails created for the Symposia cocktail series at Bvlgari Hotel Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Mixology at the world's best bar

Taki Li's approach to creating cocktails and customer service has shaped her drinking spot into a top nighttime destination, **Li Yingxue** reports.

On a busy night, Taki Li barely looks up. Her hands move instinctively — measuring, stirring, adjusting — each action precise and economical. There is no excess, no wasted gesture. Even at full capacity, with orders stacking and voices rising, she remains composed. It is this restraint, more than flair, that defines her.

It also explains why, at a moment when Bar Leone HK sits at the top of The World's 50 Best Bars 2025 by the namesake academy since 2009, Li has become one of the most closely watched bartenders in the industry.

Recently, that attention has extended beyond Hong Kong. As part of the Symposia cocktail series at Bvlgari Hotel Beijing, the 35-year-old bar manager brought her approach to a different audience — less as a showcase, more as an exchange. The format was collaborative, built around shared ideas rather than individual signatures.

For Nicola Turturro, director of the bar and restaurant at the hotel, what stood out was not just technical ability, but presence. "Very natural hospitality. She is super engaging and always smiling. Even though the bar was packed with people waiting outside, she was very calm and elegant in her movements."

That balance — between intensity and ease — is central to Li's practice. "It's a huge pleasure and honor to have her with us," Turturro adds. "She brings something, and we bring something. The two menus join together to create the drinks."

A meeting of philosophies

For Li, collaboration begins with alignment rather than contrast. "This time we used Amaro, which has floral notes, as one of the main ingredients. It fits very well with our identity as an Italian bar."

The four drinks she presented follow a clear logic: classical foundations, restrained execution, and subtle contextual references. One, Amber Night, draws directly from its surroundings. As Turturro explains: "It is inspired by the pine trees we have outside. We use a liquor made with pine needles and rum to remind guests of the warmth of our hospitality."

The emphasis is not on novelty, but coherence.

This focus on understanding how elements come together was not something she developed overnight. In fact, Li's path into bartending began with uncertainty rather than intention. "My first shift behind the bar was as a part-time server in a tiny spot," she recalls. "A guest ordered an amaretto and I hadn't expected the almond hit to be so strong and, unsurprisingly, he complained."

The moment could have passed as a routine mistake, but it became a turning point. "The bartender pulled out all the bottles and showed me how it was done," she says. "He explained the flavors, how everything comes together. I was hooked."

At the time, Li was still a student, working without any clear sense that it might become a career. The experience triggered a deeper curiosity — one that stayed. After graduating, she stepped behind the bar full time, beginning what would become a long-term commitment to the craft.

"I hadn't expected it to become something so serious," she reflects. "But once I started learning, I realized how much there is behind every drink."

With a background in design, she brings a strong sense of structure and detail to her work. "My design background taught me creativity and an eye for beauty. The number one rule is to be mindful of details."

Her early career was shaped in leading hotel bars in Hong Kong, but after years within that system, she sought a different environment.



Taki Li, bar manager of Bar Leone in Hong Kong, which is currently ranked No 1 on The World's 50 Best Bars 2025 list.

"I'd only worked in hotels, and I wanted the experience of a stand-alone bar, to work more closely with a team, which felt almost like family."

That transition came in 2023, when she joined Bar Leone's opening team in Hong Kong under Lorenzo Antinori, a signature mixologist from Rome.

Bar Leone's concept is built on cocktail popolari — a return to accessible, classical drinking. The bar avoids complex machinery and modernist techniques, focusing instead on fundamentals.

For Li, this framework sharpens rather than limits creativity.

"I prefer classic styles, focusing on reducing elements to their essence. With limited elements and steps, creation becomes a different kind of challenge."

Her process begins with structure. "I usually start with a classic I want to nod to, then build around it with flavors, ingredients, or a concept I want to explore."

Balance remains central. "The right garnish not only makes the drink look good but also lifts the whole experience," she says.

A place with strict standards

At the bar, volume and precision operate simultaneously. The bar fills quickly — often within the first hour — and maintains a steady flow until closing.

"It's a high-volume state," Li says. "We have strict standards — drinks must be delivered within 8 to 10 minutes."

Maintaining consistency under pressure requires coordination. "Teamwork is very important, guests don't interact with just one person." As bar manager, Li's role is to align the team's rhythm as much as its output.

For Li, technical skill is secondary to interpersonal ability. "Personality is more important than technique," she says. "Technique can be trained. Personality is core."

She distinguishes between competitive bartending and daily service. "Competition is a one-way presentation, daily operation is two-way communication."

There, the experience is structured around this interaction. "Guests step into the bar and the drink is the last thing they experience." What precedes it — conversation, guidance, atmosphere — is equally critical.

"We want guests to feel like they have been invited into our Italian home."

The spot's rapid rise has amplified expectations. Asia's No 1 in 2024, followed by World's No 1 in 2025, has placed the bar and its team under sustained global attention.

"When we got Asia's No 1, I was more nervous. When we got World's No 1, I kept telling my colleagues: 'Hold me, don't let me cry!'"

The recognition carries wider industry weight. As Turturro notes: "It doesn't happen every day that a bartender from the number one bar in Asia creates a cocktail with you."

Yet Li remains focused on the original intent. "We want to be a neighborhood bar, not just a place people wait in line for."

Her priorities are shifting toward leadership and development. "In the past 10 years, I focused on bartending. In recent years, I moved into management. I enjoy it."

Collaborations like the Beijing guest shift suggest a broader trajectory.

As Turturro observes: "Guests now look for the story behind the drink, they want to understand why."

Li's answer remains consistent: strip away the unnecessary, focus on balance, and build connections. "If my bartender is happy, the drinks will be good," she says.

It is a simple principle — one that, in her hands, is executed with exacting precision.

Contact the writer at liyingxue@chinadaily.com.cn

Archives reveal centuries-old ties with Naples

NAPLES — From local college names to street names, archives reveal close links between the southern Italian port of Naples and China over the centuries, serving as witnesses to the development of cultural exchanges between the two nations.

Luigi Carbone, Naples' city councilor and president of the City Council's commission for culture, tourism and productive activities, says that the ties between Naples and China are deeply rooted in history.

It has "become part of our DNA", says Carbone.

With a winding lane named "Salita dei Cinesi" (Chinese Slope), Naples became home to the Collegio dei Cinesi (Chinese College) almost 300 years ago, when it was founded by Italian missionary Matteo Ripa.

Serving as a painter and translator for the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) royal court, Ripa returned to Italy in 1723 and established the college with a clear mission: to overcome language and cultural barriers by nurturing truly inclusive, cross-cultural talent.

The college later turned into one of the earliest institutions in Europe to systematically teach Chinese language and culture.

After several name changes, the college evolved into the University of Naples L'Orientale, remaining a leading center for Sinology studies in Italy.

According to Antonella Vurchio, a librarian at L'Orientale, the library's earliest core collection came from the Collegio dei Cinesi.

Roberto Tottoli, rector of the university, says the "illuminating legacy" of Collegio dei Cinesi went directly to L'Orientale. In his view, Chinese language and culture studies have been the university's mission from the beginning.

Tottoli says the university's cooperation with Chinese institutions has expanded from language teaching and history to international relations and archaeology. It has signed multiple memorandums of understanding with Chinese partners and entered into cooperation with the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

In addition, the Confucius Institute at L'Orientale has promoted cultural exchanges, people-to-people understanding, and friendship between China and Italy.

Valeria Varriano, director of the Confucius Institute at L'Orientale, says many Italians are first drawn to traditional Chinese culture, and are then surprised by China's vitality.

The institute has become a hub in Naples that connects schools with the university and promotes exchanges between Chinese students in Italy and Italian students, adds Varriano.

Wu Junru, the Chinese director of the Confucius Institute of Naples, says the institute serves not only as a language-teaching body but also as a platform for cultural exchanges.



People watch a lion dance during a Chinese New Year celebration in Naples in 2022. XINHUA

Italian student Davide Saracino says figures such as Matteo Ripa and Marco Polo helped build bridges across civilizations in their era, and it is up to younger generations to continue their work.

XINHUA

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LIFE






From left: Students at Dahejia Primary School post sticky-note messages to welcome pianist Lang Lang. The school is nestled against the mountains near the Yellow River. Students listen attentively during Lang's music class. Students use drawings to express their understanding of music. PHOTOS BY BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY

Healing in a major key

Pianist Lang Lang brings artistic inspiration and emotional comfort to children recovering from earthquake trauma, **Bai Shuhao** reports in Linxia, Gansu.

In mid-April, pianist Lang Lang sat at an electronic keyboard inside a classroom at Dahejia Primary School, a small rural school tucked beneath the snowcapped ridges of the Qilian Mountains.

Outside, the Yellow River flowed quietly across the Loess Plateau. Harsh sunlight streamed through the classroom windows. Inside, Lang's fingers drifted over the keys, the notes flowing through the room like water finding its course.

The children listening might not fully realize that the man before them was one of China's most internationally celebrated musicians. Many had never attended a live piano performance. They just knew that the music sounded beautiful, and that the keyboard in their classroom could produce sounds they had never imagined.

"When class ended, they didn't want to leave," says Zhang Zhengyun, the school's music teacher, who taught the lesson alongside Lang. He is one of the few full-time music instructors in the entire county.

Dahejia Primary School is located in Jishishan county, Linxia Hui autonomous prefecture in western Gansu province — an autonomous county where ethnic groups account for roughly two-thirds of the population. Long affected by poverty, the county was removed from China's national poverty list in 2020.

But three years later, disaster struck. On a winter night in December 2023, a magnitude-6.2 earthquake shook the region, followed by more than 400 aftershocks. Many homes built of adobe or brick collapsed; in some villages, as much as 70 percent of the residences were damaged. Dahejia Town, where the school stands, was among the hardest-hit areas.

After the earthquake, the school building remained standing but was deemed unsafe. For months, students attended classes in temporary prefabricated shelters. A new campus was later constructed, tripling the school's size and upgrading its facilities. Today, it serves 510 students across 12 classes.

When Lang arrived this spring, children were running on a newly laid rubber track during their physical education class. Word of his visit spread quickly. Within minutes, students gathered around him, curious and excited.

They know his name well and affectionately call him "Uncle Lang". On the third floor is a music classroom he donated.

The Lang Lang Arts Foundation first donated a piano classroom to a school in Jishishan in 2021. In 2025, the initiative expanded through a partnership with the Ant Foundation and One Foundation and educators from Beijing Normal University, introducing music courses designed specifically for rural schools. Altogether, 22 schools and 35 teachers in the county received music training, while the number of equipped music classrooms grew to eight.

Inside Dahejia's music room stand five electronic keyboards, along with tambourines, triangles and hand drums. Before every class, students rush in, tapping the black-and-white keys.

"Most of them can't perform yet," Zhang says. "But the instruments spark their curiosity."

That curiosity is precisely the goal. In Jishishan, where villages are widely scattered across mountainous terrain, some remote teaching sites serve only three to five students. Teachers are often responsible for multiple subjects and music education, when it exists at all, may amount to little more than playing popular songs through classroom speakers.

"The biggest challenge is the shortage of trained music teachers," says Bu Xiaomei, an associate professor at Beijing Normal University who helped design the online curriculum after conducting field research in the region.

Providing a dedicated music teacher for every teaching site, she explains, is unrealistic. Instead, the program trains existing teachers to deliver structured, high-quality lessons supported by prepared materials and recorded instruction.



Above: Lang Lang poses for a group photo with students at Dahejia Primary School. BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY **Below:** At the end of the class, Lang performs Mozart's *Turkish March*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The curriculum introduces basic music theory, singing, and simple piano accompaniment, with deliberately modest expectations intended to ensure that every child has access to an instrument.

"The goal is to teach them to use the piano to play simple harmonies and accompany their own singing, so that every child gets a chance," Bu says.

During the class, Zhang divided students into groups and asked them to draw musical notes on paper as a challenge for Lang, who then improvised based on their creations.

Earlier that day, Lang had noticed vendors selling roasted sweet potatoes on the street. He turned the image into a playful improvisation, composing a rustic melody inspired by local life — prompting laughter and instant recognition from the children.

He also invited volunteers to play alongside him. Nearly every hand shot up.

One girl carefully played a melody, note by note, while Lang listened attentively. A boy with no musical training joined next. Starting with the familiar tune *Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star*, Lang guided him through simple harmonies.

"See?" he told the class. "Playing the piano isn't so hard."

The lesson ended with Lang performing Mozart's *Turkish March*, while students clapped to the rhythm in unison. He left them with a challenge: to learn the piece before his next visit.

"It feels a little like a spring outing," Lang says, looking toward the surrounding mountains.

Music, he says, has shaped his own life. "It made me a better person.

"No matter how well they play, something more important is letting them find the joy of music."

For many children here, music serves another purpose. Most of the current students experienced the earthquake firsthand. Some still jump at sudden noises. Many families relocated after losing their homes, forcing children to adapt to unfamiliar surroundings.

Schools provide psychological counseling, but teachers say music classes also help students process their emotions.

"Music gives children a way to express their feelings," Bu says.

Zhang agrees. After completing the required lessons, he often allows students to choose activities freely. "The most important thing is that they feel happy."

The enthusiasm is unmistakable. Students wait outside the classroom before the teacher arrives, constantly asking when the next music class will begin. Many eagerly volunteer to sing or perform, disappointed when they are not chosen.

Zhang himself pursued music despite family opposition when he was young. He still draws inspiration from the works of Franz Liszt, whose music, he says, gave him strength during difficult times. He hopes to pass that same energy on to his students.

After the lesson, students from eight local schools gathered for a small concert with Lang. Children from Dahejia sang in clear, bright voices. Before performing, they explained the meaning of their county's name: Jishishan — "stones accumulating into a mountain". They said they are just like those small stones.

The impact of such a project is difficult to measure. Few students here are likely to become professional musicians. But Lang says he understands that.

"Of course I would be happy if some became pianists, but what is more important is that music grows with them, helping them become better versions of themselves."

Before his arrival, students had covered a whiteboard with handwritten messages for him:

"Thank you for coming. We are very happy."

"I want to become a musician."

"I want to be successful like you — even though I play basketball better than the piano."

As he said goodbye, Lang left them with a phrase he often shares with students, one that reflects his own journey:

"May your dreams come true."

Contact the writer at baishuhao@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Heartthrob to hard hat, star becomes a green storyteller

By **XING WEN**
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Seven years ago, Zhang Jiawei was just another electrical engineering student at Nanjing Normal University until a talent scout spotted his towering 6-foot-3 frame and camera-ready face.

Today, that same young man, now known by his stage name Zhang Linghe, commands nearly 19 million followers on the Chinese social media platform Sina Weibo and 5 million on Instagram, where each of his posts easily garners a million likes.

The would-be electrical engineer now lives under spotlights, walks red carpets, and spends his days on drama sets.

Recently, however, he appeared in the documentary *The Answer Is Earth*, produced by Warner Bros. Discovery and the international environmental organization WildAid.

The film explores how China's green shift is quietly reshaping people's daily lives against the backdrop of the country's latest nationally determined contributions, announced on Sept 24, 2025.

The targets to be met by 2035 include reducing economywide net greenhouse gas emissions by 7-10 percent below peak levels, raising the share of nonfossil energy to over 30 percent, and expanding wind and solar power capacity to more than six times that of 2020, aiming for 3,600 gigawatts.

In the documentary, Zhang puts on a helmet and arc-flash protective clothing to work alongside real electrical engineers on an offshore booster station, finally getting the chance to experience the career path he could have taken.

"Today, some of the most important stories in the world are about climate change, energy, sustainability, and our changing relationship with nature," says Vikram Channa, vice-president of Warner Bros. Discovery.

"These are defining issues of our time. And yet, these stories are often told through facts and figures — not always in ways that people can truly connect with. That is where storytelling has the power to make a difference.

"Our goal was to make these stories feel accessible, intimate and real, especially for younger audiences, while staying grounded in scientific truth."

Channa believes Zhang is the right person to guide the journey because of his engineering mindset, which allows him to reconnect with the logic and natural curiosity behind these subjects.

"Through that journey, science becomes personal. Engineering becomes relatable. And the future becomes something audiences can feel part of," Channa says.

The documentary brought Zhang to his home province of Jiangsu, where he visited an offshore wind power cluster, a pumped-storage hydroelectric plant, and an ecological dredging platform on Taihu Lake to get hands-on experience in different jobs, including as a wind farm operation and maintenance engineer, dredging boat captain, fisherman, waste collector, and eco-agricultural technician.



Actor Zhang Linghe experiences jobs including equipment maintenance at an offshore booster station (left) and visits a wind turbine manufacturing plant (right) in a recently released documentary focusing on the country's low-carbon transition. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



He used language familiar to young audiences to explain electricity-related terms.

For instance, he described a pumped-storage hydroelectric plant — which uses surplus electricity to pump water to an upper reservoir and then releases it to generate power during peak demand — as a "giant power bank".

Zhang believes being a "translator" in the documentary can help more people understand what energy transition and low-carbon living really mean.

In the first episode, he lived and ate alongside electrical engineers at the offshore booster station, helping them carry out routine inspections and maintenance work on the station's power equipment.

Zhang observed that when the cameras were rolling, the engineers tended to speak in formal, academic terms. But once the crew paused, they would open up like family. And it was in those off-camera moments that he truly felt their passion for the job.

"I could feel how proud they are of what they do," Zhang says.

"They also want more young people to join them, but too many are chasing trendy majors and jobs instead. This documentary should show that this career has a real future and that it's truly making a difference for the environment."

Already known for a number of highly popular drama series, Zhang has been widely discussed for his good looks as a rising heartthrob in the entertainment industry.

"Because many people got to know me through my characters, and then started following me as a person, I want to make good use of that attention and influence to bring more positive things to everyone," he says.

"I hope that while following me, audiences can also see the country's energy transition, make small changes to their own lifestyles, and contribute to the progress of our energy transformation."

He also hopes more people can see his truest version. He describes this documentary as bringing him back to the world of Zhang Jiawei.

"In the past few years of becoming Zhang Linghe, I gradually drifted away from Zhang Jiawei, the young man surrounded by kind people, who was always willing to express his innermost, truest feelings."

He says that after becoming a star, he insulated himself from his old life, but this documentary journey brought him back to his hometown, doing work he was once familiar with, and most importantly, being surrounded by a group of very real people.

"The journey made me more willing to open up."

He once chose to become an actor partly out of a desire for freshness as he didn't want a conventional nine-to-five job. Acting allows him to live as a new character every few months, collaborating with different actors and directors.

However, by seeing and experiencing the daily lives of people doing different jobs throughout the journey, he has developed a completely different perspective.

"What they're doing is truly changing people's lives, changing the future of our country, and changing their own futures," he says.

"Sometimes, whether something feels fresh or not really depends on whether you can find something challenging in the repetitive work."

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Los Angeles Lakers' LeBron James takes a pass as Oklahoma City Thunder's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander defends during Game 3 of a second-round NBA playoffs series on Saturday in Los Angeles. With a 131-108 victory, the Thunder's unbeaten playoffs run puts it on the brink of another Western Conference finals. AP

Thunder over LA looks ominous

Lakers on the brink of elimination, as Cavs claw one back against the Pistons

LOS ANGELES — The Oklahoma City Thunder used another explosive second half to beat LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers 131-108 on Saturday, pushing the Lakers to the brink of elimination in the NBA playoffs.

Ajay Mitchell scored 24 points and handed out 10 assists without a turnover to help the Thunder take a 3-0 stranglehold on the best-of-seven Western Conference semifinal series.

The Lakers will host Game 4 on Monday, when they'll try to become the first NBA team to rally from 3-0 down to win a playoff series.

"I'm not giving up on this series," defiant Lakers coach JJ Redick said. "We're going to try to win on Monday. We're going to try to extend the series and we're going to try to take this thing back to OKC."

The Cleveland Cavaliers, fueled by 35 points from Donovan Mitchell and clutch shooting from James Harden, avoided falling into a similar hole, grabbing a crucial 116-109 Game 3 victory over the Detroit Pistons to cut their series deficit to 2-1.

The Cavs, who dropped the first two games in Detroit, remained unbeaten at home in these playoffs.

But the Lakers, still without injured scoring champion Luka Doncic, couldn't conjure a crucial win as their series shifted to Los Angeles.

Rui Hachimura led the Lakers with 21 points and James added 19 points, six rebounds and eight assists.

But, the Thunder's depth was just too much for the depleted Lakers.

"That's the strength of their team," Redick said.

With reigning Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander connecting on just seven of 20 shots from the floor, second-year guard Ajay Mitchell — starting in place of the injured Jalen Williams — stepped up.

"He's a gamer," said Gilgeous-Alexander, who finished with 23 points.

"It might be a shock to the world, but this is no shock to us."

Just like in game two, the Lakers took a two-point lead into halftime, this one largely on the strength of 11 first-half three-pointers.

But, again, the Thunder exploded in the third period, opening the second half on a 21-6 scoring run.

After that, it was all but over. The Lakers connected on just eight of 22 shots from the field in the third period, including just one from three-point range.

The turnovers began to mount for the Lakers, and the Thunder pushed its lead to as many as 27 in the fourth quarter.

Gilgeous-Alexander said the Thunder, which swept the Phoenix Suns in the first round, will "absolutely" be aiming to finish off the Lakers on Monday.

"We would never want to waste an opportunity to win a basketball game," he said. "We've got to do the same thing we did in the first three games — be the aggressor, play the right way together."



Cleveland Cavaliers' James Harden (right) shoots against Detroit Pistons' Tobias Harris in Saturday's game. AP

Harden on target

In Cleveland, Donovan Mitchell added 10 rebounds and four assists. Harden, a three-time NBA scoring champion, scored nine of his 19 points in a tight fourth quarter, drilling a trio of baskets that included a dagger trey that pushed Cleveland's lead to four with 25.9 seconds left.

"I love it," Harden said. "When your number's called, just getting to my spots. And it's something that I work on literally every day.

"Don(ovan) Mitchell had been working so extremely hard throughout the course of the game, (I was) just trying to find opportunities to help him. So that last minute-and-a-half, two minutes, however long it was, it presented itself. And for me, (it's about) just going out there and taking my shots."

Harden, who drew plenty of criticism for turnovers in the clutch in the first two games, kept the Cavaliers in front with big shots. The 17-year veteran hit a 16-foot step-back jumper to extend the lead to 108-104. After a driving dunk by Cade Cunningham, Harden made a floating seven-footer to put the lead back up to four.

"Chatter is going to be chatter, regardless," he said. "Whether you do something good, whether you do something bad, you give me opportunities in this fourth quarter, and I take advantage of them."

"It's the James Harden I've seen for however many years he's been in the NBA. That's the James we needed tonight," Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said. "We were searching, and we got some good screenings into the matchups we wanted and he went to work."

Cunningham responded with a 3-pointer before Harden provided the decisive blow with 25 seconds remaining on a step-back 3-pointer while being guarded by Harris to make it 113-109. Robinson was short on a 3-pointer after a timeout and Mitchell made three free throws down the stretch.

The Cavs withstood a 27-point triple-double from Cunningham, who added 10 rebounds and 10 assists.

Cleveland led 64-48 at halftime and pushed the lead to 17 early in the third, before the Pistons clawed back.

Detroit managed to edge ahead with less than four minutes to play before Cleveland responded again.

The Cavs will try to level the series when they host Game 4 on Monday.

AGENCIES

Kerr offered 2-year deal to battle on with the Warriors



Steve Kerr

SAN FRANCISCO — Steve Kerr is giving it another go with Golden State.

Kerr has reached an agreement, in principle, on a two-year contract to continue coaching the Warriors, according to a person with knowledge of the negotiations. Kerr is still yet to sign the new deal, the person told reporters on Saturday night, speaking on condition of anonymity because the contract is yet to be finalized.

The Warriors missed the playoffs for the second time in three years, earning the 10th seed in the Western Conference and eventually losing to Phoenix in the play-in tournament.

Kerr's 12-year coaching run with the franchise has featured four championships and six NBA Finals appearances, including five straight from 2015-19. Kerr shared an embrace with Stephen Curry and Draymond Green near the end of the loss in Phoenix, saying afterward he knew it could be their final time together.

He has a career record of 604-353 and a 104-48 playoffs mark, with Golden State winning its last championship in 2022.

The Warriors were 37-45 this season while dealing with numerous injuries, including losing Jimmy Butler to a season-ending right knee injury in January and Curry's 27-game absence with a right knee injury of his own.

ESPN was first to report Kerr's new contract.

Kerr, 60, got his first coaching job in 2014-15 and immediately guided Golden State to the franchise's first title in 40 years. The Warriors would then begin the next season with a record 24-0 start under the guidance of assistant Luke Walton, as Kerr missed the initial 43 games as his team went on to a record 73 victories. Kerr took a leave of absence to recover from debilitating complications following two back surgeries, then missed time again in 2017, with Mike Brown filling in as Kerr underwent a procedure to deal with a spinal fluid leak.

Green had predicted on his podcast once the season ended that Kerr wouldn't return.

Throughout his coaching career, Kerr has used his platform to speak out against gun violence and social injustice, among other prominent issues. His father, Malcolm, president of the American University of Beirut, was murdered in Lebanon when Kerr, 18 at the time, was a freshman at the University of Arizona.

In March 2018, Kerr took part in the Oakland March for Our Lives. Earlier that same month, he joined Democratic Congressmen Ro Khanna and Mike Thompson — then-chair of the House Gun Violence Prevention Task Force — and students from across the South Bay during a town hall at Newark Memorial High School to discuss gun violence in schools, and cheered the efforts of youth nationwide.

Kerr has said it isn't hard to do double duty as a basketball coach and use his voice as a public figure for those who don't have one.

"I think, in some ways, the balance is presented to us, given what's happening around the country," Kerr said. "I know that when I played, players and coaches were never — maybe not never, but rarely — asked about politics and voting."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

ATHLETICS

Nketia races into Australia's sprinting spotlight

MELBOURNE — From dreams of rugby glory for New Zealand to a Hail Mary shot at the NFL, sprinter Eddie Nketia is now on track to win medals for Australia and take a share of the limelight trained on teen talent Gout Gout.

Nketia clocked Australia's fastest 100m in 9.84 seconds at a US college meet last month, albeit with a tailwind that ruled it out of the record books.

Australians latching onto the enormous potential of 18-year-old Gout and 22-year-old Lachlan Kennedy may now have another star in the sprinting firmament.

For 24-year-old Nketia, who runs for University of Southern California (USC), the buzz back in Australia since his 9.84 at the Mt SAC Relays has been almost as overwhelming as the run itself.

"Honestly, it was genuinely a surprise, because I never expected I could run 9.84 in my life," he told reporters in a video interview from his California base.

"And it's like, 'look at where we're at now'. My name is everywhere back in Australia. And it's a lot to take in. It's insane."

Prior to his run, Nketia had been virtually unknown in Australia, despite the nation's rekindled interest in athletics thanks to the performances of Gout.

Auckland-born Nketia only switched allegiance from New Zealand in December after a mandatory stand-down period from major global events.

He spent much of his childhood in Canberra, but returned to New Zealand to finish high school.

His Ghanaian father, Gus Nketia, was also a sprinter and held New Zealand's fastest 100m (10.11) for 28 years until the younger Nketia eclipsed it with a 10.08 at the 2022 world championships — with the help of his father's coaching, of course.

It was a poignant moment hailed by New Zealand media, but Nketia's relationship with the nation's athletics federation was already strained.

New Zealand has strict criteria for Olympic selection, only picking athletes with a demonstrated ability to finish in the top 16 of their events.



Eddie Nketia (right), representing the USC Trojans, races in a 200m prelim during a Division I Track and Field Championship in Eugene, Oregon, last June. NCAA PHOTOS VIA GETTY IMAGES

In the weaker Commonwealth Games field, only potential top-six finishers are considered.

That policy has rankled more than a few Kiwi athletes over the years, and Nketia publicly criticized Olympic selectors after missing out on Tokyo 2020.

After also missing the 2022 Commonwealth Games in Birmingham, Nketia's mind was made up.

"Circumstances just kept ruining my chances of becoming a better athlete," he said.

Turning his back on his birth nation was a tough decision for Nketia, who remains proud of his Kiwi heritage and was a promising junior rugby player with a dream of playing for the All Blacks.

He ditched the track altogether to join the University of Hawaii's American football program, saying he needed a fresh start.

"It wasn't essentially that I was tired of track. I was just tired of missing tournaments," he said.

At 1.90 meters and about 97 kilograms, the powerfully built Nketia played as a wide receiver before returning to the track with USC.

His USC coach Brenton Emanuel calls him "Incredible Hulk" — gentle off the track, but a beast on it. He believes Nketia could ultimately be ranked among the greats of sprinting.

"He puts his superpower on and he just goes," he told reporters, sitting next to Nketia in the video call.

Nketia wants championship medals and has circled this summer's Commonwealth Games in Glasgow, Scotland, which run from July 23 to Aug 2, on his calendar.

First, though, he wants to smash the 100m 10-second barrier legally during the NCAA season.

Only two Australians, Patrick Johnson (9.93) and Kennedy (9.96), have broken it, while Gout's PB is 10 seconds flat.

Gout is skipping Glasgow, but Nketia envisages a showdown in Australia next year against the teenager and Kennedy.

The prospect of the trio combining on relay squads also has Nketia excited, saying they could make Australia a sprinting power to rival the United States and Jamaica.

"When it comes to world championships next year ... and Olympic Games as well, it's like we're going to go all the way, do what we can to get as many podiums as possible," he said.

REUTERS

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, MAY 7, 2026

Emergency at sea



An ambulance boat carrying crew members wearing hazmat suits approaches the pilot door on the starboard side of the cruise ship MV *Hondius*, off the port of Praia, the capital of Cape Verde, on Tuesday. Three passengers have died and at least five people have been struck by hantavirus on board the Dutch-flagged cruise ship. AFP **See story, page 4**

RMB's role as intl option grows

Recent deals highlight currency's expanding use in commodity trade pricing, settlement

By **ZHOU LANXU** and **JIANG XUEQING**

The renminbi is starting to gain ground in the dollar-dominated global commodity trade, as recent deals highlighted the Chinese currency's expanding role in offering a diversified option for pricing and settlement, economists and executives said.

Breakthroughs in RMB-denominated commodity transactions, regarded as one of the most difficult frontiers for the RMB's global use, may signal a faster phase of the currency's internationalization, as demand rises for alternatives to the US dollar and China's role in global trade grows, they added.

The RMB ranked the fifth in global payments with a share of 3.1 percent in March, up from a sixth ranking in February, as calculated by global financial messaging services provider Swift.

The Cross-Border Interbank Payment System, or CIPS — the primary platform for cross-border yuan clearing and settlement — recently recorded a single-day transaction volume of 1.22 trillion yuan ($179 billion), a record high, according to Shanghai Securities News.

Meanwhile, Reuters reported last month that Indian refiners were settling payments for specific oil cargoes purchased under a US sanctions waiver using the Chinese yuan, while mining giant BHP Group has reportedly adopted a Chinese pricing benchmark in its iron ore trade with China, signaling a broader acceptance of RMB settlement and pricing in commodity markets.

Zhang Bin, a national political adviser and a nonresident senior research fellow at the China Finance 40 Forum, said these developments suggest that the RMB is increasingly providing global trading partners with a more diversified currency option for commodity trade.

"The dollar has long served as a dominant currency for pricing, settlement and investment. However, intensified geopolitical tensions and changes in global economic governance have led some countries to reconsider the assumption that the dollar is reliable," Zhang said. "As countries seek to add an extra layer of safeguard in investment and business operations, the yuan is a particularly promising option, given China's significant and expanding role in global trade and investment."

Huang Yiping, dean of Peking University's National School of Development, highlighted the potential of the RMB in playing a bigger role in commodity pricing, as China is one of the world's largest importers of commodities and a leading exporter of manufactured goods.

"Promoting the use of the RMB to price more of our economic activities is both possible and an indispensable step of RMB internationalization," Huang said.

China launched yuan-denominated crude oil futures trading in Shanghai in 2018, an early step toward expanding the RMB's role in global commodity pricing. In recent years, countries like Russia have increasingly used the Chinese currency in oil trade with China.

"The fundamental conditions for the formation of a 'petroyuan' cycle — in which oil is increasingly priced, settled and reinvested in RMB assets — are gradually taking shape after China has become the world's largest crude oil importer," said Zhang Ming, deputy director of the Institute of World Economics and Politics at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

However, analysts cautioned that how far the Chinese currency's role in commodity trade can evolve may ultimately depend on the depth of China's financial reforms and opening-up, the country's long-term economic strength, and the resilience of the US dollar's dominance.

"Part of the recent increase in RMB usage in commodity trade has been driven by short-term geopolitical factors, and the longer-term trajectory still needs to be observed," said Shao Yu, chief economist at the innovation center of Fudan University's School of Management.

Wu Xiaoqiu, former vice-president of Renmin University of China, said the key still lies in deepening market-oriented reforms to enable freer trade of the currency if a petroyuan system is to be established.

Pan Gongsheng, governor of the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, said China has worked to enhance institutional arrangements and financial infrastructure to support broader cross-border RMB usage to offer more diversified currency choices for all entities.

The yuan's rising role in commodity trade is part of a broader expansion of the currency's international use, with a Deutsche Bank report saying that the process of RMB internationalization is likely to accelerate.

Renminbi assets are becoming increasingly attractive, underpinned by China's strong growth prospects and the rapid development of future-oriented industries, said Stefan Hoops, CEO of DWS — Deutsche Bank's asset management arm.

Hoops pointed to a structural shift in trade invoicing: Whereas the vast majority of Chinese exporter invoices were denominated in US dollars five years ago, a growing share are now denominated in RMB.

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China ready to help restore peace, stability in Mideast

By **ZHAO JIA**
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Foreign Minister Wang Yi said on Wednesday that China is ready to help create the conditions for starting peace talks and play a greater role in restoring peace and stability in the Middle East, as the region stands at a critical juncture between war and peace.

Wang made the remarks in Beijing during talks with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi, whose visit was his first trip to China since the United States and Israel launched attacks on Iran on Feb 28. Before traveling to China, as part of his intensive shuttle diplomacy, Araghchi had visited Pakistan, Oman and Russia in late April.

Since the start of the conflict, Wang and Araghchi have held three phone conversations, maintaining close communication as the situation evolved.

Wang noted that more than two months of fighting has "dealt a severe blow" to regional and global peace and stability.

"China deeply regrets this. A full end to the fighting cannot wait, any resumption of hostilities would be even more inadvisable, and staying committed to negotiations is particularly important," Wang told his Iranian counterpart.

Araghchi briefed Wang on the latest developments in Iran-US negotiations and Iran's considerations in terms of its next steps. He said that Iran will firmly safeguard its national sovereignty and dignity while continuing to build consensus through peaceful negotiations in pursuit of a comprehensive and permanent solution.

Araghchi added that the issue of keeping the Strait of Hormuz open should be properly resolved at an early date.

Iran appreciates China's tireless efforts, which were made in a constructive spirit, to prevent the situation from deteriorating and spilling over, he said, adding that Tehran trusts Beijing and looks forward to China's continued active role in promoting peace and ending hostilities.

Araghchi also voiced hope that China would support the establishment of a new postwar regional architecture capable of coordinating development and security.

Wang told Araghchi that China supports Iran in safeguarding its national sovereignty and security, and appreciates Iran's willingness to seek a political settlement through diplomatic channels.

On the Strait of Hormuz, Wang said that the international community shares a common concern on restoring normal and safe passage through the strait, and China hopes that the parties concerned will respond to global calls as soon as possible.

On the nuclear issue, Wang said that China appreciates Iran's commitment not to develop nuclear weapons, while maintaining that Iran has the legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

China believes that Gulf and Middle Eastern countries should keep their future in their own hands, Wang said. China encourages Iran and more Gulf countries to engage in dialogue and pursue good-neighborly relations, and supports regional countries in building a peace and security architecture based on common participation, shared interests and common development, he added.

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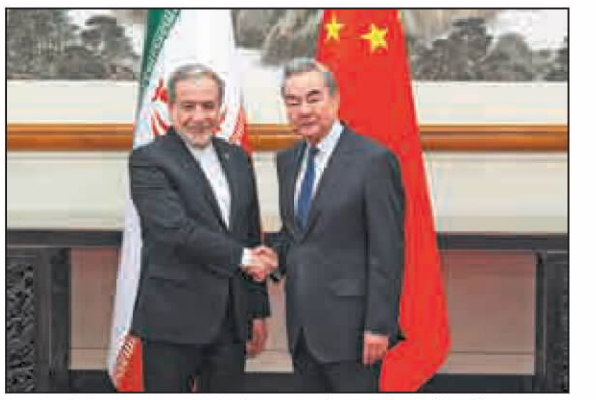

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, meets with Iranian Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi in Beijing on Wednesday. CAI YANG / XINHUA

Poverty alleviation requires constant vigilance, support

WORLD WATCH
By Daryl Guppy

On their first visit to China, Western leaders invariably congratulate China on its successful elimination of absolute poverty. But they may not understand well that poverty alleviation is an ongoing process — for China and other countries as well — that requires constant vigilance and assessment.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) builds on the nation's achievements in poverty alleviation, with the strategy's focus shifting from campaigns of poverty reduction to long-term support and monitoring. The challenge is to ensure that low-income households do not relapse into poverty.

Rural development in agriculture remains a top priority, with the aim of improving farmers' incomes. Increased productivity and more efficient logistics mean farmers can access broader and more competitive markets that offer better prices. The progress from poverty to reasonable prosperity rests on enabling infrastructure and research.

Key focus areas include strengthening high-quality development and technological self-reliance. Continued enhancement of healthcare and social services and increased access to senior high school education all align with the 2035 target of achieving "basic socialist modernization" and the prosperity that goes with it.

Although Western leaders admire China's poverty reduction programs, they fail to emulate them. This failure can be traced to differences in the way that China and some in the West think about poverty and its causes.

Modern rich Western nations prefer to describe poverty in terms of homelessness or disadvantage. This language hides and changes the way Western countries approach poverty alleviation.

*See **Disparity,** page 3*

IN CHONGQING, SPICE BRINGS VARIETY TO LIFE

Visitors keen to know what fuels the mountainous metropolis need look no further than its 40,000 hotpot restaurants

By **TAN YINGZI** and **DENG RUI** in Chongqing

The first bite is a velvet fire: rich beef tallow, dried chili, then the numbing buzz of Sichuan peppercorns dancing across the tongue. On a lantern-lit hillside under loquat trees, a group of Vietnamese hairdressers have just discovered their new obsession.

"This is unbelievable," one whispered, chopsticks already reaching for another mouthful.

In mid-April, more than 20 visitors from Hanoi, Vietnam's capital, made a pilgrimage to Nanshan Mountain's Pipayuan Shiweixian Hotpot Restaurant in Chongqing — a 30,000-square-meter terraced citadel of the hotpot world, which holds a Guinness World Record with more than 800 tables and 5,851 seats.

As dusk fell, golden lights outlined the wooden pavilions, and the scent of the bubbling beef-tallow broth drifted from terraces climbing over 100 meters high.

The Vietnamese visitors gathered around four tables, dipping shrimp paste, beef, tofu skin and mushrooms into dual-flavor pots, with the spicy side delivering the full mala (spicy and numbing) experience.

"It's truly overwhelming," said Do Duc Anh, 39.

"You taste the food and see the whole landscape. It's like eating inside a dream."

But Pipayuan is just one stage in the city's "Hotpot Broadway", which has grown spectacularly against the backdrop of the Yangtze River and soaring green mountains.

*See **Chongqing,** page 3*

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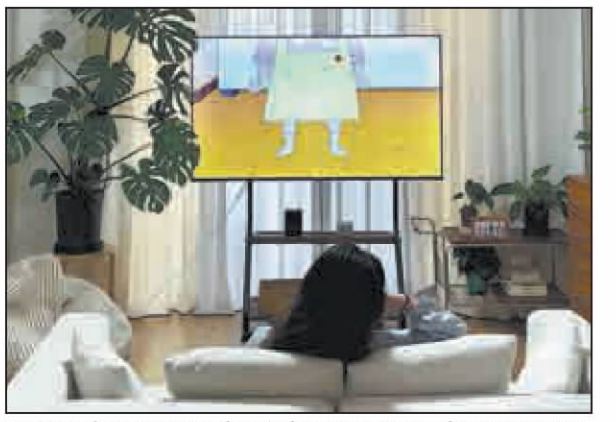

Left: Two women assemble a sofa for their rental apartment in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, to give the room a chic feel. **Middle:** Chen Xiaoli from Hangzhou measures the window space in a sunlit apartment as part of her daily work conducting pre-renovation assessments for low-budget makeovers tailored to young renters. **Right:** Xiao Cai relaxes in her renovated rental apartment in Zhangzhou, Fujian province, where low-cost upgrades have transformed the once bare space into a comfortable home that reflects her daily life. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Renters dig deep for home renovations

Long-term tenants carry costs of upgrades, focusing on quality, comfort, individual style



A woman puts up a shelf in her Hangzhou "pink princess" room in her rental apartment. MA CHONGYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Before-and-after photos show human resources professional Kai Li's redecorated living area in her apartment in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. Kai said the changes have made it a cozy and functional area that supports her lifestyle. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By YU RAN
For China Daily

Facing the prospect of long-term renting in a tough property market, a growing number of tenants are laying out money from their own pockets to upgrade apartments to their individual tastes, experts said.

Wu Tong, an associate professor at East China Normal University's School of Social Development, said the trend signals a deep generational shift.

"Compared with their parents' generation, who often spent decades saving to purchase a home as a symbol of stability and achievement, today's young people place greater emphasis on their immediate sense of well-being," said Wu.

"They care about whether they feel comfortable and happy now, rather than postponing satisfaction entirely to the future."

China's rental housing market is underpinned by 260 million renters, according to the 2024–25 Housing Rental Industry Development Report released by the PBC School of Finance at Tsinghua University in August. In 2024, the total number of rental housing units nationwide reached 91 million, with nearly 90 percent of listings coming from individual landlords.

Rising demand for higher-quality rental housing leaves more than 60 million existing units with potential for being upgraded and renovated, according to the 2025 China Urban Long-Term Rental Market Development Blue Book released in April.

Transforming existing stock into "better homes" has become central to optimizing rental supply, it said. Over 40 percent of renters are willing to increase their budget for higher-quality renovations.

New tenant Xiao Cai, 30, decided that renting would not prevent her from improving her space.

After five years of moving between small shared flats in Zhangzhou, Fujian province, Xiao, who works in the education industry, rented a 60-square-meter one-bedroom apartment for 1,000 yuan ($146.30) a month in 2025.

The budget-friendly unit came with plain white walls and shiny floor tiles, but it had good lighting and a functional layout. By signing a three-year lease, she secured a price well below the local market average.

Six months after moving in, water leakage caused sections of the walls to peel, so she decided to undertake a proper renovation. Her initial budget was 3,000 yuan, but the final cost exceeded 9,000 yuan, equivalent to her monthly salary.

Although she had planned to paint the walls and install stone plastic composite flooring herself, a lack of skills and time led her to hire professionals. To control costs, she purchased most large furniture items secondhand, significantly reducing expenses while maintaining quality.

"The most worthwhile investment was upgrading the walls and floors, because they directly determine the overall quality and comfort of the space. The biggest savings came from buying secondhand furniture and making some items myself," said Xiao.

The renovation made the apartment feel like it belonged to her, she said. "Now I genuinely look forward to returning. The house is rented, but the life inside it is mine. Renovating it wasn't about ownership, it was about creating a place where I can feel stable and at ease," said Xiao.

Comfortable spaces

In Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangdong province's Shenzhen and Guangzhou, the rental population is close to 40 million, accounting for nearly 50 percent of total residents, the blue book showed. More than half of renters said they are willing to accept renting for five years or longer, while nearly 20 percent are open to renting for more than 10 years.

For Kai Li, 28, an HR professional in the AI hardware industry, long-term renting is not a reluctant compromise, but a calculated choice in an environment where property ownership feels distant.

She has moved six times in six years from cramped urban village rooms to progressively larger rentals, with each move reshaping her expectations of a rental property.

Kai currently rents an 80-square-meter, three-bedroom apartment for 7,500 yuan per month in Shenzhen, the most spacious place she has lived in since leaving her hometown in Hunan province. "Over time, I realized I needed to look at whether a space had potential — good light and a workable layout, especially a balcony. I rent with the idea that I will shape it," said Kai.

For many young people who move to a new city, stability is less about property ownership and more about having a space that is a place to cook, host friends, play guitar or simply sit alone, she said.

Before renovating, she hesitated. She negotiated a lease of more than two years at a slightly reduced rent, using the money she saved for the upgrades.

Most of the renovation focused on soft furnishings and spatial zoning. She asked the landlord to repaint the walls, then divided the apartment into areas for dining, working and resting. The total cost exceeded 8,000 yuan, and most of the furnishings and decorations can move with her.

"I didn't want to overspend, but I also knew that if I was going to live here for years, the space had to support my daily life. Otherwise, coming home after work would feel like just another obligation," she said.

The balcony has become her anchor. Shelves assembled by hand hold rows of plants and small vegetable pots. One afternoon, sitting there alone, she felt a quiet sense of achievement.

"Everything here was arranged by myself. Even spending a short afternoon at home helps me recover my energy," said Kai.

Homeownership may feel distant, but comfort and self-definition need not be postponed, she said. "If we can't control the housing market, we can still choose how we live inside the space we have," said Kai.

Data from the 2025 Shanghai Youth Rental Housing Trends Report released by the Shanghai Youth Research Centre showed rental rates of 68 percent among those born after 2000, 64 percent among those born after 1995, and 53 percent among those born after 1990.

In Shanghai, the number of renters aged 20 to 30 reached 76,000 in 2024, marking a 68.89 percent increase compared with 2022.

When choosing rental housing, respondents placed greater emphasis on fundamental living conditions and transport accessibility. Survey data showed that indoor comfort (79 percent), convenient transportation (72 percent), and high housing quality (67 percent) rank as the top three considerations. To secure a better living experience, more than 40 percent said they were willing to pay more for better renovations.

Design innovations

The rising emphasis on comfort is influencing not only tenants but also landlords and designers.

After years of designing brand visuals for major corporations, Chen Xiaoli questioned the meaningfulness of her work.

"In large companies, my work often felt like a small interchangeable part in a vast system. It was hard to see its real impact or feel a clear sense of value," said Chen.

Now 35, and based in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, Chen turned to low-budget soft furnishing renovations in late 2025.

Within three months, she had taken on seven to eight projects, a shift she describes as moving design "from screens into real life".

The transition began unintentionally. After a low-cost renovation of her own rental property to attract more suitable tenants, she shared the results online. The apartment quickly drew attention and inquiries.

"I realized that landlords and tenants choose each other. If a flat looks worn and neglected, tenants won't feel motivated to care for it. But when a space feels thoughtfully arranged, it attracts people who appreciate and protect it. That small investment can completely change the relationship between a person and a home," she said.

Unlike corporate branding work, she said, each renovation directly affects someone's daily routine. Some of her clients are landlords hoping to improve competitiveness in a buyer's market; others are young renters seeking a stronger sense of belonging.

"When a tenant tells me she feels happier opening the door after work, or when a landlord says a property that sat idle for months finally sold after renovation, I can clearly see the impact. My design is not just decoration, but improving someone's everyday life," said Chen.

About 80 to 90 percent of her clients are landlords, while renters — typically aged 25 to 35 — often seek lighter services such as design plans and shopping lists costing around 1,000 yuan. Larger projects range from 20,000 to 40,000 yuan, a scale of work many traditional renovation companies are reluctant to take on.

Her design principles are consistent: prioritize function and movement flow before aesthetics, ensure adequate storage, unify colors and style, and avoid unnecessary waste.

"You don't need expensive items to create beauty. What matters is coherence and practicality. Whenever possible, I encourage clients to reuse what they already have, rather than discard everything," she said.

For Chen, the growing willingness among young people to invest in rental spaces signals a broader shift in mindset.

"Many people used to think renting was temporary and something you just had to endure. But young people today don't see it that way. Regardless of tenure, people still want their living space to reflect dignity and care," said Chen.

Landlords take note

As of March 2026, the hashtag "rental home renovation" had garnered over 2.3 billion views on Douyin, while related posts on Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, exceeded 3.7 billion views.

For savvy landlords, the online enthusiasm is also a barometer of renters' needs.

Zhu Chengjie, 49, moved from Jiangsu province to Shanghai more than two decades ago to start his own business. He gradually settled down in the city and now owns three apartments in Shanghai that he has rented for nearly a decade. Most of his tenants are young office workers fresh out of university, drawn to the city by career opportunities.

Recently, Zhu decided to renovate one of his apartments in Jing'an district.

Instead of simply repainting the walls, he hired a designer to make modest but thoughtful adjustments to the layout and furnishings, partly to justify a slight increase in rent, but also because he had noticed young tenants were placing greater emphasis on the style and quality of their living environment.

"I've noticed that young people today have much higher expectations for their living environment. A clean and functional space is no longer enough. They want warmth, personality and comfort," said Zhu.

His other two tenants have also approached him with requests to make small changes, such as adding houseplants, rearranging furniture or introducing soft decorative elements. Zhu has agreed to most of the requests.

"As long as the structure isn't affected, I'm happy to agree. After all, everyone wants to feel comfortable in the place they live," said Zhu.

When he first arrived in Shanghai, housing conditions were not his priority. Seeing today's young tenants invest time and energy in rented homes, he views it as a sign of changing attitudes. "Many of them are working hard in this city, just like I once did. Wanting to live well while striving for the future is not indulgence, but a reflection of confidence and social progress," said Zhu.

Experts said the change is closely linked to evolving market conditions and generational attitudes toward risk and stability.

Wu, from East China Normal University, noted that this transformation has been shaped by economic changes in recent years. When housing prices were widely expected to rise continuously, homeownership carried strong investment and status implications.

"As the market stabilizes and long-term (property) appreciation becomes less certain, renting is increasingly viewed as a rational and flexible choice. In an environment marked by employment uncertainty and income pressure, maintaining liquidity and reducing long-term financial burdens can provide a stronger sense of security," he said.

Wu added that reducing financial risk does not necessarily mean lowering living standards. Instead of investing heavily in property, many young people choose affordable soft furnishings to improve their living spaces.

"This is a pragmatic way of balancing quality of life with risk management," he said.

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TOP NEWS

Chinese firms in US grow, show resilience

Outlook of companies for countries' economic relations has improved, notes survey report

By **YIFAN XU** in Washington
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Chinese companies operating in the United States remained largely profitable last year despite geopolitical tensions, according to a recently released survey report, which also indicated improved expectations for China-US economic relations this year.

The 2026 Annual Business Survey Report on Chinese Enterprises in the United States was unveiled on Monday in Washington, DC, by the China General Chamber of Commerce-USA and the CGCC Foundation.

The event brought together business leaders, industry experts and others to discuss the survey findings, which revealed remarkable operational resilience among Chinese companies and a pivot toward cautious optimism for the coming year.

According to the report, 81 percent of surveyed Chinese companies in the US remained profitable in 2025, while the share of enterprises with pretax profit margins above 15 percent rose sharply from 7 percent to 21 percent over the past year.

The report noted that the outlook of surveyed companies for China-US relations in 2026 has improved. "In economic and trade relations, expectations of 'moderate deterioration' fell by 24 percentage points from the previous year, while expectations of 'modest improvement' rose sharply to 36 percent," it said.

The CGCC, which was founded in 2005, is the largest independent chamber representing Chinese business interests in the US.

Speaking at the event, Zhang Jianyu, chairwoman of the CGCC, said the chamber's member companies have cumulatively invested more than $140 billion in the US economy, directly creating over 230,000 jobs and contributing to more than 1 million positions nationwide.

Qiu Wenxing, minister and deputy chief of mission at the Chinese embassy in the US, who delivered a keynote address, underscored the need for deeper integration of the world's two largest economies.

Referring to the investment and employment statistics quoted by the CGCC chairwoman, Qiu said: "That is the contribution Chinese companies have already made. We can do more to help America achieve even better lives for its people."

He urged US business leaders to be "quick and agile to seize the opportunity presented by China's development", particularly through the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which offers expanded market access for international investors.

Qiu called on both Chinese and US business communities to "do the right thing instead of the politically correct thing", advocating for deeper engagement and more objective dialogue.

The relationship between China and the US is inherently mutually beneficial, and that characteristic could form the foundation for shared prosperity, he said, emphasizing that the two countries must find a common path based on "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and mutually beneficial cooperation".

"The world depends on a stable, sound and sustainable relationship," Qiu said, adding that efforts made by the two governments to stabilize ties are injecting "positive momentum" and certainty into business operations.

Pin Ni, vice-chair of the CGCC and president of Wanxiang America Corporation, said that any "decoupling" between China and the US would be disastrous for the US due to its inflationary impact.

Amid the expectations of improved economic ties, the survey report highlighted some significant hurdles. Tariff policies remain the primary source of pressure, it said, negatively affecting 79 percent of respondents through rising costs and supply chain disruptions. Geopolitical tensions have also become a "structural ceiling" for brand building, it added.

Ni stressed that successful long-term growth in the US requires a deeper commitment to localization and human capital. "Localization is not just about investing in a company; it is about investing in the local people," he said.

The strategic goal of Chinese companies in the US is to become a permanent and contributing part of the local economy, he added.

Monday's event included a panel discussion on the global rise of Chinese brands. The speakers noted that while Chinese companies make high-quality products, they need to improve their "narrative capability" in order to extend their reach.

Crisis management and storytelling should be combined to successfully navigate local challenges, the speakers added.

Talks: Nation steps up effort to promote peace, encourage dialogue

From page 1

Since the fighting started, China has stepped up efforts to promote peace and encourage talks.

In April, President Xi Jinping put forward a four-point proposal on maintaining and promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, calling for peaceful coexistence, respect for national sovereignty, adherence to the international rule of law, and a balanced approach to development and security — a framework that has guided China's diplomatic engagement in the crisis.

Wang has held nearly 30 phone calls with senior officials from relevant parties, including Iran, Israel, Russia and Gulf countries. He spoke last week by phone with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and the two sides exchanged views on the Middle East situation.

Niu Xinchun, executive director of the China-Arab Research Institute at Ningxia University, said that the US-Iran ceasefire remains fragile, with the risk of renewed hostilities still present.

He noted that prolonged disruption to the Strait of Hormuz could affect global energy supplies and maritime trade, drive up shipping costs, and increase pressure on the global economy.

Li Zixin, an associate researcher at the China Institute of International Studies, said that Tehran may hope that Beijing can convey necessary messages to Washington through bilateral and multilateral channels and convince Washington to exercise restraint.

China's communication with all key parties gives it a constructive role in preventing the ceasefire from breaking down and steering the crisis back toward dialogue, Li said.



Visitors enjoy hotpot in a pool at a water park in Meixin Wine Town, Chongqing, on Aug 2, 2025.
HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Chongqing: Hotpot served in unlikely places

From page 1

Here, dining is steeped in the vibrant, down-to-earth bustle of everyday life.

Nearby, Xianlongjing Hotpot Park sets 600 tables among lotus ponds, bridges and pavilions. At night, the traditional folk spectacle of datiehua, or molten iron fireworks, showers the lake in dramatic performances. As the sparks fly , diners dip on-site harvested lotus roots into the bubbling broth.

For a cooler dining experience, the Underground City Hotpot Restaurant repurposes a wartime air-raid shelter with 4,500 sq m of tunnels, which can seat 1,300 people at a constant 25 C.

Elsewhere, Chongqing offers more unusual places to enjoy hotpot. Set on a rooftop, the Mujiuge Hotpot Restaurant serves its ninegrid pots near a secondhand bookstore. At the Meixin Wine Town in Fuling district, diners can soak in a swimming pool while dipping into bubbling cauldrons — the ultimate summer flex in a city famously known as one of the country's "four furnaces", where summer temperatures routinely soar above 40 C.

Back on the hillside in Pipayuan, eight tables were filled with a Surabaya-based delegation of more than 40 Indonesian entrepreneurs. After touring factories to explore China's development and latest technology, they had been drawn to the eatery by Douyin videos. "It looked like a fantasy," said Fabiola Yonita Santoso, head of the delegation.

At the foot of the hill, Dave O'Toole from Dublin, Ireland, and Eve Adams from Seattle in the United States — a long-distance couple finally reunited — photographed their hotpot moment.

"My hometown is the birthplace of the Guinness World Records," O'Toole said with a laugh. "This is amazing."

Pipayuan manager Gan Yuanchuang said the restaurant now hosts many foreign diners daily, mostly from Southeast Asia. During the loquat season, which runs from late April to early May, diners pick the cool fruit to soothe palates scorched by spicy broth.

The roots of hotpot stretch back to 19th-century river porters, who simmered offal with chili. By the 1930s, two local entrepreneurs, known as the Ma brothers, had opened Chongqing's first hotpot eatery, bringing hotpot from the dockside into a proper restaurant. Today, Chongqing has nearly 20,000 hotpot enterprises and around 40,000 restaurants, with 160,000 of China's 500,000 hotpot spots tracing their lineage back to the city.

The flavor of hotpot has reached over 50 countries and regions. Locals believe that the fiery nature dispels the damp mountain air, while the unhurried, hours-long meals embody the city's inclusive, communal spirit.

Whether on a lantern-lit hillside, floating among lotuses, deep inside a cave, or bobbing in a swimming pool, a trip to Chongqing without dipping into its bubbling, numbing cauldrons would be unthinkable.

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China to attract more global students

By **ZOU SHUO**
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The 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) prioritizes the expansion of high-level opening-up of education and strengthening of the "Study in China" brand, and education officials and university leaders are confident that China is on track to become one of the world's most attractive destinations for international students.

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Wang Daquan, head of the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange under the Ministry of Education, said, "We have confidence in that goal, and we will continue to make efforts to achieve it."

Citing data collected by the center over the past three years, Wang pointed to the steady rise in the number of applicants, greater diversity in the countries of origin of students, a significant increase in the number of self-funded students, and a marked rise in the number of degree-seeking candidates at the undergraduate, postgraduate and doctoral levels.

He attributed this upward trajectory to several distinct advantages, including the strong cost-effectiveness of China's higher education system, with tuition fees in the country being among the lowest globally.

He also highlighted China's stable policies, safe environment, and rapid development — all of which allow international students to share in the country's growth. The expanding global footprint of Chinese enterprises and the Belt and Road Initiative are creating new career opportunities for graduates in their home countries and elsewhere, he added.

According to the latest data from the Ministry of Education, 380,000 international students from 191 countries and regions were studying in China as of the 2024-25 academic year.

Asian students made up the largest share at 61.1 percent, followed by those from Africa at 16.2 percent and from Europe at 15.6 percent. The number of degree-seeking students stood at 205,000, with postgraduates representing 35 percent of that figure. Engineering ranked first among the chosen fields of study, with 27.8 percent of students opting for it.



International students experience traditional Chinese stone-rubbing art, an intangible cultural heritage, in Lingshui, Hainan province, on April 26. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

The Beijing International Studies University exemplifies the shift from scale expansion to high-quality development at the institutional level.

Zheng Chengjun, vice-president of the university, said that as of March 2026, the university's international student population stood at 1,024 — a remarkable 70.6 percent increase year-on-year.

There has been notable growth in the number of students coming from Belt and Road partner countries and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership member states. Leading the enrollment figures are students from Saudi Arabia (177), Morocco (100) and Russia (54), followed by South Korea, Kazakhstan and Vietnam.

Zheng said the university aims to attract more postgraduate students during the 15th Five-Year Plan period. "International students act as a crucial link for trade, tourism and diplomatic relations between China and the world," he said.

By organizing international cultural festivals and improving campus facilities, the university ensures that international students find a true sense of belonging, he said.

Zhao Zhongxiu, president of the University of International Business and Economics, said the university has 70 years of experience in international education and has trained tens of thousands of students from over 170 countries and regions.

He said that deepening educational cooperation is a vital response to global uncertainties. Education cooperation can build cultural identity and people-to-people bonds, helping to forge a community with a shared future for humanity, he said.

In the economic sphere, international students boost two-way trade promotion, play a role in China's outward direct investment and contribute to building home-country human capital. In the field of science and technology, international cooperation in education serves as a major vehicle for talent flow and innovation, enabling global knowledge sharing and collaborative research, he said.

Zhang Hao, a professor at the Beijing Language and Culture University, emphasized that international students are the most powerful medium for telling the story of the real China when they return home.

To attract more students, Zhang urged Chinese universities to strive to reach high global rankings and work for the development of benchmark programs such as high-speed rail, electric vehicles and new energy.

Angelina Sanzharovskaya from Kazakhstan, a master's student majoring in Russian Interpretation at BISU, who has been in China for over three years, said: "The best thing about being a student here is the opportunities the university provides. Through various events, I've visited different cities and learned about the immense diversity of Chinese culture."

El Batoul Nejjaoui from Morocco, a postgraduate student at the same university with nearly 10 years of experience in living and working in China, said that as China plays an increasingly important role globally, she wants an on-the-ground understanding of its economy and urban development.

Disparity: Lack of opportunity leads to poverty

From page 1

If you pretend not to see poverty because it is classed as something different, then you do not need to act with urgency. But the reality is undeniable.

Walk the streets of the central business districts of Sydney or Melbourne, Australia, and you have to step around homeless beggars sleeping on the streets. In the countryside, they huddle in rough camps on the edge of towns. There are around 3.7 million people, or 15 percent of Australia's population, counted as living in poverty, according to a report co-authored by the Australian Council of Social Service and the University of New South Wales Sydney.

In the advanced economy of the United States, the figure is around 37 million, or 11 percent of the population, who live in poverty, according to the US Census Bureau. The percentage is much larger in the UK, where 13.4 million, or 20 percent of the population, are counted as living in poverty, according to UK government figures.

Western countries believe that poverty is the result of personal deficiencies and is not caused by structural economic problems. These unspoken beliefs are often reflected in the abusive language used to describe the poor as lazy, unintelligent or useless deadbeats.

In England, the Victorian era promoted the idea that idleness was a sin and that the workhouse or poorhouse — a place maintained at public expense to house needy people — was the solution for the lazy poor. These are ideas common to Western thinking about the foundation and causes of poverty.

Disgusted by the forced labor of industrializing Britain, German economist and philosopher Karl Marx took a different approach with his insightful analysis of social conditions: The workhouse was not a triumph of morality. It was a feature of an exploitative economic system that required a reserve of poverty-stricken workers to ensure that wages were kept low.

China treats poverty as a function of the economic system, so it has structured the system toward common prosperity and social good.

These are not abstract philosophical differences for academic debate. They are today's drivers of Chinese policy as shown in the details of the 15th Five-Year Plan.

China attacks the structural economic issues that create poverty. Western countries seem comfortable in accepting the assertion that the poor will always be with us, and so they see this as a moral problem and not an economic one.

When poverty is the result of a lack of economic opportunity, then the solution to poverty alleviation is to create the conditions necessary for economic opportunity.

Solutions require equal access to physical infrastructure and to modern digital infrastructure. Digital banking services in China like WeChat Pay and Alipay help expand inclusive financial access, as they generate financial records that can be used for loan assessments. Access rests on the rollout of reliable digital infrastructure.

China's focus is on using new quality productive forces to enable people to stay out of poverty by enabling and supporting economic opportunities.

Past success in tackling poverty means there is a genuine belief that life will improve, and that poverty will become just a memory on the path to a moderately prosperous society. Continued success is an ongoing process.

The author is an international financial technical analyst and a former national board member at the Australia China Business Council. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD

US jet fires on Iranian tanker headed to port

Reports suggest Washington, Tehran moving toward a temporary framework agreement

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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The US military fired on an Iranian oil tanker in the Gulf of Oman on Wednesday as US President Donald Trump intensified pressure on Tehran to reach a deal ending the war.

An American fighter jet fired several rounds at an unladen Iranian-flagged tanker attempting to sail toward an Iranian port, US Central Command said in a post on X.

> "The Americans will not gain anything in a war they are losing that they have not gained in face-to-face negotiations."
>
> **Ebrahim Rezaei,** Iranian lawmaker

Since the two sides agreed to a ceasefire on April 8, their negotiations have yielded no concrete results, and tensions have recently risen again.

Speaking to reporters in the Oval Office on Wednesday, Trump said the US has had "very good talks" with Iran over the past 24 hours. He added there is "never a deadline" for when he expects Tehran to respond to a US proposal for ending the war.

Trump claimed Iran had accepted his demand that it not obtain a nuclear weapon, but there was no official confirmation from Tehran and Reuters reported that no agreement had been reached.

Iran said on Wednesday it was reviewing the new US proposal. Multiple media reports indicated Washington and Tehran were moving toward a one-page memorandum to end the war while deferring complex issues, such as Iran's nuclear program, to later negotiations.

US media outlet Axios first reported a proposed 14-point, one-page memorandum to end the war. CNN, citing an unnamed source familiar with the negotiations, confirmed the information.

The memorandum would declare an end to the war and trigger a 30-day negotiation period on resolving critical issues including nuclear matters, unfreezing Iranian assets and future security arrangements in the Strait of Hormuz.

Iran is still reviewing a US proposal and will convey its response to Pakistan — which has served as the main intermediary between the two sides — after completing its assessment, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson Esmaeil Baghaei said on Wednesday, according to Iran's ISNA news agency.

Iranian lawmaker Ebrahim Rezaei, spokesman for Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Committee, expressed skepticism. He described the text reported by Axios as "more of an American wish list than a reality".

"The Americans will not gain anything in a war they are losing that they have not gained in face-to-face negotiations," Rezaei wrote in a social media post on Wednesday.

The firing occurred after the US launched "Project Freedom", a military operation to guide commercial vessels through the Strait of Hormuz, a vital waterway for oil, gas, fertilizer and other petroleum products.

The US started the mission on Monday but halted it on Tuesday, citing progress in peace talks. Trump called the operation a "humanitarian gesture", saying other countries had asked the US to "help free up their ships, which are locked up in the Strait of Hormuz".

Iran and some analysts have disputed the US claims. Baghaei, the Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesperson, said the waterway had been safe for international shipping before US-Israeli attacks began.

Following the halt of Project Freedom, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps Navy said in a post on X on Wednesday that safe passage through the Strait of Hormuz is possible under "new procedures", though it did not specify what these procedures entail.

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Protesters light flares in the colors of the Palestinian flag during a rally in Athens, Greece, on Tuesday, demanding the release of two activists detained by Israel. LOUISA GOULIAMAKI / REUTERS

UN demands Israel 'immediately' release activists

GENEVA — The United Nations on Wednesday urged Israel to immediately release two activists taken from a Gaza-bound flotilla, and demanded an investigation into "disturbing accounts" that they had been severely mistreated.

Spanish national Saif Abu Keshek and Brazilian Thiago Avila, who are held in a prison in Ashkelon, were among dozens of activists on a Gaza-bound flotilla intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters off the coast of Greece a week ago.

Israel must "immediately and unconditionally" release Keshek and Avila, "who were detained in international waters and brought to Israel, where they continue to be held without charge", UN Human Rights Office spokesman Thameen Al-Kheetan said.

"It is not a crime to show solidarity and attempt to bring humanitarian aid to the Palestinian population in Gaza, who are in dire need of it," he added.

The flotilla's vessels set sail from France, Spain and Italy with the aim of breaking Israel's blockade of Gaza and delivering humanitarian aid to the war-ravaged Palestinian territory.

Keshek and Avila's detention had initially been extended until Tuesday, but the Ashkelon Magistrate's Court extended it further until May 10.

Representatives for Avila and Keshek have accused Israeli authorities of abusing the two men, who have been on hunger strike for the past week.

Spokesman Kheetan decried the "disturbing accounts of severe mistreatment", calling for an investigation and insisting "those responsible must be brought to justice".

"We call for an end to Israel's use of arbitrary detention and of broadly and vaguely defined terrorism legislation, inconsistent with international human rights law," he said.

"Israel must also end its blockade on Gaza, and allow and facilitate the entry of humanitarian assistance to the besieged Palestinian strip, in sufficient amounts," he added.

'No evidence'

On Tuesday, Spanish Foreign Minister Jose Manuel Albares said there was "no evidence" to justify the "illegal" arrest of Keshek and Avila.

"This is a completely illegal detention; no Israeli agent has jurisdiction in international waters," he told public broadcaster RTVE.

Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva demanded on Tuesday that Israel release the two activists.

"Our government, together with that of Spain ... demands that they be fully guaranteed their safety and immediately released," he said in a post on X.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian government on Tuesday condemned Israel's approval of about $300 million for settlement roads in the occupied West Bank, calling it a "flagrant violation" of international law.

It said more than 1,600 settler and Israeli force attacks were recorded last month, including assaults, crop damage and home demolitions.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Small ball, wide door: Ping-Pong Diplomacy lives on

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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Fifty-five years after United States table tennis players made a historic visit to China, the spirit of Ping-Pong Diplomacy continues to live on as people-to-people exchanges remain a cornerstone in bilateral relations.

That is the view of Bill Einreinhofer, a three-time Emmy Award-winning US film producer and director of the public television documentary *Your Serve or Mine*.

An Asian premiere of the documentary was held at the Asia Society Hong Kong Center on Tuesday to coincide with the 55th anniversary of Ping-Pong Diplomacy this year.

"Contemporary observers typically refer to the 'bad' relationship between the United States and the People's Republic of China. But in the early 1970s, there was no relationship," Einreinhofer told China Daily.

Yet, the leaders of both countries wanted to find a way to talk and they discovered it through a "remarkable accident" — when somebody got on the wrong bus and opened the door that most people did not even know existed, he said.

At the 1971 World Table Tennis Championships in Nagoya, Japan, US player Glenn Cowan accidentally boarded the Chinese team's bus. He was warmly greeted by China's Zhuang Zedong, who gave Cowan a Huangshan Mountain silk tapestry as a gift.

On April 10 that year, at China's invitation, nine players from the US table tennis team made their historic trip to China, becoming the first US nationals to visit the country in more than 20 years.

The trip was the beginning of "Ping-Pong Diplomacy", paving the way for high-level China-US diplomatic talks, with then-US president Richard Nixon visiting China in 1972 and the formal establishment of diplomatic ties in 1979.

Einreinhofer's documentary, shot on locations in China and the US, not only interviews athletes who took part in the 1971 exchange, but also explores people-to-people exchanges between China and the US in recent times, and how the spirit of Ping-Pong Diplomacy continues to live on.

"The visit of American table tennis players to China made communication possible. The same holds true today," Einreinhofer said. People-to-people exchange plays an important role away from the glare of the media spotlight as it gives both countries an opportunity to communicate candidly, he said.

As he talked to people of different generations for the documentary, Einreinhofer said he found that young people remained eager to explore their counterparts' culture and "daily routines", which could give them deep insights into similarities and differences.

Bridging cultures

"Years ago, I was a young scholar studying in the US ... that is why I feel so compelled to bring this film to Hong Kong and to audiences across the Chinese mainland," said Ziheng Wang, who coproduced the documentary.

The film was first shown on US public broadcaster PBS in April last year and has been broadcast on more than 250 local stations, Wang said. The team hopes to bring the documentary to other cities where it was filmed at, including Beijing and Shanghai, she said.

The team also developed free learning resources and lesson plans for US public high school students to learn about Ping-Pong Diplomacy, saying exchanges of ideas among the next generation are becoming an important link in people-to-people diplomacy in this era.

Chan Tin-yan, 20, an undergraduate student in Hong Kong who plans to study in the US in two years' time, said he was amazed to learn the history of Ping-Pong Diplomacy and how the city served as a bridge for US players to enter the Chinese mainland.

"My biggest takeaway is this kind of cultural connection between two different countries is really good," Chan said.

"It is so vital to see all the communications and exchange what we have in different cultures."

Reflecting on growing up in an era when China was often referred to as "Red China" and diplomatically unrecognized in the US, Einreinhofer said the conditions for bilateral exchanges at that time were far worse than the tensions today.

That is why he remains deeply optimistic, he added.

"It is because of the nature of the American people, the nature of the Chinese people. We are two very welcoming cultures," he said.

Spain to allow virus-hit ship to dock in Canary Islands

By **JONATHAN POWELL** in London
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Authorities in Spain have granted permission for a Netherlands-flagged luxury cruise ship hit by a deadly hantavirus outbreak and anchored off Cape Verde to sail to the Canary Islands.

In a statement late on Tuesday, Spain's Health Ministry said the World Health Organization had explained that Cape Verde, in West Africa, could not receive the 147 passengers and crew of the MV *Hondius*.

"The Canary Islands are the closest location with the necessary capabilities," the ministry said. "Spain has a moral and legal obligation to assist these people, among whom are also several Spanish citizens."

Arrival in the Canary Islands was expected in "three to four days", it said, without specifying the port.

"Once there, the crew and passengers will be duly examined, cared for, and transferred to their respective countries," it said.

Since departing Argentina about a month ago for an Atlantic Ocean crossing, three passengers have died.

The WHO is investigating how hantavirus appeared on the ship, noting that the first victim developed symptoms on April 6 and possibly contracted the virus before boarding.

The rare disease, typically transmitted from infected rodents via urine, droppings or saliva, was suspected in the deaths of the three passengers. The WHO has said it had been told that "there are no rats on board" the ship.

As additional cases emerged, passengers and crew were placed in isolation after Cape Verde authorities barred the ship from docking. The vessel is anchored just off Praia, the island nation's capital.

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said three patients with suspected hantavirus infections have been evacuated from the ship and are on their way to the Netherlands.

After the evacuations, the ship would "continue its route", said Ann Lindstrand, the WHO representative in Cape Verde.

Oceanwide Expeditions, the operator, confirmed it plans to send the ship north to the Canary Islands, either Gran Canaria or Tenerife.

Passengers told The Associated Press that they were coping well with the isolation.

"Our days have been close to normal, just waiting for authorities to find a solution," said Qasem Elhato, 31. "But morale on the ship is high and we're keeping ourselves busy with reading, watching movies, having hot drinks and that kind of things."

Veteran of victory



World War II veteran Nikolai Golubtsov, 99, holds flowers as he is honored on Tuesday in Sevastopol, Crimea, Russia, ahead of Victory Day, which marks the defeat of Nazi Germany. ALEXEY PAVLISHAK / REUTERS

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WORLD

Chinese display firms showcase innovation, resilience at exhibition

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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Major Chinese display technology companies showcased a broad range of new products and next-generation applications at the 2026 Display Week hosted by the Society for Information Display in Los Angeles, highlighting continued investment in innovation, research and development, and global industrial cooperation amid evolving global trade conditions.

The event, taking place Sunday to Friday at the Los Angeles Convention Center, featured more than 200 exhibitors and a record-setting 675 technical papers and sessions, providing attendees with a chance to see the latest displays and measurement tools.

Chinese display manufacturer BOE made its 12th consecutive appearance at the event, presenting more than 30 new technologies and products, including several global and industry-first launches. According to the company, many of the exhibits were developed under its three core technology brands.

In an interview with China Daily, BOE's Chief Brand Officer Si Da said that research and development remains central to the company's long-term strategy and competitiveness.

"Geopolitical factors are something we must consider, but before considering geopolitics, we must first focus on our own technological capabilities and innovation capacity, because that is the core competitiveness behind BOE's success," Si said.

BOE invests approximately 7 percent of its annual revenue into research and development, with expected R&D spending reaching nearly 14 billion yuan ($2.06 billion) in 2025.

The company also emphasized an open innovation strategy involving collaboration with universities, research institutions, developers and industrial partners globally.

"We believe technological development requires coordinated collaboration across industry, academia, research institutions and application partners," Si said, adding that it also demonstrates the openness of Chinese technology companies.

Global partners also highlighted cooperation with the Chinese display maker. Yulia Kern of Dawar Technologies said the company values rapid communication and collaboration on customized applications.

"We like that if there's a unique application with some custom features that BOE always responds and says, here's what we could do," Kern said.

At the same exhibition, TCL CSOT, a subsidiary of TCL Technology, introduced its APEX Pixel framework, which the company said is designed to unify pixel-level innovation across LCD, OLED and other display technologies.

Industry representatives attending the exhibition pointed to growing applications for advanced display technologies across entertainment, transportation and agriculture.

Bram Desmet, chief executive officer of Flanders Scientific, which supplies professional displays for filmmaking and broadcasting applications, said customers in the industry require high-performance monitors with strong color accuracy.

"It's a very niche market, very small but very demanding customers. Customers expect almost perfect performance," Desmet said.

He said he was particularly interested in tandem OLED-related technologies presented at the exhibition.

"It's very promising," he said. "I'm particularly excited about the tandem of lead products displayed here. I think that that's a very interesting future technology."

Advanced display technologies are also expanding into agricultural equipment and industrial vehicles.

Fred Haddad, technical product manager at CNH Industrial, said the company is exploring the use of OLED heads-up displays in vehicle windshields for agricultural machinery.

"We are looking at applications for displaying vehicle information, oil pressure, speed, RPM, on the windshield of our vehicles," Haddad said.

According to him, technologies such as high-brightness displays and windshield-integrated systems could help improve efficiency in farming operations by assisting with seeding, watering, spraying and crop monitoring.

The exhibition also reflected ongoing concerns surrounding tariffs and supply chain adjustments.

Tianma, another Chinese display manufacturer, presented ruggedized displays designed for aviation and marine environments, including products capable of operating under direct sunlight and extreme temperatures.

Dale Maunu, director of marketing at Tianma, said tariffs continue to affect customers and supply chain decisions.

"The tariffs definitely affect customers," Maunu said. "For customers that we ship to directly from our warehouse in Southern California, every invoice just has one more line for tariffs. Customers always pay the tariffs. It dramatically affects the supply chain."

According to Maunu, some assembly operations have gradually shifted to countries such as Vietnam and Thailand as companies seek to manage tariff-related costs and maintain competitiveness in international markets.

Maunu also reflected on broader structural changes in global manufacturing over the past two decades. He said the movement of production capacity overseas was accompanied by a decline in specialized industrial skills within the United States.



'May the 4th be with you'

A *Star Wars*-themed drone show held in the night sky celebrates *Star Wars* Day at a park along the Han River in Seoul, South Korea, on Tuesday. Fans around the world come together every year on May 4 to celebrate the day, which is a pun on the famous line, "May the force be with you". AHN YOUNG-JOON / AP

Japan's moves imperil peace

PM's visits may encourage groupings in region, undermine stability: Experts

By **LIU JIANQIAO**
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CROSS CURRENTS

Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's recent visit to Australia, which has hyped up so-called supply chain resilience and critical minerals security, may encourage the formation of exclusive groupings in the Asia-Pacific and undermine regional peace and stability, experts said.

During her visit to Canberra, the two countries signed four separate agreements, including statements on defense, energy and critical minerals cooperation, as well as a joint declaration on "economic security cooperation".

The two sides have also signed a new agreement on critical minerals, saying they would elevate it to a "core pillar" of the economic relationship and identifying six rare earths "strategic projects" that they can support to diversify supply chains.

Last month, Japan and Australia signed contracts to deliver the first three of a $6.5 billion fleet of Japanese-designed Mogami-class frigates.

In her talks with Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, Takaichi expressed hope that Japan and Australia will take on a leading role in promoting regional stability under the updated "Free and Open Indo-Pacific" vision, noting that their growing cooperation is effectively evolving into what could be seen as a "quasi-alliance".

She said she discussed issues, including China, with Albanese. However, according to an official statement released on his official website, the Australian prime minister made no mention of the topic.

The Japanese prime minister arrived in Australia on Sunday following a three-day visit to Vietnam, where she held talks on energy and critical minerals.

Japan's efforts to deepen institutionalized energy security cooperation with Australia, effectively forming a "small-circle" framework, can be seen as a geopolitical maneuver under the banner of "economic security", said Liu Shuliang, an associate researcher at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences.

"Japan's push to deepen cooperation with Australia appears focused on economic security, but also carries a clear geopolitical dimension aimed at China," he said.

Multiple elements of Japan-Australia collaboration suggest a clear alignment with the United States' "Indo-Pacific Strategy", particularly in the efforts to restructure critical mineral supply chains, consistent with the objectives of the US-led "Indo-Pacific Economic Framework for Prosperity", he added.

In their joint declaration on economic security cooperation, Japan and Australia emphasized concerns about "economic coercion" and committed to "building resilient supply chains".

"This reflects a broader push to align with US-led efforts to diversify and rebalance control over strategic resources," Liu said.

Framed as "economic security", the mechanism risks becoming an exclusive regional bloc that politicizes economic issues, potentially disrupting global supply chains and deepening regional divisions, he added.

Broader objective

Chen Hong, director of the Australian Studies Centre at East China Normal University in Shanghai, said Japan is using supply chain diversification as a rationale, but its broader objective appears to be to deepen ties with Australia and align more closely with US strategic efforts in the region.

He said Japan is seeking to leverage Australia's natural resources to address its own strategic constraints, while simultaneously advancing security and defense cooperation with Canberra.

"This approach risks blurring the line between economic and security domains, potentially fostering bloc dynamics that could undermine the foundations of long-term open and cooperative development in the Asia-Pacific," he said.

Chen said that from earlier warship contracts to deepening defense and security cooperation, these developments underscore Japan's ongoing push to stretch the constraints of its post-World War II pacifist constitution, expand arms exports, and redefine its role in overseas security, with a view to strengthening its military footprint.

"Under this backdrop, Takaichi's call for strengthening the quasi-alliance between Japan and Australia would send a dangerous signal and risk heightening security concerns across the Asia-Pacific region," he said.

Japan's move is likely to accelerate regional bloc formation, fuel an arms race, undermine peace and stability, and heighten the risk of division and confrontation in the region, Liu from Tianjin added.

Experts said that given the evolving international landscape, Australia must maintain strategic autonomy.

Australia-China relations are in a relatively positive phase, and Australia should take an objective view of China's growing role in promoting peace and development, while avoiding being drawn into geopolitical rivalry and ideological narratives, Liu said.

Australia should place greater emphasis on sustaining pragmatic economic and trade cooperation with China, rather than align with the decoupling attempts in supply chains that risk undermining its own interests, Chen said.

It should support multilateral cooperation and avoid alignment with confrontational frameworks, he added.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Briefly

SOUTH KOREA

Judge in ex-first lady's case found dead

A South Korean judge who presided over the appeal trial of former first lady Kim Keon-hee's Deutsch Motors stock manipulation and other charges was found dead early on Wednesday, Yonhap News Agency reported. Shin Jong-oh, a judge at the Seoul High Court, was found in a flower bed near the court building in Seoul. A suicide note was found at the scene, and police are investigating the exact cause of death. A special counsel team on Monday appealed to South Korea's Supreme Court against an appellate court ruling that sentenced Kim, the wife of South Korea's former president Yoon Suk-yeol, to four years in prison over charges including stock manipulation and graft.

AFRICA

Ethiopia, Sudan accuse each other of attacks

Ethiopia and Sudan traded accusations on Tuesday, each claiming the other had violated its territory. The Ethiopian government on Tuesday rejected Sudan's recent accusation of drone strikes as "baseless". Sudan recalled its ambassador to Ethiopia after accusing Addis Ababa of a series of drone attacks that hit its international airport on Monday. Sudan's Foreign Minister Mohi El-Din Salem said in a statement on Tuesday that his country is "ready to enter into an open confrontation with Ethiopia". In a statement issued on Tuesday, the Ethiopian Ministry of Foreign Affairs rejected Sudan's "baseless accusations".

UNITED STATES

2 killed and 3 injured in back-to-back shootings

A man shot five people, killing two, in back-to-back shootings on Tuesday at a shopping center and then an apartment building because he was angry over business dealings, police said. The first shooting happened just before 10 am at a shopping center in a neighborhood in a suburb north of Dallas, the police department said. When police arrived, they found four adults who had been shot. While they were investigating, another shooting was reported at an apartment complex roughly 6 kilometers away, and responding officers found a dead man inside one of the apartments.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

President flexes control in primary state elections

COLUMBUS, Indiana — Elections in the US states of Indiana, Michigan and Ohio on Tuesday made a picture increasingly clear — that President Donald Trump still dominates the Republican Party, and Democrats seem to have the momentum ahead of November's midterm elections.

The biggest test of the president's power came in Indiana, where he backed primary challenges against seven Republican state senators who rejected his redistricting plan in December. Five of the president's candidates won.

"Big night for MAGA in Indiana," US Senator Jim Banks wrote on social media, adding that he was "proud to have helped elect more conservative Republicans to the Indiana State Senate".

It's been a costly and unprecedented intraparty battle that has exacerbated tensions among Republicans ahead of the November midterm elections that will determine control of Congress.

State Senator Travis Holdman, one of the incumbents to lose his primary, said he was at peace with his defeat. He voted against redistricting and faced more than $1.3 million in attack advertising funded by organizations tied to Banks and Governor Mike Braun.



Donna Wooten (right) votes across from her husband, Jerry Wooten, at a vote center during a primary election on Tuesday, in West Lafayette, Indiana. CARA PENQUITE / AP

"I did what my constituents asked me to do and it cost me my job," he says. "But that's OK."

Holdman warned that a more aggressive style of campaigning was arriving in his state.

"Welcome to DC politics in Indiana because this means that's what's coming," he said.

The race that was too close to call was the most expensive of the seven primaries.

The fundraising groups led by Banks and Braun combined to spend more than $2.2 million on advertising attacking Senator Spencer Deery, according to the ad-tracking firm AdImpact.

Trump began leaning on Republican-led states last year to redraw their congressional maps to make it easier for his party to hold its thin majority in the US House. Although redistricting is normally done once a decade, after a new census, the president wanted to abandon tradition to gain a political edge.

Texas was the first to follow through, and the White House pressured Indiana to go along, too. Vice-President JD Vance met with state politicians in Washington and Indianapolis, and Trump weighed in by conference call.

Meanwhile, in Michigan, Democrat Chedrick Greene won a special election on Tuesday, securing the party's control of the state Senate through the remainder of Governor Gretchen Whitmer's term.

Over in Ohio, primaries locked in candidates for two major races with national implications.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

Cessation of hostilities a prerequisite to address Strait of Hormuz deadlock

While Washington insists it is working to "secure" passage through the Strait of Hormuz for the world, recent reports describe mounting tensions. The framing is as revealing as the facts: the United States attempts to portray its actions as "a public good", even as the origins of the crisis lie on its doorstep.

Prior to the escalation started by the US-Israeli strikes on Iran the strait was not at the center of a crisis. This causal sequence should not be obscured by Washington's altruistic claim. If someone sets alight a house and then seeks credit for trying to extinguish the blaze, the applause is likely to be muted.

Washington argues that the US itself does not depend on the Strait of Hormuz. Yet inflation in the US remains stubborn, with energy costs a persistent driver. Declining approval ratings for the US administration and the looming pressure of midterm elections underscore the domestic stakes.

In this light, when Washington alleges that Iran is on the verge of collapse, Iran desperately wants a deal, or that Tehran has more to lose from a closure of the strait, it is not unreasonable to infer the opposite.

The diplomatic theater of Washington, which tries to exert pressure on China over the Middle East crisis, adds another layer of obfuscation to the proceedings. Some US officials, including the treasury secretary, have publicly urged China to "step up" its role in persuading Iran to keep the strait open. The treasury secretary told the media, "if they want to be good global citizens", Beijing could join hands with other countries at the United Nations, in reference to an April UN Security Council draft resolution allegedly aimed at "protecting" commercial shipping in the Strait of Hormuz that China and Russia vetoed for its lack of fairness and justice.

Yet this request distorts China's role. Beijing has, in fact, been engaged in responsible diplomatic efforts aimed at de-escalation. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's meeting with his Iranian counterpart in Beijing on Wednesday was the latest move in a broader push to encourage dialogue and restraint.

As Wang stressed in the meeting, China believes that a comprehensive cessation of hostilities is urgently needed, that a relapse into conflict is even more inadvisable, and that continued adherence to negotiation is of paramount importance.

On the issue of the Strait of Hormuz, the world shares a common concern over the restoration of safe and normal passage. As Wang said, Beijing hopes the parties involved will respond as promptly as possible to the strong calls of the international community.

China encourages Iran and other Gulf states to engage in dialogue aimed at fostering neighborly relations, and supports the establishment, by regional countries themselves, of a regional peace and security architecture based on shared participation, the safeguarding of regional interests, and the realization of common development.

The pro-peace endeavors of China are grounded in a framework articulated in a four-point proposal it put forward last month on peace and stability in the Middle East, which emphasizes peaceful coexistence, respect for sovereignty, adherence to international law and the coordination of development with security.

It is unrealistic for Washington to press Beijing to endorse the premise that military action lacking UN authorization and legitimacy can be retrospectively legitimized as a contribution to global common interests. Nor should Washington expect the world to accept the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz — under the US' military pressure — as an altruistic act by those who precipitated the crisis in the first place.

The US may declare to its domestic audience that its Epic Fury operation has concluded with desired effects. But the costs of disruption in the Strait of Hormuz are borne not just by the protagonists, but by the world as a whole.

If Washington genuinely seeks to uphold the world's common interests as it professes, it should begin by recognizing its role in shaping the current predicament. It should also accept that diplomatic efforts by others will not serve as a post hoc endorsement of the US-Israeli attacks on Iran. What the US administration seeks to do now is to pressure others to clear up a mess of its own making while taking the credit if any breakthrough is made.

Stability in critical global arteries cannot be secured through unilateral forces. It requires consistency, restraint and a willingness to place shared interests above immediate political gain. Until that lesson is absorbed, the Strait of Hormuz will remain not just a strategic choke point, but a mirror reflecting the misjudgment of some.

Service sector driving high-quality growth

The 2026 Beijing International Automotive Exhibition, the world's largest auto show, was a testament to the rapid internationalization and quality upgrade of China's service sector, and compelling evidence of how China pursues high-quality development through innovation and openness.

With automakers from 21 countries and regions displaying more than 1,400 vehicles, the industry showcase, held from April 24 to May 3, highlighted China's role as a competitive player in electric vehicles and the transition of some global brands from "in China, for China" to "in China, for the world" as they deepen cooperation with local partners and leverage China's supply chain to optimize global production and sales. The mutual learning and co-evolution of Chinese and foreign companies in the Chinese market demonstrate that openness is two-way empowerment.

The event also offered the world a window through which to observe the development of China's convention and exhibition economy, a vital and integral part of the broader service trade industry.

Take the capital city as an example. With the construction of high-capacity, smart and green venues, Beijing's exhibition industry has become a key driver of the local economy. From automotive shows to energy storage expos and medical health fairs, the theme of the city's exhibition calendar is becoming increasingly innovative, intelligent and sustainable, reflecting its efforts to build itself into a globally influential convention and exhibition hub.

Shortly after the annual gatherings of China's top legislature and political advisory body in March, the State Council, the country's Cabinet, has twice specifically emphasized the development of the service industry in its meetings, sending a clear signal that the service industry is an important part of the modern industrial system, relating to the overall high-quality development and modernization.

The policymakers have unambiguously stated the need to actively plan and promote the expansion and improvement of the service industry.

In April, China held its first national conference on the service sector, which called for fostering new growth points, enhancing the digital and intelligent transformation of the sector, strengthening producer and consumer services, and cultivating more "China Services" brands, while also promoting broader opening-up of the service industry.

These pragmatic policy signals underscore a recognition that as China's economy transitions from a phase of rapid growth to one of high-quality development, modern services should play a major role in driving innovation, employment and consumption.

The numbers speak for themselves. In 2025, the added value of China's service sector exceeded 80 trillion yuan ($11.65 trillion), accounting for 57.7 percent of GDP and contributing 61.4 percent to economic growth. The industry also provided around half of the country's jobs and accounted for 46.1 percent of per capita spending by urban and rural residents, making it a key engine for expanding domestic demand.

China's expansion of its service sector also provides numerous shared opportunities and benefits for the world at large. The country's industry, economy and market will continue to contribute to global growth and certainty in the process. Instead of clinging to the zero-sum game mentality peddled by some naysayers of the Chinese economy, a pragmatic choice for multinational corporations is to embrace the opportunities presented by the superlarge Chinese market and foster win-win cooperation.

The service industry is the cornerstone of a thriving economy, serving as a barometer of a nation's development stage and a driver of global competitiveness. And China's thriving exhibition industry is a prime example of how the service sector is driving the country's high-quality economic growth.

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Fan Jianping



Opinion Line

Politicized fragmentation is the wrong prescription

According to Reuters, G7 countries, led in part by France, have convened discussions aimed at curbing what they describe as China's "grip" on critical mineral supply chains, even considering the creation of a permanent coordinating mechanism. Parallel reports by Euronews highlight cooperation among the European Union, the United States and Japan to restructure supply chains for the crucial raw materials.

Yet this is putting prescription before diagnosis.

The modern global supply system is facing obstacles at a time when the world's largest economy has increasingly embraced tariffs, export controls and financial sanctions as instruments of statecraft. Trade has been weaponized; interdependence, once celebrated as a stabilizing force, is now treated as a vulnerability. Inevitably, such actions reverberate across supply chains that were built on assumptions of relative openness and predictability.

However, rather than acknowledging this underlying disease and strengthening their immunity, some developed economies are spreading the contagion. The implicit belief seems to be that disengaging from China will naturally deliver "security".

This belief is, at best, incomplete. Within the EU itself, there is growing recognition that excessive reliance on the US — be it in energy, defense, finance and now industrial policy — poses its own strategic vulnerabilities.

Moreover, the premise that interdependence is inherently dangerous misreads how global markets function. Within a rules-based system, mutual dependence is precisely what disciplines behavior. It creates incentives for stability, predictability and cooperation. The risks arise not from interdependence itself, but from its politicization.

Unlike many economies, China is simultaneously a major importer of raw materials, a processor and exporter of refined inputs and a crucial market for high-end manufacturing equipment and semiconductors. Being so deeply embedded across multiple nodes of global supply chains, it has no appetite for causing systemic disruption.

To suggest, therefore, that China is the principal source of "instability" in global supply chains is to overlook both data and logic. The fragmentation now underway risks harming all participants. Resource-exporting countries would face collapsing demand if markets were artificially segmented and manufacturing hubs would struggle to sustain output without access to large, integrated markets.

The more uncomfortable question for some policymakers in the G7 and beyond is whether the "partners" they are now prioritizing truly represent more reliable, rule-abiding alternatives. Trust in international economic relations cannot be declared; it should be demonstrated through consistent adherence to agreed norms, which, in recent years, have been eroded not by emerging economies, but by the very actor that once championed them.

Within Europe, a cohort of policymakers has adopted a de facto adversarial stance toward China. Yet this stance often coexists with a willingness to acquiesce to pressure from Europe's transatlantic ally. The result is a policy posture that is neither strategically autonomous nor analytically coherent.

A rational approach tells one that supply chain resilience cannot be achieved through bloc formation or ideological alignment. It requires restoring confidence in the openness and predictability of the global trading system. That, in turn, demands a recommitment to multilateralism.

This doesn't imply passivity. Economies are entitled to safeguard legitimate security interests. But the indiscriminate expansion of "security" to encompass broad swaths of economic activity risks becoming self-defeating. China, for its part, has signaled that it will continue to pursue mutually beneficial economic relations with partners that engage on the basis of equality and respect. At the same time, it has made clear that discriminatory measures will invite proportionate responses. Such reciprocity is not evidence of risk; it is a predictable feature of sovereign interaction and rules defense.

The choice facing some developed economies is therefore not between dependence and independence, but between managed interdependence and unmanaged fragmentation. The former requires discipline, humility and analytical clarity. The latter offers only the illusion of control, at the cost of stability.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Industry still the foundation for development

Editor's note: *China's economy is witnessing the emergence of new drivers. Zheng Yongnian, dean of the School of Public Policy at The Chinese University of Hong Kong, Shenzhen, spoke to Economic Daily about why it shouldn't abandon low-end industries. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Currently, a new wave of technological revolution and industrial transformation is making breakthroughs at a greater speed. New growth drivers are emerging for the Chinese economy, which shows no sign of peaking.

China strives to harmonize economic and social progress and balance the roles of the government and the market. This approach highlights both efficiency and equity, and integrates vitality with order. The country continues to deepen reforms in key fields to improve the socialist market economy system, and adheres to the approach of combining an efficient market with a capable government.

On the one hand, China recognizes that the government cannot manage everything on its own, and acknowledges that further efforts are required to unleash economic vitality. On the other hand, it has drawn lessons from other economies to avoid disorderly capital expansion and the structural imbalances that may follow. These institutional arrangements are conducive to sustaining long-term growth.

A robust manufacturing industry is an important advantage for China's economic development. The country is not only upgrading its traditional industries, but also fostering emerging industries and industries of the future. It is accelerating efforts to build a modern, comprehensive, advanced and secure industrial system.

China enjoys a complete industry chain and a huge market thanks to its all-encompassing manufacturing industry. The country needs to continue developing the real economy and the manufacturing industry, and advancing the integration of scientific and technological innovation with industrial innovation.

Some traditional businesses, such as rebar and cement, remain vital for the manufacturing industry, and should not be abandoned simply because they are not "high-end".

High-value-added and high-technology sectors have only a limited share in the overall economy. Also, many high-technology sectors require collaboration and support from other industries. In some fields, the capacity of different sectors to coordinate with each other matters more than individual technological breakthroughs.

A modern industrial system includes traditional, emerging and future industries. The three do not replace one another, but support and reinforce each other. A truly strong economy needs not only high-end manufacturing, but also some low-end and mid-level sectors. Only in this way can the economy achieve greater resilience and competitiveness.

Under the new circumstances, China needs to boost not only its GDP but also the "Chinese people's economy", or gross national income. GNI, which includes the country's overseas earnings, embodies the open way in which China pursues development. For instance, as Chinese enterprises make investments abroad under the Belt and Road Initiative, China's production capacity, technologies and development experience are "going global".

The country doesn't seek a monopoly or intend to stop other countries from developing as some Western countries have done. Nor will it impose its own development pattern on other countries.

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VIEWS

Erik Solheim

Ecology and economics are allies, not rivals

For most of modern history, the world operated on the conviction that if you want to develop your economy, you will damage the environment. The two move in opposite directions, so you can choose one.

This was not the view of ignorant or careless people. It was the lived experience of industrialization.

Global Lens

The British knew that sending children into coal mines during the Industrial Revolution was harmful. But they did it anyway, because they saw no other path to prosperity.

That model spread from Britain to Germany, to the United States, to Japan, to the Republic of Korea, to China, and eventually to every corner of the world that wanted to grow. For nearly two centuries, the trade-off between development and nature was not a debate. It was a fact of life.

That fact has changed only in the past few years, and the agent of change was not idealism. It was price. Twenty years ago, the world took an entire year to add one gigawatt of solar capacity.

Today the same gigawatt is added in half a day. Solar energy costs have fallen by around 90 percent in a decade. Wind costs have followed a similar trajectory. Batteries are now doing the same. When clean energy becomes the cheapest option in most of the world, the old trade-off dissolves.

You no longer have to choose between growing your economy and protecting your environment, because the tools that grow your economy are increasingly the same tools that protect it. The debate that defined two centuries of development has not been won by one side or the other. It has simply been overtaken by technology and economics.

Any nation replacing a drop of oil from the Strait of Hormuz with solar energy saves money, and becomes more energy independent.

This shift changes everything about how we should read what is happening in China.

What looks from the outside like a collection of separate environmental policies is actually something more coherent: a systematic attempt to prove, at scale and over time, that the old trade-off was a historical condition rather than a permanent truth.

I have been watching this unfold for two decades. Earlier this year, I took a boat along the Lijiang River in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

That river was once heavily polluted, widely reported as one of China's most polluted rivers. But what I saw from the water settled something for me.

The water is so clean you can go for a swim, maybe even drink it. It shows that protection and prosperity can advance together, and that the decision to treat nature as an asset rather than a sacrifice is one that pays back. Beautiful nature invites tourists and brings prosperity.

The Yellow River, the Yangtze and the Lancang-Mekong rivers sustain hundreds of millions of people across Asia. China is now building a national park at their origin in the Qinghai plateau to protect these watersheds for the long term. On the Talatan grassland nearby, vast solar installations cover what was once barren desert. The panels generate electricity for the national grid while their shade slows the wind, reduces evaporation, and allows grass to grow beneath them.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Herders now graze their sheep underneath what has become the largest solar installation on earth.

Energy production and ecological restoration are not competing here. They are the same project.

This is what makes the concept of ecological civilization genuinely significant. As articulated by Chinese President Xi Jinping, "Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets." The argument is not that China will sacrifice economic growth to protect nature, but that protecting nature is itself a sound economic strategy. The Yangtze River basin is the proof. A decade ago, a landmark commitment was made in Chongqing to prioritize ecological protection along the river over large-scale development. In 10 years, around 96.5 percent of the river's water meets the high-quality standards.

Over the same period, the region's GDP has more than doubled.

The tiger population in the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park has grown from 27 to around 70.

Nearly 50,000 people have got jobs connected to China's first five national parks.

Managed well, nature generates wealth rather than competes with it.

This March, China adopted the Ecological and Environmental Code, consolidating 30 separate environmental laws into a single statutory framework. It is the second formal code in Chinese law after the Civil Code. It shows that while some other countries are retreating from environmental commitments, China is embedding those commitments in legal foundations.

The message is that this direction will hold, regardless of short-term economic pressures. That kind of institutional continuity is precisely what makes ecological recovery possible. You cannot restore a river or a tiger population in one political cycle. You can only do it by committing over decades and meaning it.

This matters beyond China because the old trade-off weighed most heavily on the countries that could least afford it. The logic of pollute first and clean up later was, in practice, a sentence passed on poor nations, not a strategy chosen by them. Clean up later turned out to mean never, or not until enormous damage had already been done.

But developing countries no longer face that sentence. Clean energy is not a luxury technology available only to wealthy nations.

It is, increasingly, the cheapest technology available to anyone. In Rwanda, protecting mountain gorillas generates around $1,500 per hour-long visitor experience, making conservation one of the country's most important economic assets. The gorillas are worth more alive in their habitat than they could be in any other form.

India, the home of around 75 percent of the world's tigers, has doubled its tiger population, not only for animal welfare but as an economic strategy. That is the logic that China is applying to its rivers, its forests, and its wildlife at a scale the world has not seen before.

The debate whether a country must choose between development and nature shaped two centuries of industrial history. Many still have that old mindset. But the economics of clean energy and the practical experience of ecological restoration have now answered that debate. The choice was never as fixed as it seemed.

And for the nations still at the beginning of their development paths, it is no longer a choice at all.

The author is a diplomat and former minister of international development and minister of environment of Norway. He was also the under-secretary-general of the United Nations and executive director of the United Nations Environment Programme.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

China and the World Roundtable | Global Collaboration on Maritime Governance

Editor's note: *The Shared Oceans Shanghai Forum 2026 was held at Shanghai Maritime University in April. Launched in 2025, the forum promotes joint efforts to build a maritime community with a shared future. Experts from various countries and international organizations discussed maritime security, connectivity and other issues at the forum. Below are excerpts from the comments of some of the participants.*

Building a maritime community with a shared future

Improved global maritime governance needed



Mao Ruipeng is the director of the Institute for Global Governance at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies.

The United Nations has a leading position in global maritime security governance, serving as the overarching framework for shaping and safeguarding the modern international maritime order.

Oceans play a fundamental role in global trade transport, data transmission, energy supply and food security.

In recent years, the strategic significance of oceans has heightened, causing maritime security to gradually shift from a marginal issue to a core topic of discussion within the UN.

Yet maritime security is confronted with increasingly diverse threats and challenges, ranging from traditional risks, such as piracy and illegal fishing, to emerging hazards, including plastic pollution, climate change, ecological crises and threats to submarine cables. These challenges require comprehensive solutions.

Although maritime security has become a key topic of discussion within the UN, the organization is facing several challenges in handling the various threats.

The first hurdle is the stance taken by major countries. The United States' maritime policies, which emphasize key waterways and seek to control them, are steering UN discussions on maritime security away from international cooperation.

The second issue is the deep-seated differences between countries regarding the scope of maritime security.

There are vastly different views on which specific maritime security issues should be deliberated at the UN Security Council. Indeed, maritime security has become a battleground for rivalry and contention among various parties.

The third challenge comes from the UN itself. While many international organizations are involved in maritime security affairs within the UN system, they should have had an effective leading and coordinating mechanism.

As a result, some countries and think tanks have called for the UN to set up a dedicated institution to address maritime issues in a coordinated manner. Despite these challenges, the UN is expected to make slow but steady progress in placing greater emphasis on maritime security.

Inclusivity critical for maritime public goods



Wang Bocheng is an associate professor at the School of Marxism in Shanghai Maritime University.

The world has a wide variety of maritime public goods, but there is a structural imbalance in the provision of these goods.

There is considerable international cooperation and public goods in fishery resources.

But in other fields, such as maritime security and polar governance, the interests of different countries collide, leading to a shortage of relevant public goods.

Another problem lies in the imbalance of participants. There is a divide between the Global North and the Global South. Developed countries tend to follow the approach of "small yards, high fences", which effectively denies most developing countries access to the maritime public goods they provide.

A public good is defined by non-excludability and non-rivalry in nature. But many maritime public goods around the world fall in the category of quasi-public goods or club goods — goods that only a limited number of countries can use.

A typical example is the provision of public goods by some Western countries. These goods are highly exclusive, and often marked by attempts to impose stringent standards and high thresholds to keep China out.

China launched the Belt and Road Initiative and proposed the building of a maritime community with a shared future. It has provided maritime public goods — such as institutional frameworks, technological support and deep-sea data — which are available to all countries.

Guided by the vision of a maritime community with a shared future, China contributes to ocean conservation, maritime resource utilization and maritime security by offering its own solutions.

But China is facing unprecedented challenges, especially the intensifying geopolitical competition. It is therefore essential for the country to strengthen cooperation with other BRICS countries and other countries of the Global South.

Through this cooperation, it can demonstrate the openness, stability and inclusiveness of its supply of global maritime public goods.

Global collaboration will ensure stability at sea



Thong Viro is the deputy director-general of administration management at Sihanoukville Autonomous Port in Cambodia.

More than 80 percent of global trade is carried by sea. A stable maritime order is, therefore, the cornerstone of the global economy. However, today's international landscape has become increasingly complex due to geopolitical shifts, regional conflicts and non-traditional security threats.

When the maritime order is disrupted, the impact on maritime transportation is immediate. Shipping costs rise, supply chains fracture, and ultimately the pace of global economic recovery slows.

As a port administrator in Sihanoukville, I witnessed how sensitive international trade is to the global security environment. Without security, there is no efficiency, and without stability, there is no prosperity.

In an era of economic globalization, a country's interests are no longer confined to its own borders, especially when it comes to maritime and shipping. No single country can protect these growing overseas interests alone. The following steps can help in this direction.

First, we must uphold international laws and respect the established maritime order. A fair and rules-based international framework provides fundamental legal protection for our overseas assets and personnel.

Second, we must strengthen collaborative security mechanisms. Protecting overseas interests means sharing information, conducting joint patrols along critical waterways, and providing mutual assistance in times of crisis. Through international cooperation, we can build a robust safety net for global shipping lanes.

Third, we must embrace the vision of a maritime community with a shared future, a vision that captures the reality of modern trade with great clarity. All stakeholders and partners in the maritime industry should collaborate closely and continue harnessing advanced technologies, intelligent port systems and green initiatives to make international shipping safer and more resilient.

Also, when we help secure a shipping lane, we are not merely protecting one country's overseas investments. We are protecting the entire global supply chain for the world economy.

Aligning growth with green responsibilities

Two years ago, the Red Sea was closed to commercial shipping. Major carriers rerouted around the Cape of Good Hope. Freight costs surged. Supply chains that had linked Asia, Africa and Europe through the Suez Canal for over a century were severed almost overnight.

For Egypt, the impact was immediate. The Suez Canal, a lifeline through which roughly 12 percent of global trade passed, saw its revenues drop by nearly half.

This episode revealed a critical truth. While more than 80 percent of global trade moves by sea, the governance structures that underpin maritime security remain fragmented. Shipping lanes are global, but the mechanisms to protect them are not. This gap poses a key challenge, and the stakes go far beyond shipping alone.



Kazem Agamy is the dean of the Arab Research Institute for Sustainable Blue Economy at the Arab Academy for Science, Technology and Maritime Transport.

The ocean economy, spanning fisheries, coastal tourism, offshore energy and marine biotechnology, is valued at roughly $2.5 trillion annually. Egypt, with coastlines on both the Mediterranean and the Red Sea and more than 50 working ports, is deeply embedded in that economy. For its people, the sea means jobs, food, and opportunity. But they cannot capture those benefits if the ocean itself is degraded.

Illegal fishing depletes stocks. Plastic and industrial pollution erode coastal habitats. Submarine cables, which carry over 95 percent of the world's intercontinental data, remain inadequately protected. The United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea provides the legal framework, but governance is only as strong as its implementation.

In this context, three priorities require urgent and sustained attention. First, there should be better maritime awareness. We need shared surveillance, stronger regional coordination and joint operations that are equal to the threats we face.

Second, blue economy strategies must align with environmental responsibilities. Economic growth that undermines the ecosystems upon which it depends is inherently unsustainable. Lasting development requires balance, responsible stewardship, and a long-term vision.

Third, we must invest in knowledge and human capital.

The path forward lies in partnership, grounded in international law, guided by science and measured by concrete results.

Greater connectivity crucial for regional growth



Azhar Jaimurzina Ducrest is the chief of the Transport Connectivity and Logistics Section of the Transport Division of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

This year, ESCAP member states are preparing their new regional action program for sustainable transport development which will cover the period from 2027 to 2031.

Similar to the previous regional action program, this will be a unique strategic framework designed to address the evolving challenges of our times in the field of transport.

In 2021, member countries recognized maritime connectivity as one of the seven thematic areas of utmost priority for the region. They also established a key mechanism for regular regional dialogue on sustainable maritime connectivity for Asia and the Pacific.

The new regional action program is expected to build on these achievements to set a clear road map for collective action. In this context, the pivotal role of the Asia-Pacific region as the engine of global trade and the efforts of ESCAP countries in advancing maritime connectivity must be recognized.

Numerous national and regional initiatives, of which China's Maritime Silk Road is a flagship example, helped us achieve significant progress in more efficient and resilient transport operations.

These efforts have done more than just build infrastructure; they have created vital arteries for economic flow and people-to-people exchanges. By enhancing port efficiency and fostering intermodal connectivity, these initiatives have significantly contributed to the development of maritime transport across Asia and the Pacific, leading to tangible results in shortened lead times, more integrated supply chains, and a stronger, more unified regional market.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

ZHOU WEISHENG

Dynamic medium of interaction

The Chinese language is evolving from a communication tool into a key carrier of global public value

Promoting mutual understanding and people-to-people ties through language has become a pressing priority for the international community. China's Global Civilization Initiative aligns closely with the United Nations



Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, offering new theoretical and practical pathways for the international dissemination of the Chinese language.

Conceptually, the Global Civilization Initiative, first proposed in March 2023, advocates respect for the diversity of civilizations, emphasizes the importance of the inheritance and innovation of civilizations, upholds the common values of humanity, and promotes international people-to-people exchanges and cooperation.

It echoes the Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity, which states that cultural diversity is the common heritage of humanity. Within this framework, language is not merely a tool for transmitting information but a core mechanism for generating cultural meaning and enabling civilizational interaction. As one of the world's most spoken languages, Chinese has become a vital medium for diverse civilizations to coexist and interact.

Traditionally, however, Western views on language dissemination have been confined to cultural export or even cultural competition. Such perspectives often emphasize one-way communication and the expansion of influence, which can easily lead to the polarization and the instrumentalization of cultural relations. In today's complex, volatile world, this paradigm no longer meets practical needs. It is therefore necessary to steer the international dissemination of Chinese culture toward "cultural symbiosis" and realize a more effective provision of public value. Cultural symbiosis means the interaction, integration and coevolution of different civilizations; while public value supply refers to providing the global community with institutional resources for understanding, trust and cooperation through language and cultural exchanges.

On the practical front, the global reach of the Chinese language has expanded dramatically in recent years. Statistics show that over 180 countries and regions offer Chinese language education. More than 80 countries have integrated Chinese language teaching into their basic national education systems. Digital platforms have also lowered barriers to language learning, driving sustained growth in the number of online Chinese language learners. These figures show that Chinese has evolved from a regional language into a globally influential one — what might be called international Chinese language.

In terms of cultural influence, the international dissemination of the Chinese language features a distinctive "embedded" trait. Unlike mere cultural product exports, language learning itself fosters cultural understanding. For example, when learners study Chinese concepts such as *he er bu tong* (harmony in diversity) and *tianxia datong* (universal harmony), they gain not just vocabulary but also the relational thinking and holistic perspectives rooted in traditional Chinese philosophy. This kind of culturally embedded learning through language helps reduce cognitive biases and deepens cross-cultural understanding.

Language plays a fundamental and structural role in promoting people-to-people bonds. International relations depend not only on institutional arrangements but also on societal cognitive and emotional foundations. As more people learn Chinese, non-Chinese speakers can access first-hand linguistic resources to better understand Chinese society. This "disintermediated" access to information helps reduce misunderstandings and biases.

As a key vehicle for the international dissemination of Chinese culture, the Confucius Institute offers a representative case. Since its founding in 2004, it has been going beyond language teaching to include cultural activities, teacher training and academic exchanges. Despite differing institutional environments and public opinions in various countries, it remains vital for promoting Chinese language education and cultural exchange. More importantly, these institutes have developed a practical collaborative dissemination model — partnering with local educational institutions to share resources and facilitate cultural interaction, which fully embodies the vision of cultural symbiosis.

Meanwhile, technological progress is reshaping the ways in which the Chinese language is disseminated globally. Artificial intelligence translation, online education platforms and social media are shifting language dissemination from institution-led to multi-actor participation. For example, Chinese-language content creators on short-video platforms are presenting culture in more everyday and diverse ways. This decentralized model of dissemination enhances the diversity and authenticity of cultural expression, increasing international audiences' acceptance.

Admittedly, the global dissemination of the Chinese language still faces challenges such as cultural context differences, discourse system transformation and the international public opinion environment. Thus, future efforts should focus on three key dimensions: first, strengthening localized expression by integrating Chinese language teaching with local cultures; second, promoting two-way exchanges to avoid cognitive biases that can arise from one-way communication; third, reinforcing language's role as a public good to deliver more shared value to the world.

Guided by the Global Civilization Initiative and the principle of cultural diversity, the global dissemination of the Chinese language is moving toward cultural symbiosis. By fostering civilizational mutual learning and people-to-people ties with language as a bridge, Chinese is evolving from a communication tool into a key carrier of global public value. Driven by continued institutional innovation and technological progress, the Chinese language is poised to play a more active and profound role in building an inclusive, diverse and sustainable global civilizational system.

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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY



YANG MEINI / FOR CHINA DAILY

ZHAI KUN AND LIN HANDONG

Certainty amid volatility

China and ASEAN should strengthen the resilience of their comprehensive strategic partnership to maintain regional stability

The year 2026 marks the fifth anniversary of the establishment of the comprehensive strategic partnership between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, at a time when the global order is undergoing the most intense fragmentation since the end of the Cold War. Amid this new period of turbulence and transformation, China-ASEAN relations have not only withstood the test but also demonstrated robust resilience, showing clearer planning, more pragmatic cooperation and enhanced mutual trust. The continued deepening of this partnership reflects both an outcome of upgraded bilateral cooperation and a shared regional choice favoring stability, development and strategic autonomy.



Zhai Kun



Lin Handong

Through institutional alignment and planning coordination, ASEAN and China have crafted a highly predictable blueprint for regional development. The Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-30) explicitly supports ASEAN community building and integration, including efforts toward the ASEAN Community Vision 2045 and its strategic goals, and reaffirms China's support for ASEAN centrality in the regional architecture and ASEAN-led mechanisms. This demonstrates that advancing relations is not about creating parallel structures but about upgrading cooperation within ASEAN's established institutional context.

Furthermore, China has aligned its own development planning with regional cooperation. China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) clearly calls for expanding high-standard opening-up and promoting the implementation of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0. By institutionalizing and itemizing their cooperation agenda, both sides have preserved a rare and valuable mid-to-long-term certainty during an otherwise volatile period.

Practical cooperation is increasingly showcasing the deepening of China-ASEAN relations. Politically, China and ASEAN maintain high-level strategic communication through annual leaders' meetings, while foreign ministers' meetings, senior officials' consultations and the ASEAN Defence Ministers' Meeting Plus form a multi-tiered cooperation mechanism. Economically, ASEAN has been China's largest export market for three consecutive years and its largest source of imports for seven consecutive years. The upgrading of the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area to version 3.0 means bilateral cooperation is moving toward higher-level rules connectivity, and it now incorporates emerging fields such as the digital economy, the green economy and supply chain interconnectivity.

On the security front, as of April 18, China and ASEAN had held 54 meetings of the joint working group on the implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, advancing consultations on a Code of Conduct for the waters. In 2025, China mediated the Cambodia-Thailand border conflict, playing a key role through shuttle diplomacy that culminated in the Fuxian consensus. The China-Cambodia-Thailand Track II dialogue has also preserved vital communication channels for the rebuilding of mutual trust. Meanwhile, China and ASEAN countries have carried out efficient joint law enforcement in non-traditional security areas, jointly combating cross-border online gambling, telecom fraud and other crimes, effectively responding to the demand of people in the region for security.

Greater regional trust has become a force behind stronger China-ASEAN relations. According to the State of Southeast Asia: 2026 Survey Report released by Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute, trust in China among ASEAN respondents in this survey had reached a historic inflection point since the annual report's release in 2019, with trust levels (39.8 percent) exceeding distrust for the first time. In hypothetical "taking sides" scenarios, those choosing China (52 percent) surpassed those choosing the United States (48 percent). Among ASEAN's dialogue partners, China, with an average score of 9.1, remains the most strategically important partner.

The results reflect ASEAN's recognition of China's economic performance and policy continuity. It is noteworthy that a clear majority, over half at 55.2 percent, identified "strengthening ASEAN's resilience and unity" as the primary approach to navigating the competition between the US and China, underscoring that strategic autonomy remains ASEAN's core principle. In this sense, the key to the continuous deepening of China-ASEAN relations lies in China's consistent respect for the autonomous demands of ASEAN and joint efforts to expand the region's stability, development space and institutional resilience.

Both sides face fresh historical opportunities and notable challenges. Over the next five years, China and ASEAN need to seek common ground while shelving and narrowing differences, and find targeted, practical solutions to the difficulties hindering deeper relations.

On the one hand, the State of Southeast Asia: 2026 Survey Report shows that ASEAN's political concern over the South China Sea situation, at 48.2 percent, has declined, but it remains the top geopolitical issue involving China. In 2026, as conditions for concluding the Code of Conduct become increasingly favorable, all parties must guard against disruptive external interference.

China can also address the South China Sea issue within the broader framework of strategic bilateral cooperation to prevent it from overshadowing overall relations. Functional security projects, such as joint search and rescue exercises and maritime law enforcement capacity building, could help stabilize expectations. In addition, by strengthening China-ASEAN cooperation in the blue economy, including marine fisheries, marine biological resource development and marine renewable energy, the two sides can provide support for the handling of sensitive issues.

On the other hand, the survey shows that 41.9 percent of respondents are confident or very confident in China as a Global South leader. As a natural member of the Global South, China's positioning consistently aligns with that of other developing countries. In practice, China should focus more on poverty alleviation, climate change and digital transformation through localized and perceptible grassroots actions. For instance, most ASEAN respondents (60 percent) view climate change and intensifying extreme weather events as the most pressing challenge, but their underlying logic differs fundamentally from that of the European Union. Climate change directly affects agricultural output, freshwater security, coastal livelihoods and vulnerable rural groups in ASEAN. Therefore, China should not stop at general discussions of climate issues, but respond to the survival pressures behind them. Only by doing so can China better support the collective empowerment and self-strengthening of the Global South.

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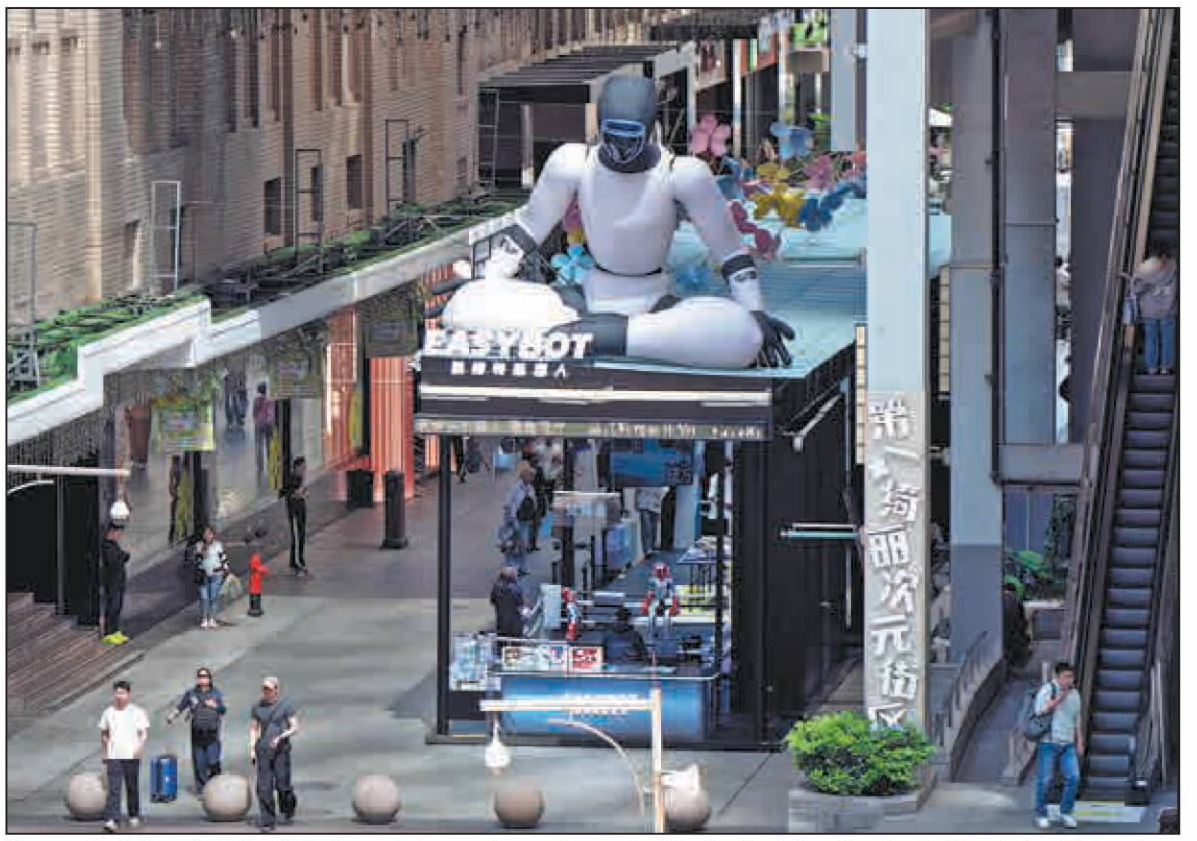
BUSINESS

No coffee breaks



Humanoid robots work at a booth during a robot pop-up interactive event on Nanjing Road shopping street in Shanghai on Wednesday. The Digital China Summit said the country accounts for 84.7 percent of global humanoid robot shipments, with 14,400 domestic units shipped in 2025 out of the worldwide total of 18,000 units. WANG GANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Debut of full-spectrum hyperspectral satellite to empower commercial aerospace innovation

By **REN QI**
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Kuaizhou-11 Y7 rocket launches at 12:12 pm on March 16 from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu province, deploying eight domestic satellites into scheduled orbits in a flawless mission. CCTV+

A significant milestone in China's commercial aerospace sector, the recent successful launch and precise orbital insertion of the Xiguang-1 06 satellite reflect the development of China's industry, underscoring the robust support provided by the local government, experts said.

Developed by Xi'an Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace Technology Group Co Ltd, based in Xixian New Area of Shaanxi province, the satellite was launched aboard the Kuaizhou-11 Y7 carrier rocket from Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Gansu province.

As China's first and currently the only in-orbit commercial hyperspectral remote sensing satellite with full-spectrum coverage of the 400–2500 nanometers band, the satellite ushers in a new industry era of "full-spectrum precise perception".

Covering the visible to shortwave infrared bands with 26 independent spectral bands, the satellite managed to transmit clear images within 24 hours of entering orbit.

"The satellite functions as if it is performing CT scans on the planet. It doesn't just look at surface morphology, but can analyze material composition, monitor crop health and predict ecological hidden dangers," said Kou Yimin, chief engineer at Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace.

Supported by the Xi'an Institute of Optics and Precision Mechanics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the development team achieved independent control over core technologies, adopting an integrated design to significantly reduce weight, lower costs and shorten the development cycle.

The satellite's applications have already been implemented broadly. In Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, it monitors the growth of characteristic cash crops like tea and traditional Chinese medicinal herbs. In northwestern China's mining areas, it provides early warnings for geological disasters such as landslides, ensuring safe production.

Behind this single satellite's success is the collaborative support of an entire industrial chain. With Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace as the leading enterprise, Xixian New Area has built a complete commercial aerospace ecosystem encompassing upstream new materials, midstream core component manufacturing and downstream data application services.

In the upstream, Shaanxi Pulimei Material Technology Co Ltd focuses on aerospace composite materials.

"We specialize in aerospace-grade heat-resistant and structural materials, with multiple product performances reaching leading domestic levels," said Zhang Xinhang, chairman of the company.

For midstream manufacturing, Shaanxi Weixing Zhihang Technology Co Ltd possesses the capacity to produce 50,000 aerospace boards annually in its 100,000-class clean room. General Manager Zeng Xuan noted their products meet stringent aerospace standards and have supported multiple satellite models with a 100 percent qualification rate.

Downstream, Shaanxi Baota Xingkong Aerospace Technology Co Ltd operates the "Yan'an Constellation" and a big data center, providing standardized products for over 30 industries nationwide and boosting data interpretation efficiency by over 60 percent.

Such an achievement is inseparable from strong policy guarantees. Xixian New Area has rolled out measures to strengthen policy supply and financial empowerment to back up such projects. Currently, the area hosts 34 enterprises in the aerospace industry chain, achieving an output value of 5.69 billion yuan ($835.29 million) in 2025.

"The success of this satellite sets another benchmark for the new area to cultivate a more modernized industrial system with new quality productive forces," a spokesperson for Xixian New Area told China Daily.

"We will use this to accelerate the linkage of commercial aerospace, high-end equipment and new materials, contributing the 'Xixian experience' to China's high-quality manufacturing development."

High-income status seen around corner

Official data put China's '25 per capita GNI above World Bank's '24 benchmark

By **ZHOU LANXU** and **OUYANG SHIJIA**

China is on track to reach high-income status within one to two years, as steady growth and structural upgrading place the country on the cusp of a key developmental milestone, even as external uncertainties add complexity to the outlook, economists said.

"Taking a relatively conservative view, China is likely to reach the threshold of a high-income economy within the next one to two years," said Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research. The academy is affiliated with the National Development and Reform Commission.

> "Taking a relatively conservative view, China is likely to reach the threshold of a high-income economy within the next one to two years."
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$19.2 trillion
gross national income of China in 2025, according to the National Bureau of Statistics

Sun said that crossing the threshold would mark "an important milestone" and signal a new phase of development characterized by upgrades to industrial structures and shifts in household consumption patterns, in line with the country's broader push for high-quality growth.

The outlook comes as China is now very close to this key milestone. In the World Bank's classification in July last year, China was ranked as an upper-middle income economy with 2024 per capita gross national income (GNI) at $13,660, versus the 2024 high-income benchmark of $13,935.

In 2025, the country's GNI reached 139.4 trillion yuan ($19.2 trillion), the National Bureau of Statistics said. Using NBS figures, China Daily estimates per capita GNI at 99,109 yuan for 2025, or about $14,503 at current exchange rates — exceeding the 2024 threshold of $13,935.

The final classification depends on the updated benchmarks for 2025 and exchange rate adjustments based on the World Bank's calculation method, allowing the next round of income group updates to be released in July to provide a key observation window for assessing whether China formally enters the high-income category.

International institutions share a cautiously optimistic view. Marshall Mills, senior resident representative of the International Monetary Fund in China, said he saw significant potential for further expansion of China's economy as reforms to improve resource allocation and boost consumption could lift annual GDP growth by nearly 0.5 percentage point.

This will help address the challenges of a shrinking labor force and slowing productivity growth and support the country's prospects of reaching high-income status within the next five years, he said.

Beyond headline income levels, economists and policy advisers stressed that sustaining growth after reaching high-income status will be critical. Some economies have struggled with slowing momentum after crossing the threshold.

Sun, from the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said the key lies in strengthening innovation capacity, which China has prioritized as a strategic priority. The country's steady rise in the Global Innovation Index rankings — where it ranked 10th in 2025 — reflects significant progress that could help it avoid the so-called middle-income trap.

Equally important is maintaining social stability and improving income distribution, Sun said, adding that advancing common prosperity will be crucial to ensuring long-term, sustainable development after achieving higher income levels.

The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) has demonstrated China's determination of achieving steady mid-to-long-term growth, reiterating China's goal of achieving "mid-level developed country" status by 2035.

With first-quarter GDP growth resilient at 5 percent despite rising external headwinds, Mao Shengyong, deputy head of the NBS, said that growth driven by technological progress and industrial upgrading will be sustainable going forward.

Zhang Bin, deputy director at the Institute of World Economics and Politics under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that given China's current level of industrialization and production capacity, reaching the World Bank's high-income threshold would be a natural outcome.

Crossing the line does not mark the end of development, Zhang said, adding that China's per capita GNI remains far behind the more than $80,000 in leading advanced economies such as the United States.

"China still faces gaps in frontier technologies and advanced capabilities, requiring continued efforts to catch up with leading economies," he said.

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Tech firms spending big on strategic land buys

By **CHENG YU**
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China's internet giants are ramping up land purchases in major cities, committing more than 15 billion yuan ($2.2 billion) since late last year in a strategic shift from asset-light leasing to owning property tied to core operations.

Companies including ByteDance and JD have led a fresh wave of land purchases in hubs such as Beijing and Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, signaling a deeper transformation in how China's tech sector manages capital and growth.

The new buying spree is not a traditional real estate play but reflects a broader move toward heavy-asset ownership. Firms are increasingly seeking to anchor research, data and headquarters functions in self-owned facilities, aligning with long-term industrial strategies rather than short-term property gains, industry experts said.

JD has been among the most active. Last month, a unit of JD spent 1.76 billion yuan to acquire two parcels of land in Beijing E-Town, adjacent to its existing headquarters. The purchase came just one day after its other subsidiary paid 663 million yuan for a commercial site in Hangzhou.

In late 2025, JD secured land in Nanjing and acquired office space in Hong Kong's Central District for HK$3.47 billion ($442.9 million), underscoring a multi-city footprint built in rapid succession.

Other tech majors are following suit. Alibaba Group acquired office space in Hong Kong's Causeway Bay in October 2025 for HK$7.2 billion, while ByteDance has spent roughly 6.1 billion yuan this year alone on two prime sites in Beijing's Haidian district, a core technology hub.

The pace of investment has accelerated markedly since 2025, with purchases becoming more concentrated and strategic. Unlike earlier, scattered acquisitions of office buildings, the latest deals feature high self-use ratios, strong links to industrial activity and long-term operational horizons.

Yan Yuejin, deputy head of the E-House China R&D Institute in Shanghai, said: "This is about optimizing balance sheets and hedging against uncertainty. Holding high-quality real estate in core locations can provide stable asset appreciation, especially as property prices have adjusted."

The shift also reflects a redefinition of land use by tech firms. Rather than speculative holdings, companies are developing integrated campuses for research and development, digital industry parks and artificial intelligence computing centers — infrastructure viewed as critical to future growth, Yan said.



A file photo shows a horse-themed setup by ByteDance's Douyin in Shanghai on Jan 27. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Demand from internet companies — often linked to what policymakers called new quality productive forces — is emerging as a rare source of certainty, particularly in the commercial and R&D segments of major cities still grappling with a property slowdown," he added.

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BUSINESS

Restaurant chains eye rapid growth

Country's catering industry experiencing acceleration in franchised development

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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People wait to dine at a Haidilao hotpot restaurant in Shanghai on May 2. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The country's catering sector is experiencing sustained acceleration in chain store development, driven by market consolidation and operational quality upgrades, according to the 2026 White Paper on the Development of Restaurant Chains in China released by the China Chain Store & Franchise Association and Meituan.

The report shows that the percentage of restaurants in the country that are part of a chain rose from 21 percent in 2023 to 25 percent in 2025, an average annual increase of 2 percent. This growth highlights the sector's resilience in adapting to evolving consumer preferences and operational challenges. Across segments — including beverages, fast foods, snacks and marinated flavors — leading chain enterprises with national influence have emerged in every category.

"This is exactly why we upgraded the 'Top 100 Catering Franchises' to the 'Top 300 Chain Restaurants' this year," said Peng Jianzhen, CCFA director. "With the chain rate rising, more brands are emerging, and as niche categories diversify, benchmark chains are appearing across every sector — Chinese, Western, casual dining, fast food, beverages and baking."

The white paper identified a clear divergence among brands of different sizes, according to the Meituan Research Institute. Top-tier brands with over 10,000 outlets continue to consolidate leadership through standardized operations and strong brand influence.

Chains with between 101 and 500 stores increased store count in 2025 by 28.3 percent year-on-year, while chains boasting between 501 and 1,000 outlets also expanded rapidly, increasing store numbers by 32.6 percent year-on-year. The smallest chains, typically with three to 10 outlets, shrank sharply, with an 18.5 percent year-on-year reduction, largely due to limited risk resilience and underdeveloped supply chains.

Xiaocaiyuan, a "Top 300" Chinese chain restaurant brand, stands as a prime example of high-quality growth. Founded in 2013, Xiaocaiyuan has expanded to over 800 directly operated stores. According to its first interim report following its public listing in August 2025, the company achieved revenue of 2.71 billion yuan ($397.5 million) during the reporting period, a year-on-year increase of 6.5 percent, with the growth driven by the steady expansion of its store network. Net profit reached 382 million yuan, representing a surge of 35.7 percent compared to the same period in 2024.

Overall, the total number of catering outlets in the country remained largely stable, with 7.47 million stores nationwide by the end of 2025 — a 0.1 percent decline from the previous year.

Category differentiation is a defining feature of the market.

Beverage chains, in particular, have become the primary growth engine, with a chain rate of 54 percent, far above the industry average. These brands benefited from high platform subsidies and booming takeaway demand, allowing rapid replication of standardized operations.

Top-tier brands, leveraging mature operating systems and strong management, are the backbone of China's chain development.

Luckin Coffee is an example of this trend. Its 2025 financial report shows a net addition of 8,708 stores, bringing the total to 31,048 — a 39 percent year-on-year increase. Self-operated stores alone exceeded 20,000. Luckin also prioritized product innovation, launching over 140 new items in 2025, driving a 39 percent increase in freshly prepared beverage sales to 4.1 billion cups.

Other segments, including Chinese and Western cuisine, face more complex operational challenges, said the report. High unit costs, intricate supply chains, and difficulties in standardization have prompted operators to focus on service quality and menu innovation rather than rapid expansion. Consumer demand for value and quality favors standardized, cost-effective categories.

The consumer market remains robust. Total retail sales of consumer goods reached 50.12 trillion yuan in 2025, up 3.7 percent year-on-year, while catering revenue totaled 5.79 trillion yuan, up 3.2 percent. Although slightly below overall retail growth, this demonstrates the sector's resilience amid intensified competition and evolving consumer expectations.



A humanoid robot interacts with people at Luckin Coffee's exhibition booth during the 2026 Shanghai International Coffee Culture Festival on April 30. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Macroeconomic indicators provide additional context: GDP growth reached 5 percent in 2025, disposable income rose by 5 percent, and the service industry producer index increased by 5.5 percent. Catering revenue could have grown around 5 percent without subsidy-driven "takeaway battles", indicating that competitive pricing pressures slightly suppressed revenue, though market fundamentals remain strong, said the report.

While competition has intensified, operational quality is improving. Meituan and Dianping data show a decline in low-rated outlets in 2025, while mid-tier scores rose, reflecting enhanced service stability and operational excellence. Market shakeouts have accelerated improvements in management standards, menu consistency and customer experience, laying the foundation for sustainable medium-term growth.

Technology adoption is also increasing. The 2026 white paper on the Development of China's Catering Ingredients, released by catering research unit NCBD and Expo Fine-food Shanghai, reported that the cooking robot market exceeded 3.5 billion yuan in 2025 and is projected to surpass 12 billion yuan by 2030. These robots are being deployed in group meals, fast food and regional cuisines, helping restaurants standardize operations and improve efficiency.

Chain penetration is higher in major cities. First-tier cities such as Beijing; Shanghai; Guangzhou and Shenzhen of Guangdong province, have a chain rate of 33.2 percent. Lower-tier cities are catching up, with fifth-tier cities reaching 21 percent, reflecting accelerated chain expansion into less developed markets, said the report. But a rising number of catering brands is shifting to lower-tier markets with localized strategies.

Taking Miss Xiaogu, a brand which focuses on three core categories — spicy hotpot, *malatang* (numbing, spicy and hot) and *malaxiangguo* (numbing, spicy and fragrant pot) — as a prime example, the brand has now surpassed 1,200 stores globally.

Targeting the lower-tier market, Miss Xiaogu has specifically engineered a profitable single-store model characterized by low costs and high repurchase rates, deeply aligning with community consumption needs. By leveraging the core advantage of low rental costs in these markets, the brand practices deep community-based operations. It has precisely anchored two core positioning strategies: as the "family backup kitchen" and as a "convenient canteen for young people". This approach has allowed it to rapidly gain a foothold in smaller cities, establishing itself as a benchmark case for the downward expansion of restaurant chains.

Peng of CCFA suggested key priorities for the industry should include trade-in subsidies for catering equipment. He said catering equipment should be included after automobiles and home appliances in trade-in policies.

Expanding subsidies would facilitate digital and intelligent transformation, improving equipment standards and productivity, he added.

Peng also suggested in the report ideas for opening domestic listing channels, allowing catering companies to access domestic capital markets. Additionally, he called for specific policies to support the international expansion of Chinese cuisine in order to enhance global influence and market share.

Online
Unlock China's Treasures: Shop, Explore, Enjoy.

Walmart's Chengdu store turns prototype for nationwide upgrades

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**

Walmart China's recently revamped Chengdu, Sichuan province, store marks the launch of its next-generation store model in the country, signaling a rising trend of proximity-focused formats in retail.

The 20-year-old location has been overhauled with a new merchandise layout, spatial design and enhanced omni-channel experience, reflecting the company's strategy to deliver fresh, high-value and convenient shopping for urban consumers.

The Chengdu store will serve as a prototype for a nationwide upgrade. Walmart plans to renovate more than 100 existing stores and open five to 10 new locations this year, signaling a renewed push for high-quality growth in the retail market in the country.

The new store format targets urban middle-income families and single shoppers. Walmart has optimized a compact footprint of roughly 3,000 square meters with around 10,000 stock keeping units, emphasizing fresh food and groceries.

Zhu Jun, senior vice-president of Walmart China, said: "The Chengdu reopening represents the company's response to changing consumer habits and will serve as a blueprint for similar renovations in other cities this year."

Fresh food is central to the new model. Walmart has intensified sourcing from local suppliers and enhanced production, display and shelf-life management standards. Short-shelf-life items, including fresh-cut beef, sashimi, chilled fish and fruit platters, have been expanded, while Chengdu-specific offerings such as a "Sichuan Hot Pot Fresh Ingredients Zone" cater to local tastes.

The stores also feature digital shelf-life monitoring systems, seasonal product corners, and flower and fruit zones, designed to maximize freshness and provide a dynamic shopping experience.

Walmart's refreshed "Marketside" private label has expanded its portfolio of bakery, beverages, snacks and fresh food. The label underscores Walmart's strategy to differentiate through simplicity, freshness and local sourcing.

The Chengdu reopening comes as the retailer continues to rebalance its portfolio. While Walmart China is consolidating to about 300 stores nationwide, its membership format Sam's Club has become the primary growth engine.


Customers shop on April 24 at Walmart's newly opened Chengdu store in Sichuan province, marking the launch of its next-generation store model in China. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Sam's Club has opened 10 new locations over the past year and plans at least 14 more in 2026. The recent opening of the Wuxi, Jiangsu province, store marked its 64th location in China, highlighting the company's focus on its membership warehouse format while quietly refining neighborhood Walmart stores.

This expansion mirrors a broader reshaping of the country's offline retail market, according to Worldpanel by Numerator's first quarter 2026 analysis. The data underscore a widening gap between traditional modern trade channels and community-focused, high-value formats.

Hypermarkets, supermarkets and convenience stores faced headwinds in the first quarter, according to Worldpanel. Factors include the post-holiday "reverse migration", stronger foodservice recovery, a rebound in travel spending and continued online penetration.

Modern trade sales fell 3.2 percent year-on-year, highlighting the challenges of large-format retail in an increasingly fragmented market, Worldpanel's analysis shows.

Smaller, proximity-focused formats bucked the trend, posting a 2.7 percent year-on-year increase, driven by higher purchase frequency and everyday convenience. These results underscore the resilience of urban and community-oriented retail, a space where Walmart's compact "new generation" store model seeks to gain traction.

Among China's top 10 retailers, Walmart China and Hema Fresh stood out for growth and market adaptation. Walmart China pursued a dual-line strategy, focusing on neighborhood markets and Sam's Club membership stores. Strengthened product capabilities and localized supply chains helped both Walmart and Sam's Club private labels achieve rapid growth, reflecting a strategy consistent with the Chengdu store prototype, Worldpanel stated.

Hema Fresh increased its market share by 1.2 percentage points, overtaking CR Vanguard Group. Its dual-format expansion strategy improved both efficiency and scale, with penetration rates approaching 8 percent in the first quarter. Hema's value-for-money private label leveraged supply chain advantages to increase penetration by 4.6 points in the eastern region and achieve breakthroughs in the southern region.

Yonghui Superstores saw a 1 percentage point decline in market share, but reported strong rebounds in sales and private label performance, aided by initiatives in product quality and scene-driven sales.

JD Seven Fresh expanded offline, leveraging logistics and supply chain advantages to attract in-store traffic. Its northern region penetration rate rose 1.2 points year-on-year in the first quarter.

Worldpanel highlighted an emerging trend of ecosystem integration between online and offline retail. High-efficiency formats, including small supermarkets and discount stores, continue to perform, while online channels grow through content commerce and instant retail.

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CHINA

Coming of age



Senior students cheer under an "Adulthood Arch" during their coming-of-age ceremony at a high school in Kuqa, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, on Wednesday. The event saw over 1,200 students honoring their transition to adulthood through a series of activities like Constitution oath-taking and exchanging letters with parents.
YUAN HUANHUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Prosecutors pledge to tighten marine protection oversight

Advanced tech, better governance to be used to safeguard ocean ecosystems

By YANG ZEKUN
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China's top procuratorate has pledged to strengthen legal oversight in marine environmental protection by leveraging advanced technologies and enhancing coordinated governance, as the country steps up efforts to safeguard ocean ecosystems and support sustainable development.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate said it will intensify case handling in key areas such as marine water quality, coastline changes and control of invasive species.

The move aligns with the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which advocates for stronger prevention of marine environmental risks at the source and greater efforts in pollution control and ecological restoration in key coastal regions.

Xu Xiangchun, director of the SPP's public interest litigation department, said procuratorial organs in coastal regions have made notable progress in recent years by leveraging geographic advantages and actively performing their public interest litigation functions.

"Protecting marine ecological resources is also closely linked to safeguarding people's livelihoods," Xu said, noting that improving marine environmental quality directly supports coastal communities and industries.

> "Protecting marine ecological resources is also closely linked to safeguarding people's livelihoods."
>
> **Xu Xiangchun,** director of the SPP's public interest litigation department

Xu acknowledged that balancing ecological protection with economic development remains a challenge, particularly in cases involving historical issues and complex local conditions. "It is important to properly handle this relationship to address problems at their root," he said.

He added that many long-standing and complex issues in marine protection require coordinated efforts across different levels of procuratorial organs and government departments, rather than relying on a single authority.

One case released by the SPP illustrates this approach. In Xiangshui county, Jiangsu province, an agricultural company converted 300 hectares of saline land along the Yellow Sea into aquaculture ponds and leased them to 106 shrimp farmers. Untreated wastewater was discharged into the sea, affecting coastal water quality and harming public interests.

The local procuratorate identified the case during a campaign to protect the Yellow Sea and launched a public interest litigation investigation in April 2023. It then convened authorities overseeing water resources, agriculture and rural affairs, and the environment.

Although all parties agreed the discharge was illegal, enforcement proved difficult. Farmers had already invested heavily, an immediate shutdown risked social tensions, departmental responsibilities overlapped, and the large aquaculture area posed technical challenges.

The procuratorate issued recommendations urging coordinated enforcement, better management of discharge outlets and standardized wastewater treatment. Following joint enforcement efforts, more than 60 drainage outlets were removed and dynamic monitoring was introduced.

To balance environmental protection with economic stability, local authorities invested more than 10.7 million yuan ($1.5 million) in wastewater treatment facilities, ensuring compliant discharge while maintaining production. An ecological education base was also built.

The case later revealed broader problems. In 2024, prosecutors found similar issues across more than 9,300 hectares of coastal aquaculture areas and issued recommendations to promote unified treatment. A centralized tailwater treatment area covering more than 833 hectares was established, 40 monitoring points were added, and an ecological aquaculture community of more than 8,000 hectares was developed.

By April last year, more than 24,600 hectares of aquaculture areas in Yancheng, Jiangsu, had completed rectification and achieved compliant discharge. The Xiangshui experience has since been promoted across the province.

Xu said prosecutors will focus next on key areas of marine ecological protection and intensify case handling. Led by an ongoing public interest litigation campaign around the Bohai Sea, prosecutors will guide local authorities to strengthen oversight in major marine environmental and resource protection cases and develop region-specific models.

Technology will play a larger role, Xu said. Given the fluid and complex nature of marine ecosystems, traditional methods of identifying clues and collecting evidence are no longer sufficient. Prosecutors will make greater use of satellite remote sensing and big data models.

He added that prosecutors will deepen cooperation with departments overseeing ecology and environment, natural resources and maritime affairs, improve information-sharing and joint case-handling mechanisms, and issue guidance to address practical issues such as damage assessment and compensation management.

Supercomputer reconstructs evolution of the universe

By LI MENGHAN
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Chinese scientists and international collaborators have used one of the largest cosmological simulations ever created to "fast-forward" the universe from the "Big Bang" all the way to the present day inside a supercomputer.

The project, called HyperMillennium and led by the National Astronomical Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, simulates a cubic volume of space with a side size of 12 billion light years. That is roughly equivalent to lining up about 120,000 Milky Way galaxies end to end.

Inside this digital universe, 4.2 trillion virtual dark matter particles evolve under gravity, reproducing 13.8 billion years of cosmic history. Dark matter refers to an invisible form of matter that does not emit or absorb light but is believed to make up about 85 percent of all matter in the universe and to provide the gravitational "framework" on which galaxies form.

"Due to the vast scale of the universe and the long course of its evolution, the distant galaxies observed through telescopes are actually static snapshots dating billions or even tens of billions of years ago, making it impossible to track their evolution in real time," said Gao Liang, a professor at the CAS' National Astronomical Observatories who leads the project.

Gao said ordinary matter that emits light represents only the "visible surface" of the cosmos, while dark matter forms its "invisible skeleton". Because dark matter does not interact with electromagnetic radiation, it cannot be directly observed with telescopes.

"Cosmological simulations are the key to solving this puzzle. By calculating the gravitational interactions among vast numbers of virtual dark matter particles, they can reconstruct — with high precision — the evolution of the universe from its early days to the present, allowing us to directly 'see' how dark matter particles cluster, distribute, and form structures over time," he said. "By comparing simulated virtual universes with real telescope observations, scientists can test and refine theoretical models of dark matter and dark energy."

Wang Qiao, a researcher at the observatory, said next-generation sky surveys are increasing demand for such simulations. These include the European Space Agency's Euclid mission and the China Space Station Telescope.

He said simulations must balance two competing requirements: a large enough volume to match the scope of sky surveys and extremely fine resolution to capture the formation of small galaxies.

"The emergence of ultra-large-scale cosmological simulations like the HyperMillennium aims to bridge the gap driven by observational progress, providing a crucial link in humanity's quest to understand the universe's ultimate mysteries," Wang said.

Globally, he noted, there are now three major simulations tracking trillions of dark matter particles: Japan's Uchuu simulation, Europe's Flagship 2, and China's HyperMillennium. The Flagship 2 emphasizes large cosmic volume, while the Uchuu focuses on high resolution. According to Wang, the HyperMillennium combines both strengths.

Wang added that the HyperMillennium runs on China's ORISE supercomputer, using software optimized for that system.

The simulation of 4.2 trillion particles produced about 13 petabytes of data — roughly equivalent to 13 million high-definition movies. A petabyte is 1,000 trillion bytes of data. Processing this dataset required 16,000 accelerator computing cards working for 18 days, underscoring advances in high-performance computing.

The first academic paper from the project was recently published in the Monthly Notices of the Royal Astronomical Society. It focused on Abell 2744, a giant galaxy cluster known for its complex structure and extreme gravitational interactions. The study found that the simulation closely matches real observations, supporting its accuracy in simulating rare and complex cosmic systems. The first batch of data will be made available worldwide later.

Mike Boylan-Kolchin, a professor at the University of Texas in the United States, described the simulation as "a computational marvel that will help unlock fundamental physics from observations of the cosmos".

"It has an unprecedented range of volume and mass resolution, enabling detailed predictions about how huge numbers of relatively common galaxies are distributed across the cosmic web and the properties of inherently rare and interesting objects that are inaccessible with smaller volumes. The HyperMillennium simulation will be a touchstone for the galaxy formation and cosmology communities for years to come," he said.

Volker Springel, director of the Max Planck Institute for Astrophysics in Germany, said he was struck by the simulation's scale and precision, adding that it "redefines what is nowadays possible in numerical cosmology".

BLCU aims for 16,000 intl students by 2030

By ZOU SHUO
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Beijing Language and Culture University plans to expand its international student population to 16,000 by the end of the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), with degree-seeking students expected to reach 8,000, according to university president Duan Peng.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Duan said BLCU currently hosts 12,000 international students for the 2025 academic year — a 3.5-fold increase from 2023. Among them, 4,300 are undergraduate, master's or doctoral candidates, marking a fivefold rise in degree-seeking students over the same period. The university now ranks first in China for both total international enrollments and degree-pursuing international students.

"Our historical peak was in 2009, with about 8,000 to 9,000 international students. Today we have surpassed that," Duan said. "Back then, degree students numbered around 1,500; now we have over 4,300 — more than double."

Since its founding in 1962, BLCU has cultivated 300,000 international alumni, including 300 ambassadors. Among them are 11 current foreign ambassadors to China who are BLCU graduates.

"These alumni serve as enduring bridges of friendship and understanding," Duan said.

To achieve its 2030 target, BLCU is leveraging its global network of 29 Confucius Institutes and classrooms, four China institutes, Tokyo College of BLCU, Beijing Language and Culture University Bangkok College, BLCU Kazakhstan and the BLCU Saudi Arabia program.

The university has diversified its academic offerings beyond language education to include business, artificial intelligence, computer science and joint engineering programs.

Looking ahead, Duan said the university will broaden its outreach to attract outstanding students worldwide.

"The goal of making China a top study destination is one that all of us in higher education should strive for," he said.

Andriantina Princie Fandresena, a 21-year-old doctoral student from Madagascar, said she has been in China for nearly three years and considers BLCU her second home.


Duan Peng

"I share my daily life on social media — the campus, the scenery, even Chinese songs I've translated into Malagasy — to help more people understand China. I am also researching how to introduce Malagasy culture to Chinese friends," she said.

She added that she often posts practical tips for prospective students from Madagascar, helping them navigate the application process.

"I want more people from my country to experience studying in China," she said.

Another student, Zechariah Werner Levi from the United States, gave up a career in commercial real estate to study at BLCU.

"I wanted to improve my Chinese and understand the Chinese market," he said. "China is hyperfocused on the future — AI, electric cars, consumer services. I hope to work between the US and China someday."

He has since invited his father, mother, brother, sister and best friends to visit China.

"Showing the real China is the best way," he said.

He also posts on social media to give US citizens a more authentic picture of daily life in China.

"I haven't felt any discrimination — people are super nice and welcoming. And the digital ecosystem here — WeChat, delivery, even calling taxis — makes the US feel so slow when I go back," he added.

2 Guangdong museums win global design prize

By QIU QUANLIN in Guangzhou
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Top: Xuelei Fragrance Museum. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Above: Shenzhen Science and Technology Museum.
REN XIAOXIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Two museums in southern China's Guangdong province have been recognized in the Prix Versailles, a global architecture award established by UNESCO and the International Union of Architects, highlighting the country's advances in contemporary design.

The two are the Shenzhen Science and Technology Museum in Shenzhen, a hub of China's reform and opening-up, and the Xuelei Fragrance Museum in Guangzhou, the provincial capital.

"The award showcases the systematic construction, contemporary expression and cultural confidence of China's fragrance culture to the world," said Weng Haocong, director of the Xuelei Fragrance Museum.

Widely regarded as a major prize in architecture and design, the 2026 list of the world's most beautiful museums — commonly known as the Prix Versailles — was announced in France on Monday.

The award recognizes outstanding contemporary architecture and spatial design projects worldwide, emphasizing how architecture responds to urban, cultural, ecological and public life challenges.

According to the organizers, the award values innovation, local cultural expression, ecological efficiency, social interaction and public engagement.

The Shenzhen museum, with a building area of about 128,300 square meters, features a 38-meter-high atrium and permanent exhibition halls covering 35,000 sq m.

Its exterior incorporates cutting-edge technology that creates visual illusions, changing appearance with different weather conditions and times of day. Because of its futuristic design, it has been dubbed "the big spaceship" by locals and visitors, and has become a new landmark for science and culture in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

The Guangzhou-based fragrance museum received the honor after being certified by the Guinness World Records in November as the largest fragrance museum.

Located in Baiyun district, it has an immersive space of over 9,500 sq m, with 18 themed exhibition areas, more than 50 interactive installations and over 300 scent points.

The structure is composed of clusters of red-brick cylinders inspired by the distillers used in modern perfume-making, resembling a "fragrance castle" that appears to breathe.

Unlike traditional museums that focus primarily on visual experiences, it offers a sensory journey centered on smell, providing visitors with a distinctive immersive experience.

For Guangzhou, the recognition signals an expansion of the city's cultural and tourism offerings beyond sightseeing and cuisine to more nuanced sensory experiences, Weng said.

Chen Shaofeng, chairman of the Guangdong Provincial Museums Association and deputy director of the Guangdong Museum, said the fragrance museum, as a specialized institution, plays an important role in promoting fragrance culture.

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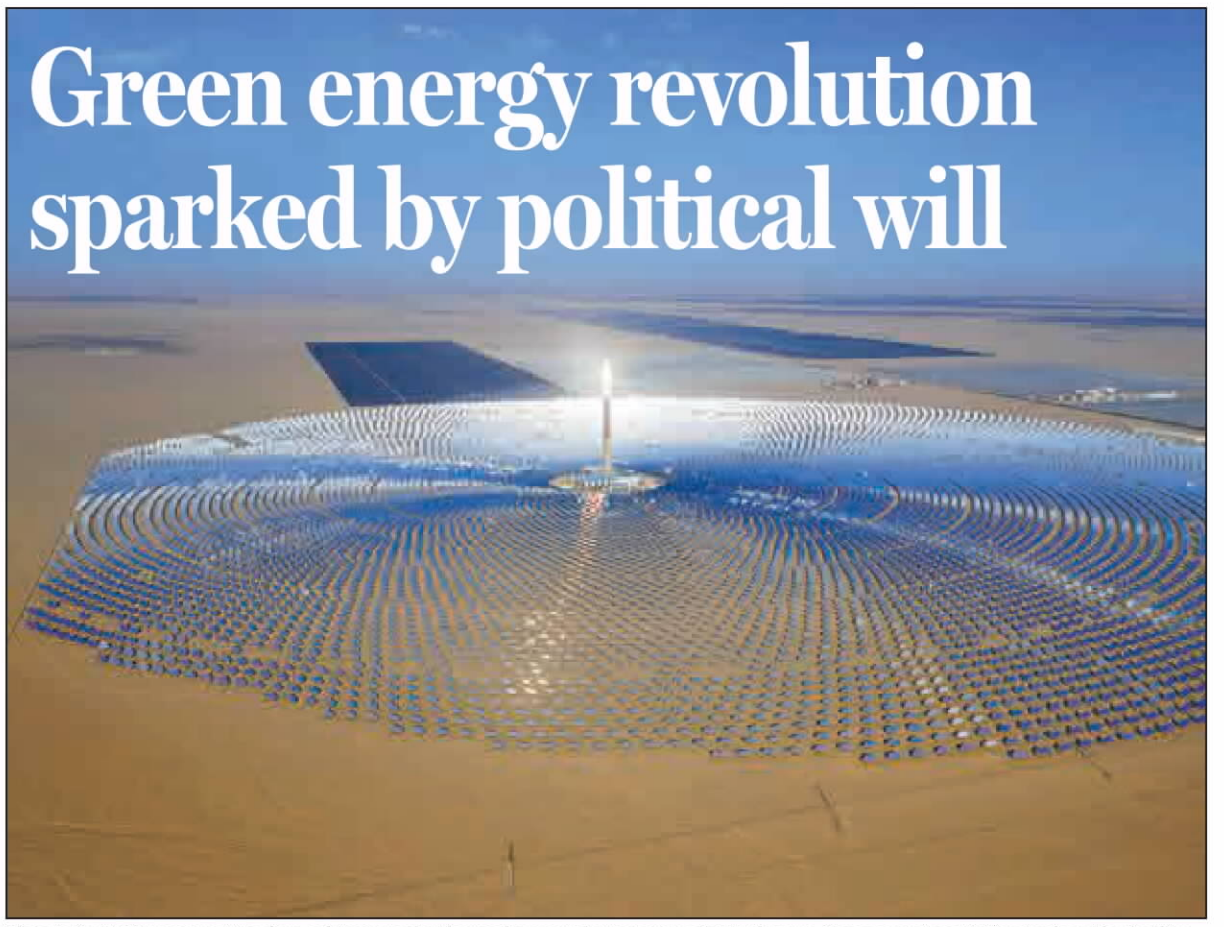
Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Green energy revolution sparked by political will



China's first 100-megawatt molten salt tower solar thermal power plant operates in Dunhuang, Gansu province, in September. The facility, completed in late 2018, is able to generate some 390 million kilowatt-hours of green electricity every year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Adaptive legal framework supercharged nation's renewable network rollout

By HOU LIQIANG
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When the Renewable Energy Law took effect in 2006, China's clean tech sector was a fraction of its current size, struggling to compete as the country wrestled with severe, localized power shortages.

Two decades later, the transformation is staggering. By 2025, renewable electricity generation in China reached approximately 4 trillion kilowatt-hours, exceeding the total consumption of the European Union's 27 member states. More than 60 percent of China's installed power generation capacity comes from renewable sources.

This meteoric rise from a marginal player to the global leader in renewables was not an accident of the market; it was engineered by forward-thinking legislation. According to energy experts, the 2006 law provided the vital regulatory foundation required to transform an energy crisis into an economic opportunity.

Zhou Dadi, executive vice-chairman of the China Energy Research Society, explained that the law was enacted against the backdrop of severe domestic electricity shortages and intensifying international climate negotiations.

Accelerated economic development following the country's reform and opening-up in 1978 further worsened the electricity supply, making rolling blackouts a frequent occurrence, he told China Energy News. On the international front, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, signed in 1992, established the principle of "common but differentiated responsibilities".

Although developed countries accounted for 60 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions at that time, and China's emissions remained far lower than those of developed economies, the country's total energy consumption — given its vast population — could no longer be overlooked, Zhou said.

The enactment of the Renewable Energy Law proved to be the decisive answer. It established renewable energy as a priority category, granted it policy preferences, and provided the legal guarantees required to launch the industry.

In 2003, the National People's Congress, China's top legislature, listed renewable energy legislation on its priority agenda.

Wang Zhongying, a key participant in drafting the law, recalled 2004 as a critical turning point that sped up its passage. That year, China announced to the world that it would enact the law at the International Conference for Renewable Energies in Bonn, Germany.

Wang highlighted the important role of international cooperation in shaping the law.

"Through renewable energy research projects with the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme, as well as group study tours organized by different departments to Germany and Denmark, we deepened our understanding of renewable energy and accelerated the law's drafting," he said.

The efforts of Wang and his team saw the law, featuring classified pricing, guaranteed purchase and special funds, adopted in February 2005.

Qiao Liming, former head of Asia at the Global Wind Energy Council, said that while the law initially provided the framework and policy direction, it was the subsequent series of implementation rules that truly drove the market.



A spiral case stay ring is fixed at a pumped storage hydropower station in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, last month. CAI ZENGLE / FOR CHINA DAILY



A worker installs photovoltaic panels on a hillside in Anqing, Anhui province, last month. WU JUNQI / FOR CHINA DAILY

She pointed to the fixed feed-in tariff policy — borrowed from the German model — as the most critical element. "It allowed renewable power to be stably connected to the grid and sold, thus opening the door to the market," she said.

China's feed-in tariff mechanism — with classified price levels for different technologies and resource regions — requires grid operators to purchase renewable electricity at government-set prices, a guaranteed above-market rate funded through a small surcharge on electricity bills.

After six adjustments to subsidies for wind power and eight for solar, newly approved onshore wind and solar projects in China have achieved grid parity, with their on-grid tariffs set at the same level as local coal-fired power since 2021.

For the first decade after the law's enactment, China's wind power capacity grew 120-fold, from 1.26 million kilowatts to 150 million kW, while solar module prices fell to just one-tenth of their original cost.

However, as the industry expanded, challenges emerged. By the first half of 2016, the volume of curtailed wind and solar power had already surpassed the total for all of 2015. To address this, authorities replaced the full-guaranteed purchase mechanism with renewable portfolio standards in 2019, setting out binding targets for renewable consumption in each province.

In 2017, the Green Electricity Certificate was launched to provide a standardized way for businesses to track and verify that the power they consume comes from clean energy.

Dimitri de Boer, director for China at ClientEarth, an environmental law organization, noted that legislation must not remain static in order to be effective.

"Over time, the law, together with supporting policies, has gradually optimized the framework from administratively set prices, to competitive allocation, to full market integration and grid parity," he said.

De Boer said the second and current revision of the law provides an opportunity to further enhance its effectiveness in light of new and emerging trends.

He said further incentives for energy storage, demand-side response and flexible electricity pricing, for example, can help the energy system to adapt to the next stage of the energy transition, especially as China moves toward very high renewable penetration scenarios.

Equally, it's important to clarify the role of coal in the new system, repurposing it from base-load power to peaking power provision, he added.

De Boer suggested the circular economy and recycling in renewable energy industry chains, especially as the early installations begin to retire, become key focuses of the revision.

"At the same time, we need to ensure that renewable energy doesn't have an excessive impact on biodiversity," he said.

Beyond its domestic impact, China's rapid expansion of clean energy spurred by this legislation has had global significance. By driving down component costs and turning climate action into an economic opportunity, China has made the global energy transition faster, more efficient and far more accessible to developing nations.

De Boer said the share of oil and gas in China's primary energy needs is now only half that of the United States or the EU, meaning China is better insulated from global energy price shocks than many other major economies.

Reducing exposure to volatile fossil fuel markets, he suggested, offers a practical lesson for other nations.

The incredible progress in renewable energy sectors in China is one of the greatest contributions to climate action globally, as it provides the solutions needed by the entire world, De Boer said.

"China has helped to turn climate action from a burden into an economic opportunity," he said.

"Without China's clean energy achievements, the global energy transition would be more expensive, less efficient and take much longer."

Law just one part of key drivers of power transition



Hou Liqiang
Reporter's log

This year marks the 20th anniversary of China's Renewable Energy Law coming into force — a milestone many developing nations now turn to for reference as they scramble to accelerate their own energy transitions.

And rightly so. The law signaled strong political will and kicked off one of the fastest energy transitions in history — one that started almost from scratch. Today, renewable energy accounts for over 60 percent of China's total installed power generation capacity, with total installed renewable capacity surpassing 1,800 gigawatts in 2025.

China's experience in promoting energy transition holds significant potential for many developing nations, as it is not far from other developing states in terms of development stages. As Nigeria's Minister of Environment, Balarabe Abbas Lawal, once stressed in an interview with China Daily, China "understands what we are going through because they have just gone through it".

Yet, we must be careful not to over-romanticize China's experience in renewable energy development — particularly the law's role. Doing so risks missing some key drivers of China's success: its vast domestic market and complete industrial chain. These are precisely what many developing countries lack.

Consider China's geography — from 1.3 million square kilometers of desert in the northwest to 4.73 million square kilometers of maritime territory, spanning multiple climate zones from tropical to cold temperate. This diversity allowed China to test and scale a wide range of renewable technologies under different conditions. Its massive population and industrial base created unparalleled economies of scale, driving down the cost of solar panels and wind turbines to record lows.

But for many much smaller nations with limited land, fragmented infrastructure, or a small electricity market, copying the law without these structural advantages may lead to disappointment.

The hard truth? No amount of legislation can substitute for market scale or an integrated industrial ecosystem. Even China succeeded not by law alone — but through intense bilateral and multilateral cooperation.

The country learned from Germany and Denmark through demonstration projects, welcomed international investment, and trained a generation of policymakers, entrepreneurs and skilled workers. That cooperation — not the law in isolation — built today's giants, such as wind turbine giant Goldwind and BYD, the latter selling 4.6 million new energy vehicles in 2025.

Therefore, developing countries cannot go it alone. They must deepen South-South cooperation — sharing regional markets, jointly building supply chains, and co-investing in manufacturing. Some capacity may be outdated for China but remains highly useful elsewhere, as it can help developing nations start to build their own industrial chains — the key to future takeoff.

Thus, developing nations should set ambitious goals, but begin with humility. The law offers a compass, but only cooperation can pave the road.

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Report: China, Philippines cooperation on electricity a 'win-win'

By HOU LIQIANG

The Philippines and China could benefit from a wealth of untapped potential in renewable energy cooperation, capitalizing on the Philippines' natural resources and Chinese know-how, according to a recently released report.

By partnering with China on renewables, the Philippines could fast-track its shift to clean energy and unlock a strategic market for Chinese companies, creating a "win-win" scenario, the report said.

The Bridging Opportunities: A Roadmap for China–Philippines Renewable Energy Cooperation report was compiled and released in April by People of Asia for Climate Solutions, a Manila-based NGO, and global nonprofit New Energy Nexus.

The report comes as the Philippines strives to raise the share of renewables in its energy mix to 35 percent by 2030 and 50 percent by 2040, while fossil fuels continue to dominate at roughly 78 percent.

The country's energy transition has become more urgent amid the ongoing fossil fuel crisis, as it remains heavily reliant on crude oil imports, the study said.

The Philippines imports 98 percent of its crude oil from the Middle East, according to the country's Department of Energy.

Today's oil crisis is a reminder that the Philippines remains highly exposed to global fuel shocks. What this report shows is that the solution is already within reach, said Brenda Valerio, country director for the Philippines at New Energy Nexus.

"With the right partnerships, we can accelerate deployment while building domestic capability, jobs, and more affordable energy for households and businesses," she said.

While diplomatic ties between the Philippines and China span five decades, collaboration in renewable energy remains limited. The study found that the opportunity is not simply in increasing capital flows, but in structuring partnerships that drive shared growth, including joint ventures, local manufacturing partnerships, knowledge transfer and technical capacity development that anchor value within the Philippines.

Valerio said the Philippines has abundant renewable resources from solar and wind to geothermal. With clear policy direction for energy transition, the country's electricity demand continues to grow, creating a strong market for new capacity.

Despite this, however, she pointed out several important concerns that make international companies, especially those from China, hesitate to engage in the country's renewable energy development.

She noted policy inconsistency as the most frequently cited challenge. "Not necessarily the absence of policies, but gaps in implementation. So processes can be slow or unclear, which creates uncertainty for investors," she said.

She added that the complexity of permitting and regulatory requirements — which can lengthen project timelines and increase costs — along with infrastructure constraints, are also factors to blame.

Chinese renewable energy companies bring extensive experience in technology, manufacturing, and large-scale deployment. The study found that collaboration should expand to distributed and community-based solutions such as rooftop solar and microgrids, which can be deployed faster and help address grid constraints.

"This can be a perfect match. The Philippines has rich renewable resources and urgent needs, while China has strong capacity and readiness. Together, we can deliver clean, safe and affordable electricity for Filipino communities," said Wang Xiaojun, executive director at People of Asia for Climate Solutions.

"The longer we hesitate, the more we lose," he said.

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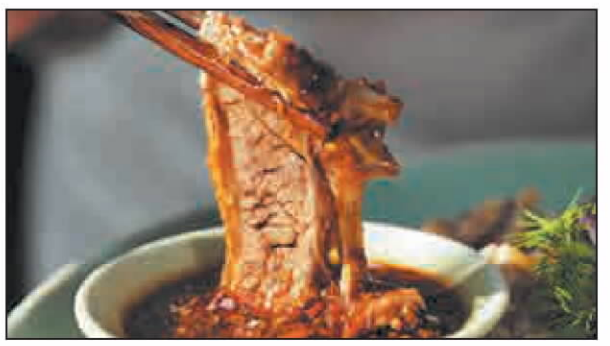
LIFE







From top: Dishes Sun Lixin has taught the public via video, including Huaishan Four Treasures Soup (made with Chinese yam, cauliflower mushroom, cordyceps flower and chicken), beef ribs with dipping sauce, and braised pork knuckle.



Sun Lixin, former executive chef of a century-old restaurant and a veteran of state banquets.

Banquet halls to home stoves

Once a master of state dinners, Sun Lixin now teaches cooking to millions online, proving that even the most refined dishes can live on in everyday, family kitchens, **Li Yingxue** reports.







From top: More of Sun's creations include blueberry Chinese yam, a chicken dish, and a fish dish. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Deep in the maze of Beijing's *hutong* (alleyways), inside a lived-in *siheyuan* (enclosed courtyard), the air is thick with steam and the steady crackle of fire. A wok flashes over an open flame. Oil shimmers, spits, and releases a familiar, irresistible aroma.

Leaning toward a slightly trembling phone camera, a nearly 70-year-old chef speaks in a warm Beijing drawl: "Watch this step carefully — this is called coating. Don't lose focus."

To millions online, he is simply "Second Uncle". In real life, he is Sun Lixin — once the executive chef of the century-old restaurant Bianyifang, best known for its Peking duck, and a veteran of countless state banquets.

In 2019, alongside Zheng Xiusheng, the former executive chef of the Beijing Hotel, he co-founded "Lao Fan Gu", a moniker meaning veteran master chefs. The duo's account has since amassed a Douyin (a social media platform) following of more than 16 million.

But Sun's journey to internet fame was anything but overnight.

Born in 1956, Sun stepped into the kitchen straight out of middle school. His formative years were shaped by Tuo Dailiang, a revered Sichuan cuisine master who once oversaw a massive national banquet marking the 10th anniversary of the People's Republic of China (in 1959).

At 16, Sun learned his first dish, Kung Pao Chicken, and never strayed far from its disciplined principles: a balance of numbing spice, heat, savoriness, freshness, and a subtle sweet-sour finish; precision in knife work; and harmony in texture.

"My master cooked for top leaders, but he was always extremely low-key," Sun recalls. "He told me not to chase fame, just focus on making every meal well."

That philosophy would later define Sun's own career. By his 20s, he had already risen to head chef at one of China's earliest foreign-affairs hotels. Over decades, he became known not only for preserving tradition but also for quietly pushing its boundaries.

One of his most unlikely legacies is a dish now found on menus across China: blueberry yam.

The idea emerged from thrift. While preparing a traditional dish of osmanthus yam strips, Sun found that scraps were inevitably discarded. Unwilling to waste them, Sun steamed and mashed the leftovers.

The result was bland — until he borrowed from Western pastry techniques, adding whipped cream and condensed milk, piping the mixture into delicate mounds, and finishing it with blueberry sauce. What began as an anti-waste experiment became a nationwide staple.

If blueberry yam was an inspired improvisation, Sun's reinvention of roast duck was a deliberate, years-long pursuit.

After taking on a leadership role at Bianyifang, he noticed a shift in diners' expectations toward healthier eating. Roast duck, an iconic dish of Chinese cuisine, was synonymous with richness. Sun wanted to change that without losing its soul.

Starting in 2003, he worked with nutrition experts to overhaul the process. Vegetable juices replaced traditional marinades. Even the liquid poured into the duck cavity — once spiced water — was reimagined. The result was a technique he describes as "roasting outside, simmering inside", producing a duck that was lower in fat and oil while retaining its signature depth of flavor.

The innovation earned a national patent and industry acclaim. But for Sun, the goal was never recognition. It was continuity.

"Preserving tradition doesn't mean refusing changes," he says. "You keep the roots, but give them new life for today."

Having already modernized state banquet dishes for changing tastes, Sun soon realized the medium for sharing them also needed to evolve. In 2019, he turned to a different audience: home cooks.

"Lao Fan Gu" began modestly on Douyin. Early videos were sprawling, sometimes stretching a single dish across dozens of episodes. Viewers quickly lost patience. The team adapted, condensing lessons into concise, digestible segments. Then came a breakthrough: a meticulous re-creation of a historic state banquet menu sparked a surge in followers.

What sets "Lao Fan Gu" apart is not production polish, as there are no studio lights or staged backdrops, but authenticity. Filmed in a real, working home kitchen, the videos capture Sun and Zheng in constant motion, joking like crosstalk performers as they cook. Fans have dubbed it "the crosstalk kitchen".

Yet beneath the humor lies rigor. When demonstrating a smooth walnut dessert once served at state banquets, Sun pauses to emphasize a point: even a stray piece of jujube skin, he notes, would count as a serious mistake in a professional kitchen.

As their audience grew, so did its diversity. Some viewers were complete beginners; others were seasoned chefs. Striking a balance became a challenge.

"If it's too technical, beginners can't follow it," Sun says. "If it's too simple, professionals don't learn anything."

The solution was a dual-layered approach: precise breakdowns of advanced techniques alongside plainspoken explanations in everyday language. Complex methods like stock-making or battering are dissected step by step, while timing and heat are explained in a way that anyone with a home stove can grasp.

The impact is tangible. Viewers often return with updates — moving from tentative first attempts to proud successes — as the once-intimidating kitchen becomes a space of growing confidence.

One user, "yuanfangchuanlaifengdi", commented under a braised pork ribs video: "So detailed! I followed your recipe today — my ribs are stewing now, can't wait." Hours later, he returned with an update: "It's delicious. I used to add so many seasonings, but this simple version tastes even better."

Sun recalls a letter from a woman whose marriage had been on the verge of collapse. Her husband, once disengaged from household life, began cooking after watching "Lao Fan Gu". Gradually, he became more involved at home. "You saved my family," she wrote.

For Sun, the message was clear. "Cooking is a kind of glue for family harmony," Sun reflects. "That's the real meaning behind our motto: we cook well, and you eat well."

Today, "Lao Fan Gu" extends beyond short videos. The team develops ready-to-eat products, visits university campuses, and hosts livestreams demonstrating intricate regional dishes. Their audience's questions — about nutrition, relationships, daily life — have broadened the scope of what began as a cooking channel.

In 2022, Zheng passed away, marking a profound loss. However, the project continues, joined by other veteran chefs, including 75-year-old master chef Hou Yurui, a national judge and expert in Hunan cuisine. Known for his gentle demeanor and focus on health, Hou excels at explaining the underlying logic behind cooking techniques.

Alongside these seasoned masters, younger apprentices increasingly appear on camera, continuing the intergenerational relay of culinary knowledge. Sun remains at the center, steady as ever.

From a teenage apprentice to a master of state banquets, and now a mentor to millions of home cooks, his journey reflects a quiet arc of return. The techniques may be refined, the platforms modern, but the purpose is unchanged.

"In fact, banquet menus are quite simple, with many dishes using everyday ingredients," Zheng once said. "We hope people can learn them and re-create them at family gatherings, passing them down through generations."

That vision endures. In kitchens far from Beijing's *hutong*, in the glow of phone screens and the rhythm of home stoves, Sun and the "Lao Fan Gu" team continue to translate the grandeur of the banquet table into something intimate, repeatable and alive — one dish, one family, one generation at a time.

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Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

From indigo dye to dough art, Xinzhou turns tradition into experiences

TAIYUAN — In an ancient courtyard in Xinzhou city, in North China's relic-rich Shanxi province, Cui Yafei saw a plain white silk scarf turn lush green after it was soaked in dye for 10 minutes, and watched as it then turned indigo within minutes of being exposed to the air.

"Everyone is a designer here. Every piece is a unique memory shared between us and the traditional natural dyeing technique," says Cui.

For her, the hands-on process is far more rewarding than simply taking "check-in" photos at famous landmarks.

The "magic" is part of a traditional natural dyeing technique, a municipal-level intangible cultural heritage project in Xinzhou. The indigo dye is extracted from the leaves of isatis root, a herb that Zhao Hui, the local inheritor, treats with profound respect.

"If maintained well, the dye could outlive me," Zhao says, noting that her workshop in Xinzhou ancient city now offers over 100 different color variations, which are attracting a growing number of young visitors.



Steps of Dong ethnic embroidery (left) and indigo dyeing (middle and right) captured on April 21 in Liping county, Guizhou province. PHOTOS BY XINHUA

The rise of the "handmade economy" marks a shift in Chinese consumption trends, where travelers increasingly seek cultural experiences and emotional value over material purchases.

Xinzhou, known in ancient times as Xiurong, with a history dating back to the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220), has transformed into a living folklore museum, integrating cultural heritage protection with high-quality tourism development.

Just steps away from the dyeing workshop, another group of tourists was busy kneading dough at a traditional *huamo* (steamed buns with elaborate decorations) shop. Under the guidance of Gao Juan, a district-level inheritor of the local *huamo*-making techniques, a lively fish-shaped *huamo* took form in seconds.

"Beyond traditional shapes, we now offer tourists an experience of making cartoon-style buns," Gao says, adding that her business has significantly benefited from the "heritage plus experience" travel model.

Local government support has played a crucial role in the revival. To date, 30 creative cultural shops have opened on a dedicated street in Xinzhou ancient city, including 12 intangible cultural heritage projects.

The trend is resonating across China. In Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, young people are lining up to try their hands at the pottery wheel; in Jiangsu province's Suzhou, crowds gather to craft unique lacquer fans using mineral pigments; and in the tea workshops of Fujian province, visitors learn the 1,000-year-old art of tea making from master craftsmen.

Experts believe the shift reflects a profound change in consumer demand. "Consumers are no longer satisfied with passive reception; they are more willing to pay for unique emotional value, social experiences, and memories of the process," says Yan Chun, a folklore scholar and associate professor at Shanxi Normal University.

The rise of the "handmade economy" has taken ancient traditions out of deep alleys and brought them to the public, activating new consumption momentum, Yan adds.

XINHUA

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CULTURE

Sketching from memories

Picture book artist taps her inner child and grandmother's stories to create award-winning works, report **Li Muyun** and **He Chun** in Changsha.

"Everyone has a child inside," says Cai Gao, the 79-year-old renowned picture book artist who has spent decades nurturing her inner child and her work. "Anything that stops me from being a child, I cut it loose. No mercy," she asserts.

This unwavering inner child has propelled her to the pinnacle of her career. On April 13, Cai became the first Chinese illustrator to receive the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the highest international accolade given every other year to writers and illustrators of children's books. The announcement was made at the annual news conference of the International Board on Books for Young People (IBBY) during the Bologna Children's Book Fair in Italy.

The night she received the news, Cai's thoughts were not on the prize or herself, but on the people and the land that shaped her.

Born in 1946 in Changsha, the capital city of Central China's Hunan province, Cai grew up during the last days of an era when stories were passed down orally from generation to generation. Her worldview was profoundly influenced by the tales her grandmother shared with her while sitting in the courtyard, sewing by hand.

She fondly recalls her grandmother in an immaculate plain blue cotton gown with a fresh flower — either a jasmine or gardenia — pinned to her collar.

"She loved life, and made our daily existence feel like a celebration," Cai reminisces, adding that her grandmother often took her to see both local and visiting opera troupes. This exposure allowed Cai to sketch the characters and preserve the performances in her memory.

Despite never having the opportunity to attend art school, Cai considers her childhood experiences — playing in the courtyard of pomegranate trees, listening to her grandmother's nursery rhymes, and watching theater plays — as the "best education".

"My childhood cannot be replicated," she says. "I'm lucky to have had all of that."

Many of her books echo her childhood memories, including *Where the Moon Goes, I Go*.

"The girl picking the pomegranate in that book is me," she says with a broad smile. "It's easy to illustrate your own childhood. Art is not such a big deal for me because it is never far from life."

Graduating from Hunan First Normal School (now Hunan First Normal University), Cai began her career as a rural teacher. Despite the challenges of rural life, she found beauty in her surroundings and never abandoned her passion for art. Reflecting on her six years working and living in the countryside, she describes herself as a "Sunday artist", seizing any spare moment outside of her teaching duties to pick up her brush.

In 1982, at 36, Cai started working as an editor for children's books at Hunan Juvenile and Children's Publishing House in Changsha. This position allowed her to delve deeply into the world of picture books, both editing and illustrating. Her talent was internationally recognized in 1993 when her book, *Bao'er*, won the Golden Apple Award at the 14th Biennial of Illustration Bratislava, making her the first Chinese artist to receive this prestigious accolade.



Cai Gao (right) interacts with readers at a book sharing and signing session in Changsha, Hunan province, on April 18.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



> "The girl picking the pomegranate in that book is me ... Art is not such a big deal for me because it is never far from life."
>
> **Cai Gao,** the first Chinese illustrator to receive the Hans Christian Andersen Award











Top: Illustrations from Cai's work *How I Came to Be Me*. **Above left:** An illustration from Cai's work *Where the Moon Goes, I Go*. **Above right:** Another illustration from Cai's *Blazing City 1938*.

The story of *Bao'er* is adapted from a tale by Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) novelist Pu Songling's masterpiece *Liaozhai Zhiyi* (Strange Tales from a Chinese Studio). Cai selected the only story featuring a child as the protagonist and reimagined it, focusing on a boy's love for his mother and his courage in confronting evil and darkness.

In Cai's book, when the boy focuses intensely, his eyes turn a clear blue, symbolizing his determination and insight. "Blue is the color of enchanting, clear water, with sunlight lingering deep inside," Cai explains. "Children's eyes are clear and innocent, allowing them to see through to the essence of things."

Like *Bao'er*, many of Cai's works are deeply rooted in Chinese folk traditions and classical literature.

The picture book *The Land of the Peach Blossom* is inspired by the classic essay and poem *The Peach Blossom Spring* by Tao Yuanming from the Eastern Jin Dynasty (317-420), reflecting the Taoist vision of life. Published in 2001 by Fukuinkan Shoten Publishers in Japan, the book's first edition of 5,000 copies sold out within a month. In 2003, two illustrations from the book were selected for inclusion in Japanese sixth-graders' Chinese textbooks.

Tan Fengxia, a professor at Nanjing Normal University and a member of the 2026 Hans Christian Andersen Award jury, praised Cai's work as a powerful model for how Chinese stories can transcend borders.

"She has embraced Western artistic influences with an open mind, blending them into a visual language that is distinctly rooted in Chinese tradition, yet speaks across cultures," Tan says. "She crosses cultural barriers by touching on universal themes: the love for our children and the desire to offer them something bright."

"I love Chinese culture. I love every written character of the Chinese language," Cai says. "I hope the world can see more of the finest Chinese works and, through them, gain a better understanding of China."

Among the works that most impressed the HCA jury was the 2023 edition of *Blazing City 1938*, a wordless, black-and-white picture book created by Cai and her daughter Xiao Aozi, who is also a painter. Through the eyes of a little girl, the book revisits the Wenxi Fire, a devastating catastrophe in Changsha during the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45). The fire destroyed over 90 percent of the houses in Changsha, leaving the city in ruins.

Shereen Kreidieh, president of the HCA Jury, describes Cai's work as "amazing".

"With just two colors and no words, it tells a complete story of war, allowing any child anywhere in the world to have a feeling of what's happening," Kreidieh says.

With her books, Cai hopes to convey the Chinese people's love for peace, a message she believes is increasingly important in today's global context.

"Our picture books should serve as bridges of understanding, bringing more harmony to the world," she says.

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Chinese animation selected for prestigious film festival

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai
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The Chinese animated feature *Nobody* has been selected for the Annecy International Animation Film Festival's official feature film competition, one of the festival's most prestigious sections, organizers announced in late April.

The festival, which was established in 1960, is held annually in France and is globally recognized as the premier animation film festival.

The 2026 edition is scheduled to take place from June 21 to June 27.

Produced by Shanghai Animation Film Studio and Shanghai Film Infinity, *Nobody*, or *Langlang Shan Xiao Yaoguai* in Chinese (The Little Monsters of Langlang Mountain) is a feature-length spin-off of the acclaimed animated short film anthology *Yao-Chinese Folktales*. It was released domestically on Aug 2 and achieved phenomenal success with a cumulative box office of 1.72 billion yuan ($252 million), setting a new all-time record for Chinese 2D animated films.

Written and directed by Yu Shui, the film follows a little pig monster, an outcast neglected by his boss, who inadvertently forms a grassroots counterfeit-pilgrimage team.

The group embarks on an absurd, self-styled journey to the West, hoping to receive immortality from Buddha. The film explores universal themes of family, friendship, growth, and dreams.

The competition section of the Annecy Festival is renowned for its stringent artistic standards and forward-looking industry vision, representing one of the highest benchmarks in global animation.

According to Shanghai Film Infinity, a subsidiary of Shanghai Film Group, the selection of the film is a significant milestone that not only marks another prominent showcase for Chinese animation artistry on the world stage but also opens a core channel to the global market, promising broader international attention and potential cooperation opportunities.

Following its domestic triumph, *Nobody* has begun its international release, opening in markets including Australia, Malaysia, New Zealand and the North American countries.

Its overseas performance has been notably strong in Vietnam, where it has already entered the top five highest-grossing Chinese-language films of all time.

Nobody continues a historic connection between Chinese animation and the Annecy Festival that dates back to 1962, when *Tadpoles Looking for Mother*, one of the world's first ink-wash animated short films, produced by Shanghai Animation Film Studio, amazed audiences with its unique techniques and won the Children's Film Award at Annecy.



A poster for the Chinese animation film *Nobody*.
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CULTURE



From left: Pianist Zhang Haochen; violinist Lyu Siqing (left) and cellist Li-Wei Qin (center); and violinist Ning Feng are performing during the NCPA May Festival. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Mozart takes center stage at NCPA May Festival

Beijing's flagship chamber music event returns with a star-studded lineup, marking the composer's 270th anniversary with global collaborations, **Chen Nan** reports.

Every spring, the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing presents a grand celebration of chamber music — its annual NCPA May Festival.

Running until May 24, the festival is showcasing a diverse array of performances including new works, international ensembles, and the multifaceted forms of chamber music.

This year's festival is especially significant as it marks the 270th anniversary of the birth of Mozart. His works are being featured throughout the event, including at the opening concert last Friday.

Titled *Bows and Strings VI*, the concert saw an impressive ensemble of 10 distinguished artists, including renowned violinist Lyu Siqing, cellist Li-Wei Qin and clarinetist Wang Tao, joining forces with the China NCPA Orchestra under the baton of resident conductor Lai Jiajing.

Together, they performed several of Mozart's iconic masterpieces, including a groundbreaking version of his *Serenade in C Major, K 648*, newly adapted to include brass instruments and piano, which is a departure from traditional string arrangements. Referred to as "A Very Little Night Music", the serenade for two violins and bass is a previously unknown piece. Composed by Mozart when he was in his early teens, the piece dates back to the mid-to-late 1760s and consists of seven miniature movements for a string trio.

"This sense of collaboration and artistic exploration is at the heart of the NCPA May Festival, making it one of the most anticipated musical events of the year in China and beyond," said Lyu, the NCPA May Festival's artistic director, at the NCPA in Beijing on April 15. "With a diverse and star-studded lineup, the 2026 festival promises to be an unforgettable celebration of music, talent, and cultural exchange."



Beyond the opening concert, Lyu, who is also a leading performer at the festival, is presenting several more performances. On Monday, he collaborated with cellist Qin and pianist Chen Sa as a trio in a chamber music concert titled *Dawn and Echo in Vienna*, with music pieces such as Mozart's *Piano Trio in B-flat Major, K 502* and Franz Schubert's *Piano Trio No 2 in E-flat Major, Op 100 (D 929)*.

Then, on May 21, he will take the stage again with the Royal Scottish National Orchestra in a symphonic performance, paying tribute to the grandeur of classical music with pieces including Tchaikovsky's *Polonaise*, an excerpt from *Eugene Onegin*, Act 3, Scene 1, Op 24, and Jean Sibelius' *Violin Concerto in D Minor, Op 47*.

The festival will also feature an outstanding lineup of international and Chinese soloists, including violinist Ning Feng, pianist Zhang Haochen, and renowned ensembles such as the Berlin Philharmonic Piano Quartet, Cappella Andrea Barca, the Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra, and the Hong Kong String Orchestra.

A highlight of the festival will be the performance by violinist Ning and his mentor, the esteemed German musician Antje Weithaas, who will perform alongside I Musici, which was founded in 1951 in Rome, Italy, and is one of the oldest active chamber music groups in the world. The duo will also join forces with the China NCPA Orchestra and conductor Lyu Jia for a performance of Mozart's *Symphony No 36 in C Major, K 425 (Linz)* on May 15, where Ning will take on the viola part, bridging the gap between violin and viola in a fascinating crossover.



Top: Violinist Lyu Siqing (third from right), the artistic director of the NCPA May Festival, announces this year's edition in Beijing on April 15. **Above:** The Berlin Philharmonic Piano Quartet will perform in Beijing on May 16.

For those who appreciate the richness of European chamber music, the festival offers an exciting opportunity to experience the Kodaly Quartet's 60th anniversary celebration, showcasing the unique flavors of Hungarian chamber music.

The Concertgebouw Chamber Orchestra will bring a poetic touch to the festival with its program, embodying the exquisite aesthetics of European chamber music. Additionally, the China NCPA Orchestra will collaborate with pianist Zhang Haochen in a unique fusion of works by composer Chen Qigang and Mozart.

The festival will close with a touch of jazz featuring the legendary Grammy winner Kurt Elling, one of the world's foremost jazz vocalists.

Cellist Qin, who has participated in previous editions of the NCPA May Festival, underscored the significance of chamber music in a recent interview. He highlighted how chamber music offers a unique opportunity for musicians to express their artistry beyond solo performances.

"In chamber music, the cello often plays the 'heartbeat' role, providing rhythmic support," he said at the NCPA in Beijing on April 15. "At first, this may seem monotonous or even boring, but as I gained more experience, I came to appreciate the flexibility of chamber music, the way it allows multiple musicians to combine their voices into a rich, multilayered performance. It's like being both a lead character and a supporting role in a film, and that complexity brings something special to the audience."

In keeping with its community engagement, the festival will once again feature its public performances, bringing music into the heart of the city. These concerts will reach audiences in urban spaces, such as factories, campuses and public areas, providing an opportunity for frontline workers and local residents to experience the joy and warmth of music.

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Literature and learning bridge China and Greece

By **TAN YINGZI** and **DENG RUI** in Chongqing





Left: The 3rd Global Forum on Mutual Learning Among Civilizations began on April 16 at Southwest University in Chongqing.
Right: A Greek guest tries traditional Chinese painting under the guidance of a teacher at the event. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The cultural ties between Greece and China are growing ever stronger, highlighted by a series of collaborative events and initiatives held in Southwest China's Chongqing recently to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership.

Amid the buzz of these celebrations, Greek author and Chinese literature translator Dimitris Sotakis shared his excitement at the 3rd Global Forum on Mutual Learning Among Civilizations, held in mid-April. "We now have many possibilities for collaboration in China in the field of literature that I represent," Sotakis told China Daily.

He added that over the past year, his literary works have found a receptive audience in China, with his second book translated and published on the Chinese mainland. His invitations to major book fairs and events in China further underscore the growing interest in Greek literature.

"Contact with the Chinese language and its way of thinking also acts as a mirror for Greek. It forces us to reevaluate concepts we take for granted, to see our language not as something static, but as a dynamic system that evolves through encounters with differences. This interaction is not one-way, but a continuous dialogue that enriches both sides," he said, adding that there are still many significant contemporary Chinese writers whose works remain unknown in Greece, emphasizing the need for translation programs to bridge this gap.

Held from April 14 to 16 at the Center for Chinese and Greek Civilizations, also known as the Chinese KELKIP, at Southwest University in Chongqing, the forum brought together experts in the Greek language and culture from Greek universities and Chinese institutions with Greek studies departments across China, serving as a crucible of ideas and cultural exchange.

A highlight of the event was the launch of the Sino-Hellenic University Alliance for Mutual Learning Among Civilizations, which unites universities from both nations to foster educational exchange. This initiative promises to be a cornerstone for future scholarly collaboration.

The forum also saw the release of two book series aimed at enhancing mutual learning. One is the Contemporary Greek Legal Classics Translation Series — the first collection in China focused on Greek law. The other, the Documentary Series on Sino-Foreign Medical Exchanges Along the Silk Road, features Sino-Arab and Sino-Persian volumes.

Cui Yanqiang, director of the Chinese KELKIP, noted that the Greek law series was a collaborative effort between legal scholars and university professors from both countries.

In a video speech, Shahbaz Khan, director and representative of the UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia, commended the center for its efforts to promote dialogue, educational exchange, and deeper understanding between cultures. "By bringing together two rich intellectual traditions, the center has created a meaningful platform for reflection and cooperation," he said.

The celebrations continued on April 18 with a salon in honor of World Greek Language Day. The Ambassador of Greece to China, Evgenios Kalpyris, awarded representatives of nine centers of Greek studies at Chinese universities for their outstanding contributions to promoting Greek studies in China. He highlighted the Greek language's 4,000-year history and its "undeniable global dynamism".

Greece established the Greek KELKIP in Athens in 2021, while Southwest University, with its strong background in humanities and philosophy, especially in Chinese and Greek civilizations, collaborated with other Chinese universities to set up the Chinese KELKIP two years later to engage in comprehensive cooperation with Greece.

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SPORTS

ICE HOCKEY





Above: Team China's young stars are jubilant after beating Estonia in a penalty shootout and claiming the silver medal at the International Ice Hockey Federation Men's World Championships Division I Group B tournament in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Tuesday. **Below:** China's Hou Yuyang celebrates scoring a goal during the match. XINHUA

CHINA CLAIMS HISTORIC SILVER

Young, all-Chinese roster reaches heights not seen in three decades

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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From having to rely on naturalized troops at its home Olympics to securing a silver medal at the worlds with an all-Chinese roster, China's men's ice hockey has come a long way over the past four years.

With gloves tossed in the air and the crowd on its feet roaring, pucksters in red and white collided in bear hugs, as the wild celebration at the Universiade Center Arena in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Tuesday sent a strong message to ice hockey's elite — the long-overdue rise of China's men's program is happening for real and, remarkably, on its own.

The elation was triggered by the host squad's 3-2 penalty shootout win (4-3 overall) over Estonia in its fifth and final round-robin game at the International Ice Hockey Federation Men's World Championships Division I Group B tournament to clinch a silver medal at the third-tier event in the IIHF Worlds system. It marked the Chinese men's best result since the current multi-division worlds format was adopted in 2001.

The awe-inspiring podium finish, witnessed by a rapturous home crowd, is expected to place Team China at 24th overall in IIHF's 2026 standings, after the completion of the top- and second-tier championships at the end of May, giving the country its highest-ever ranking in the traditionally Western-dominated sport since it claimed 20th place way back in 1994.

Team China's strong campaign at the six-nation Shenzhen tourney — eventually won by Estonia with four straight regulation wins, two more than the host — has produced a more profound boost, beyond just statistical feats, for the game domestically, given its dramatic shift of strategy over the past four years.

Rather than recruiting North American-born players with Chinese heritage, like the country did around the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, this current national program has put together a new breed of young talent all born and raised in China, yet nurturing their hockey prowess in overseas minor leagues, and mixed them up with the best of the domestic league to represent their nation on the international stage.

Ten of Team China's 23 players in Shenzhen are currently honing their game in overseas programs, such as the US college league, the Japan-based Asian league and Canada's Ontario Hockey League.

The untapped potential of this young cohort, and the camaraderie among them, have created a more united squad with greater pride in representing their home country than the naturalized Olympic squads of four years ago, where over half of China's men's and women's lineups were born either in the United States or Canada.

And, arguably, nobody has embodied the program's new approach more than China's teen prospect Wang Haoxi.



The 18-year-old, 1.96-meter Beijing native, who became the highest-selected Chinese player in NHL history after being picked by the San Jose Sharks at 33rd overall in the 2025 draft, lived up to his billing as the new face of Team China by winning the tournament's Best Defenseman award.

Wang, who goes by the name Simon in Canada where he plays in the OHL, made no secret of Team China's ambition, throwing down the gauntlet to the world's elite.

"No, it did not exceed our own expectations, because we know how good a team we are," Wang said after the penalty shootout victory over Estonia.

"Our team is very strong, and we fought our hardest in every game. If we hadn't needed overtime to beat Romania (in the second game), we could've secured the gold and the promotion," said Wang, who appeared in 57 games in the 2025-26 OHL season, recording 26 points between the Oshawa Generals and Niagara IceDogs.

Tying with Estonia on the total number of wins, Team China had to settle with a runner-up finish, three points shy of the European side, due to, as Wang pointed out, its two overtime wins.

With an upbringing and development path similar to Wang's, 17-year-old goalie Tu Yueran couldn't hold back his pride after making his senior international debut for Team China in Shenzhen, having stood out in Canada's minor program.

Tu's composure beyond his years and solid skills took over in the critical shootout as he denied three of Estonia's five attempts to help secure the win together with teammate Zheng Mingju, who sent the crowd into frenzy by scoring China's final and fifth penalty to close out the match.

"Being able to represent China is the best feeling in the world (for us). I am glad we got the job done," said Tu, who goes by the name Eric in Canada and, somewhat appropriately, has an image of the impenetrable Great Wall on the back of his helmet.

"To play for your country with so many people rallying behind you feels so different from playing for a club overseas," said Tu, who made 1035 saves representing the Calgary Hitmen in 45 games in the 2025-26 Western Hockey League season.

"Winning the game gave us a lot of confidence. We had that belief in the room already, and winning has just added to that."

China's head coach Perry Pearn, a Canadian former assistant coach with the NHL's Vancouver Canucks, said the trajectory of China's young core is fascinating.

"It's exciting, because we let some young players go (without being called up) that are pretty close to being here, who are playing pretty good junior hockey in North America," said the 74-year-old, who coached Canada's women's national team and Japan's men's squad before taking the China's men's team job in 2025.

"I don't think it will be long before they are ready to come here. Of course, Eric (Tu) and Simon Wang are pretty good kids from the standpoint of hockey in general. I think that really bodes well for the Chinese game."

BASKETBALL

Thunder strikes first against Lakers as Pistons down Cavs

The Oklahoma City Thunder overpowered LeBron James and the Los Angeles Lakers 108-90 on Tuesday to grab a 1-0 lead in their NBA Western Conference semifinal series.

A balanced offensive performance and steely defensive display from the reigning NBA champion were enough to seal victory over the depleted Lakers, which started brightly, but trailed for the final three quarters.

Chet Holmgren led the Thunder with 24 points and 12 rebounds, while reigning NBA Most Valuable Player Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and Ajay Mitchell added 18 points apiece.

"We were a little choppy, a little rusty, but offensively we just stuck with it," Gilgeous-Alexander said, saluting a Thunder defense that restricted the Lakers to their lowest score in a playoff game since 2021.

"We just try to make people play outside their comfort zone, as simple as that," Gilgeous-Alexander said of the Thunder defense. "Whatever guys like to do, we like to take that away from them."

The commanding Thunder victory underscored the size of the task facing the fourth-seeded Lakers if they are to defy the odds and upset the champion in the best-of-seven series.

Oklahoma City completed a 4-0 regular-season sweep over the Lakers, winning each game by an average margin of 29.3 points.

Tuesday's series-opener at Oklahoma City's Paycom Center echoed the Thunder's regular-season dominance, with the champion pulling away down the stretch to score an emphatic win.

James, who had defied his 41 years to lead the Lakers to a surprise 4-2 upset of the Houston Rockets in the first round, led Los Angeles with 27 points in a losing effort.

Rui Hachimura added 18 points with Marcus Smart bagging 12 and Deandre Ayton 10.



Oklahoma City Thunder center Isaiah Hartenstein celebrates as fans react to his basket during a second-round NBA playoffs series game against the Los Angeles Lakers in Oklahoma on Tuesday. AP

Detroit quells late rally

In Tuesday's other playoff game, Cade Cunningham scored 23 points as the Detroit Pistons held off a second-half rally to beat the Cleveland Cavaliers 111-101 in their NBA Eastern Conference semifinal series opener.

The top-seeded Pistons looked to be cruising to a comfortable win after dominating in the first half and taking a 17-point lead in the third period.

But, a spirited Cleveland rally saw the Cavaliers close to within four points before Detroit finally pulled clear again in the fourth quarter.

Jalen Duren had three dunks, two rebounds and a block in a 67-second stretch to break open a tied game.

Cunningham was one of six Detroit players to finish in double figures, with Tobias Harris adding 20 points while Duncan Robinson bagged five three-pointers on his way to a 19-point haul at the Pistons' Little Caesars Arena.

Daniss Jenkins added 12 points from the bench with Ausar Thompson and Duren scoring 11 points apiece.

Donovan Mitchell led Cleveland with 23 points, including four three-pointers, while James Harden scored 22 points with eight rebounds and seven assists.

"It was a great team win — defending the ball, rebounding the ball," Cunningham told broadcaster NBC.

"We've got a great system in place. You've got somebody that will come in behind you whenever you get tired.

"But it's one win, we've got to come back and do it again."

Detroit had battled into the conference semifinals after coming back from 3-1 down to defeat Orlando 4-3 in the first round.

Cunningham said the Pistons are anxious to avoid a repeat.

"You've got to protect home court. We didn't do that in the last series, so we want to do that this series," Cunningham said.

"They want to come in and steal one, so we've got to do this again the day after tomorrow."

AFP

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Dozens left hantavirus-hit vessel without tracing
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Chinese battery tech on display at auto show
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CHINA DAILY

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Stable Sino-US ties linked to global growth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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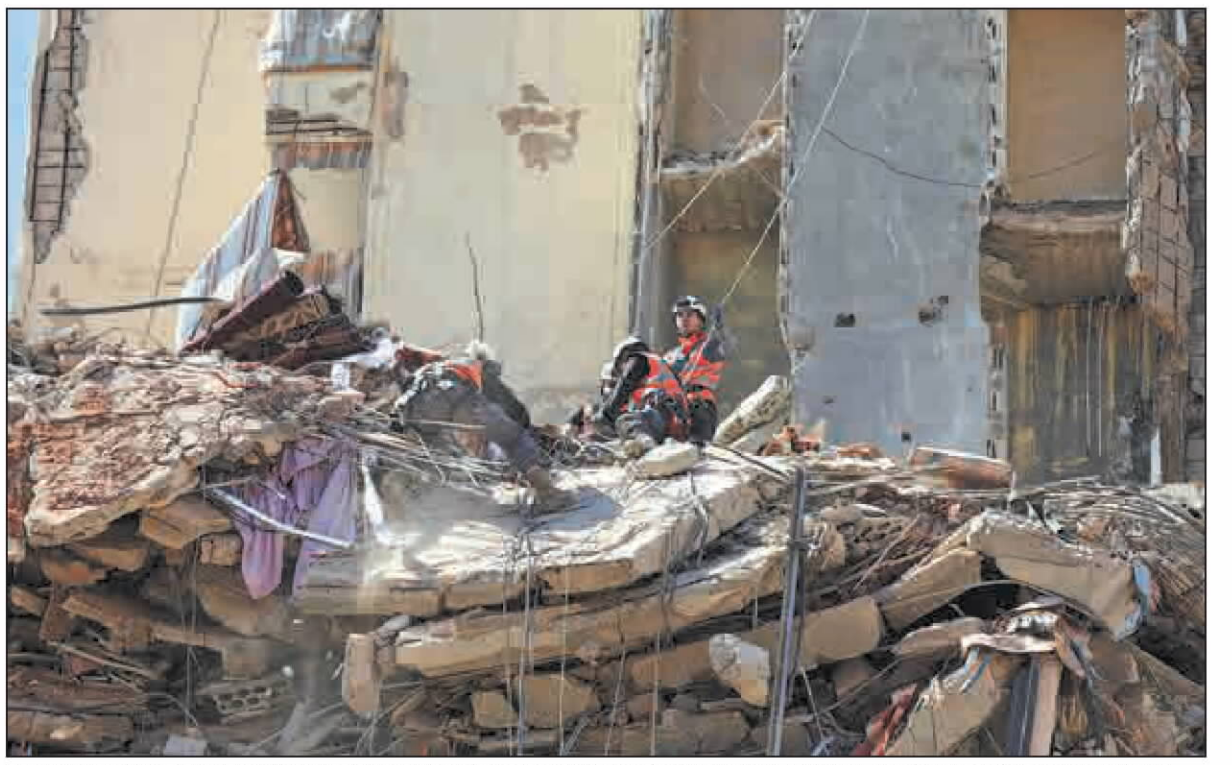

Rescuers work on Thursday at the site of an Israeli strike in the southern suburbs of Beirut, Lebanon. Israel launched its first airstrike on Beirut on Wednesday since a ceasefire with Lebanon took effect in mid-April. MOHAMAD AZAKIR / REUTERS

Tehran, Washington inch toward limited agreement

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn

Human connections nurture long-term links with Africa

WORLD WATCH
By Balew Demissie

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

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

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

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

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GUANGXI HAS BECOME A GREAT PLACE TO HANG OUT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

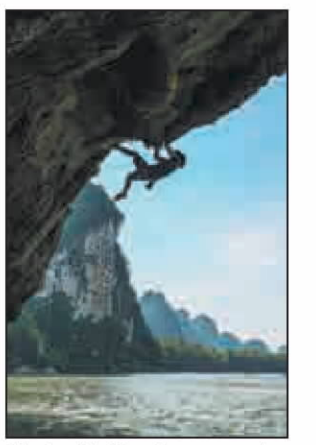
On May 15 last year, the cave officially opened as a pilgrimage site for enthusiasts chasing the planet's most extreme vertical challenges.

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

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

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

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



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

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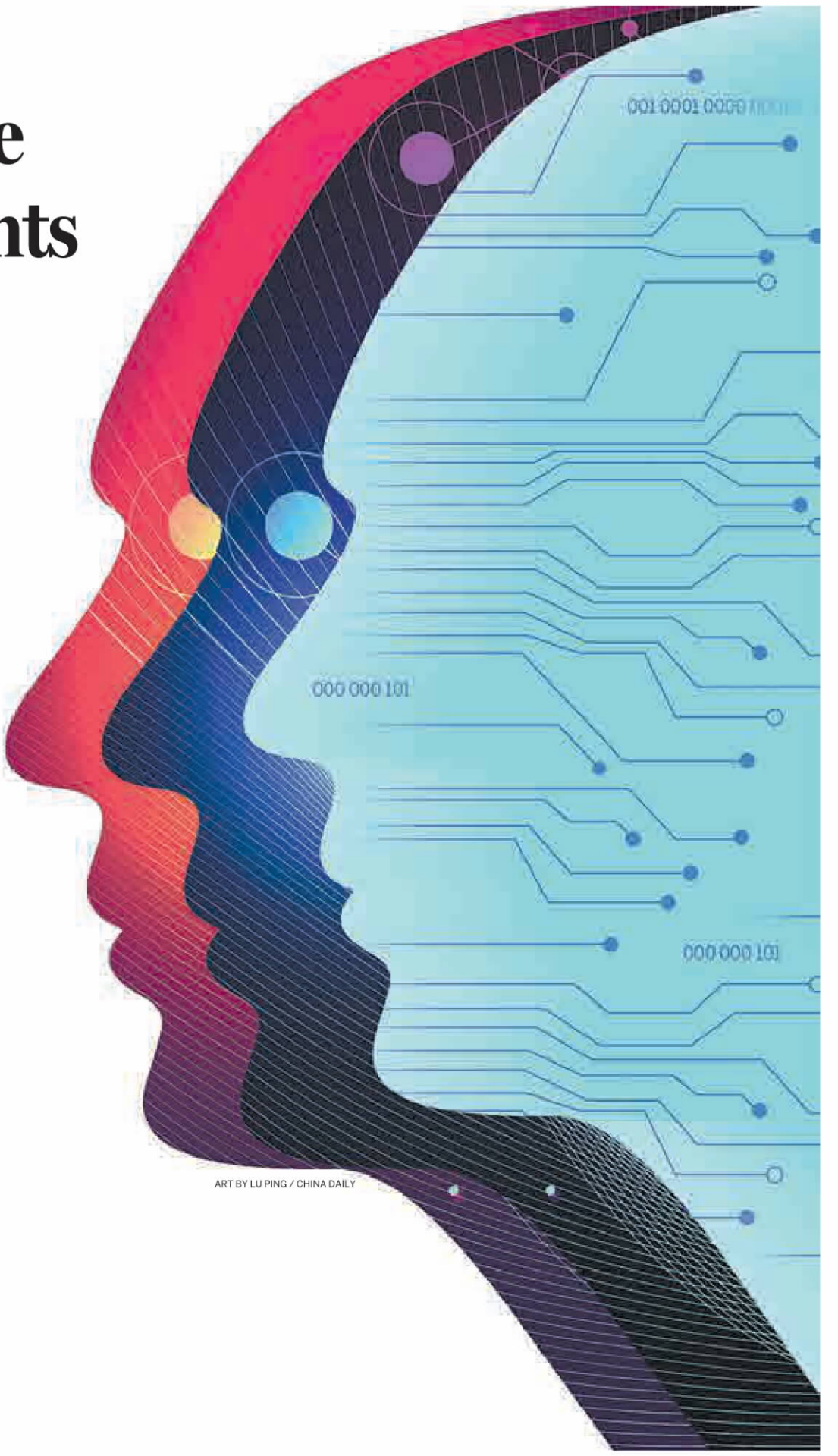
INDEPTH

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

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



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

More frequent

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Similar disputes have been ended through negotiation.

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

Growing concerns

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Way forward

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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TOP NEWS

Trade: Business with EU, ASEAN up

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

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

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

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

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

Guangxi: All levels of climbers welcomed

From page 1

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

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

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

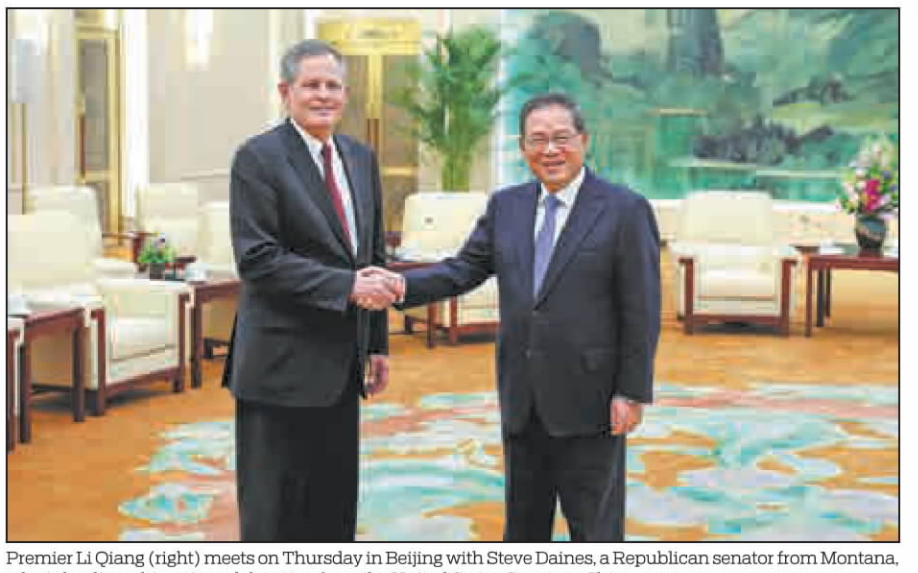
Foreigners can access most crags after registering with the local association. For beginners, Yangshuo's 37 certified clubs, all with high-risk operation permits, offer safe, reliable gateways into the vertical world.

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

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

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

Contact the writers at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn



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

China, US urged to work for more practical results

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Two former defense ministers given suspended death sentences for graft

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Relations: Reinforcing societal connections critical

From page 1

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Protest in Seoul



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

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WORLD

C-drama craze sweeps across Southeast Asia

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fertile ground

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Beached giant



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



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

AI risks loom over Musk-OpenAI trial

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Guzheng combine tradition, innovation

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brussels talks on EU-US deal make no progress

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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WORLD

Airing dirty laundry



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

Briefly

BRAZIL

Chinese citizens to gain visa-free entry

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

UNITED KINGDOM

Voters cast ballots in local elections

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

FRANCE

Bill gets nod to return ill-gotten artifacts

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

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA—AGENCIES

Japan's missile launch shatters pacifist stance

Move raises remilitarization fears and heightens regional tensions: Analysts

CROSS CURRENTS

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Arms exports

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Xinhua contributed to this story.



Beating the heat

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Agriculture and food security emerged as another major focus.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

29 passengers got off ship after 1st hantavirus fatality

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Regulatory overreach masks EU's malaise

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

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

This is nothing more than pride and prejudice.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

FIFA pricing risks alienating premium product-making fans

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

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

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

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

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

And then there are the tickets.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

APEC crucial cohesion platform in Asia-Pacific

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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VIEWS

Jiang Jianguo

China's right path to human development

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Asit K. Biswas, Wang Hao and Cecilia Tortajada

Flood of opportunities in ecological preservation

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

Global Lens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Adaptation is an ongoing process that requires continuous improvements.

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

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

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

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

Li Juncheng

Young urban ears increasingly tuning into podcasts

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

ZHANG MING

Pressure point

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



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

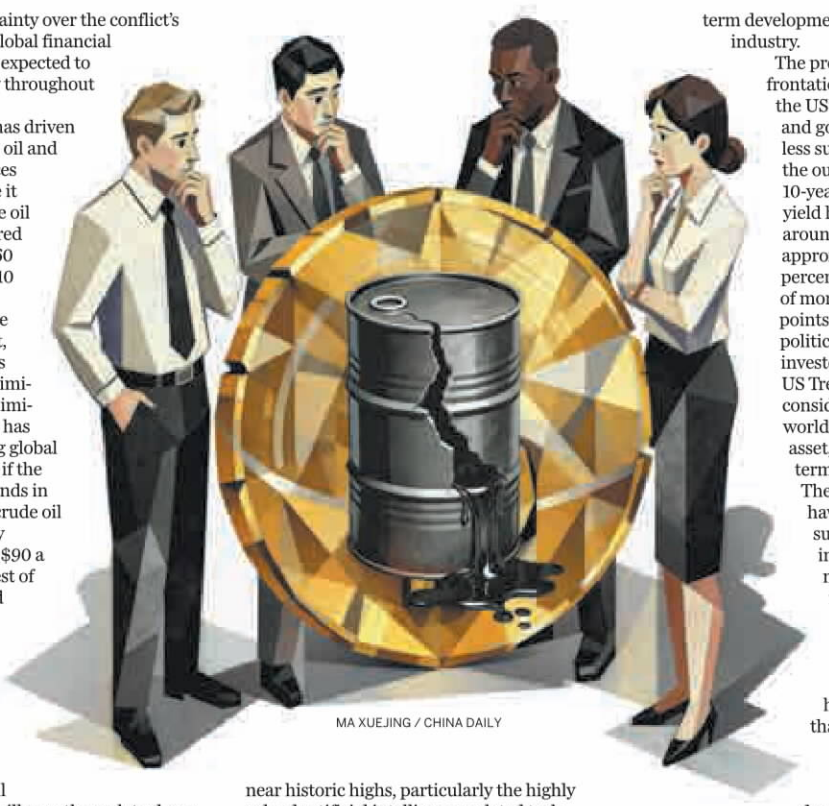
Since 2022, the global growth landscape has shifted from prolonged stagnation to stagflation. The former features "three lows and one high" (low growth, low inflation, low interest rates and high government debt), while the latter features "one low and three highs" (low growth, moderately high inflation,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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

CHEN WENXIN

New discourse to uphold multilateralism

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

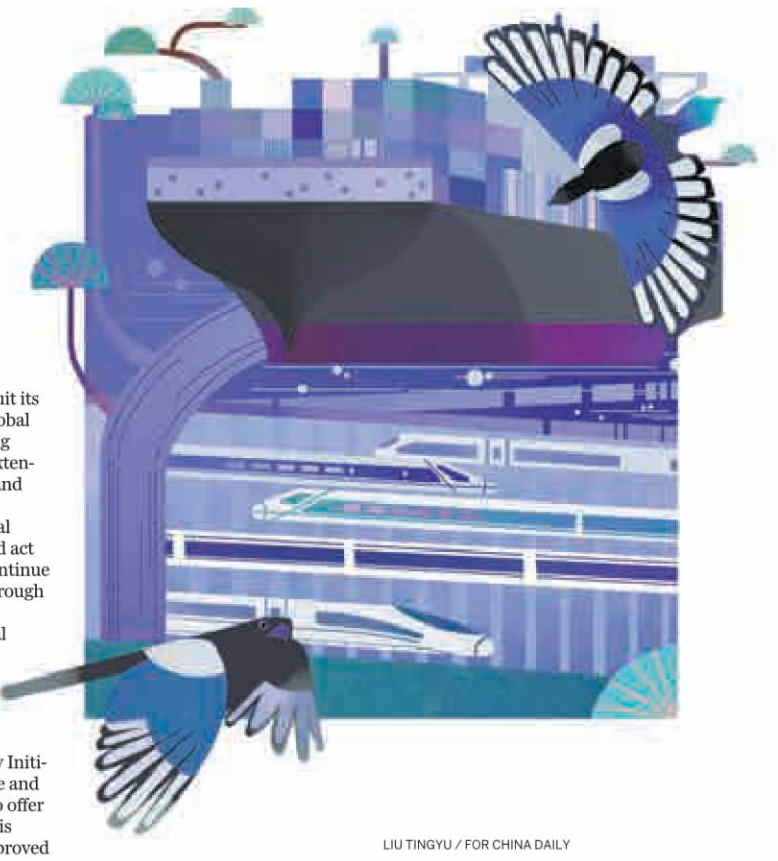
A third goal is to scale back investment in global governance. The US increasingly evaluates global engagement through a cost-benefit lens and reshapes its global role accordingly. Continued cuts to funding for international organizations are intended to reduce external burdens, reflecting a utilitarian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

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

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

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

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



LIU TINGYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

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

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

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

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

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

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BUSINESS

Rules eased to boost cross-border financing

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Rail drill

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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BUSINESS

Durian boom ripening into supply chain story

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







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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XINHUA

Nation's innovative bamboo goods going global



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

XINHUA

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CHINA

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Jilin's hubs to modernize production

Industries centered on advanced manufacturing seen as growth drivers

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Spring pastures

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

Guangzhou targets medical tourism

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Dance across cultures

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

Briefly

Central environmental inspections launched

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

Ex-senior adviser sentenced for bribery

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

CHINA DAILY

Ocean warming threatens penguins in Antarctica

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Hu Xiaotong contributed to this story.

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CHINA

Aerial firefighter



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

Novel mass printing material developed

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

New action plan bolsters family farms

Growers will be encouraged to develop modern, green agricultural businesses

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

Gene therapy can address congenital deafness

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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CULTURE



The artist behind the author

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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







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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact the writer at linqi@chinadaily.com.cn

What's on



Poetry of textiles

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

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

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

Modern landscapes

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

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



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

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

Graduation show

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

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

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



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Brewing ideas into fashion

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



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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Contact the writer at heqi@chinadaily.com.cn

International opera collaborations strike power chord

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





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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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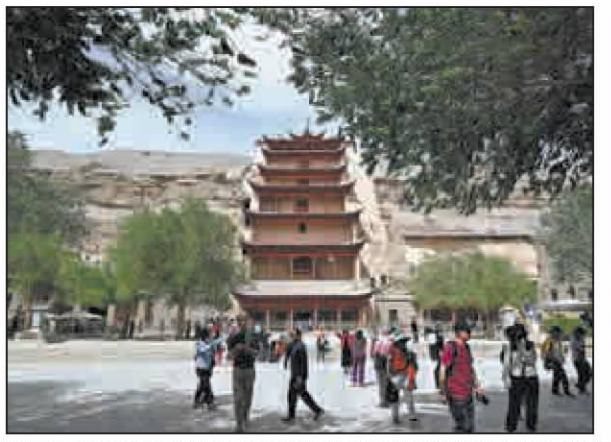
LIFE







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

Keeping the fires burning

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Retired Shougang employees donate personal memorabilia to the RE Blast Furnace No 3 Digital Museum in Beijing during a mid-April gathering. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Zhang Shijun, a retired Shougang worker, presents French newspapers from 1988 reporting on a 45-member Shougang delegation to France.

Zhang Shijun, in his 70s, walked up to the front and center of the themed day event, holding a few old French newspapers that he had kept for 38 years. He entered Shougang in 1980 after finishing metallurgical machinery and electrical engineering studies in college. In his younger days at work, he won just about every award a young employee could win.

"I can't document the past 100 years — I wasn't born yet," Zhang says with a smile. "But I can document 50 years."

The newspapers reported on a Shougang team that was sent to the northern French city of Calais in 1988 on a mission to dismantle an entire steel plant and ship the equipment back to China for reassembly. The timeline was pressing, and the 45 men of the team worked around the clock.

The coverage emphasized their exceptional efficiency, technical expertise, and strong work ethic, noting that they dismantled thousands of tons of equipment in months for immediate reassembly in China. The French report also framed Shougang's actions as evidence of China's impending economic rise.

By then, they could not have known that by 1994, Shougang would produce 8.24 million tons of steel annually, ranking it first in China, Zhang says with pride. Although the French newspapers are no longer in his hands, he says it gives him great comfort to see them enter the museum's collection.

Zhang's bond with Shougang is personal, forged over decades inside the plant. But today, Shougang's bond with its former employees has expanded to the public.

Shougang Park received over 13 million visitors in 2024, an 8 percent increase from the previous year.

But average spending per visitor was below the citywide average, and the park's service area is limited, considering daily visitors reached 150,000 during the 2022 Winter Olympics, according to Fu Fan, a professor at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture. Fu has conducted extensive research in the park area.

He notes that the official strategy blends culture, commerce, sports, tourism, technology, and science education, but says there are always ways to improve the visitor experience.

Fu suggests further tapping into the site's history, architecture, and nostalgia to develop a vessel — something that can be consumed, experienced, and shared — so the public and the industrial site can build a closer relationship.

Bu Xiting, a professor at the Communication University of China, offers a way forward, which he calls "cultural reproduction".

He points to the Tate Modern in London, a power plant built in the mid-20th century and now a world-famous museum that deliberately preserved its industrial space.

The lesson for Shougang, he says, is clear: "Instead of waiting 20 years for it to become waste, why not treat it today as an industrial design and an artistic statement?"

He emphasizes immersive experiences that invite visitors to step inside and take it all in.

"The space must wrap around them. The narrative must invite participation. The experience must engage all the senses: hearing, smell, touch, temperature," he says.

Besides envisioning Shougang as a new stage for cultural consumption, an incubator for technological innovation, and a laboratory for the digital economy, Bu says the key is to turn distant collective memory into personal experience — something that can be touched and felt.

At Shougang Park, the furnace no longer burns, but the event's participants concur that something else is burning now.

"The difficulty of preserving living heritage is that it depends on people — on oral transmission, on hand-me-down stories," Song says.

"But that is also its value. It is not a museum specimen. It is life still unfolding."

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Charting the world: China renews a tradition of global study

By WANG RU
wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn

More than a century ago, in 1843, *Haiguo Tuzhi*, or the *Illustrated Treatise on the Maritime Kingdoms*, a Chinese gazetteer mainly compiled by scholar-official Wei Yuan (1794-1857), was printed and published in present-day Yangzhou, Jiangsu province. The publication was one of the earliest works compiled by modern Chinese people that introduced foreign countries, covering topics related to their politics, economics, military affairs, history, geography and culture.

The collection was so important because it broke the ideological shackles of the isolationism of the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), allowing the Chinese of that era to open their eyes to the world through this book.

Wei's work laid the foundation for China's understanding of the world. Building on that spirit of openness, later scholars have continued to expand and deepen such research, culminating in the new edition of the *Guide to the World Nations and International Organizations Surveys*.

This is an academic program that aims to conduct systematic studies of the humanities and history, political economy, social governance, security and diplomacy of sovereign states around the world, as well as the historical evolution, institutional development and international influence of major organizations.





Left: The first eight books of the new edition of *Guide to the World Nations and International Organizations Surveys*, a major academic program studying countries and key global organizations. **Right:** A seminar organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences to promote the first set of books. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The first batch of eight books, as the first phase of the program, has now been published, said the organizers of a seminar in Beijing on April 20. The new edition is based on an earlier version launched by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in the 1990s, covering 174 countries and 42 international organizations. The new edition expands this to 196 sovereign states and 60 major international organizations.

"The program is a large-scale, multivolume academic book series with a long history, grand scope, and distinctive representativeness in the fields of area and regional studies, both within the CASS and across China as a whole," says Yao Zhizhong, head of the bureau of international cooperation at the academy.

Zhao Rui, deputy director of the academy, says the new edition was written to meet the needs of the new era. "As we enter this new age, the world is undergoing unprecedented and accelerating transformations, the likes of which have not been seen in a century. Therefore, we must seek a more comprehensive, multidimensional, and in-depth understanding of the world to better serve the cause of building a community with a shared future for humanity."

Currently, 66 projects under the framework have been launched, involving invited experts from across China. The first batch of eight books includes volumes introducing the United States, Japan, Indonesia, Nigeria, the Czech Republic, Fiji, the United Nations and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization.

Zhao Chuandong, deputy director of the National Office for Philosophy and Social Sciences, says the new edition, while being informative and readable, aims to place greater emphasis on the academic nature and research value of the collection.

"Efforts should be made to achieve a balance between academic rigor and general readability," he says.

Liu Chenyang, head of the project to study the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, says that on the basis of a true, systematic and comprehensive introduction of APEC's progress and influence, their project will conduct an in-depth analysis of the role the organization can play in promoting cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and global governance in the new era.

"APEC brings together major political and economic powers from around the world. Its 21 member economies together account for half of global economic and trade volume. Not only does APEC play a primary role in regional cooperation in the Asia-Pacific, but its influence in the global governance system is also steadily increasing," he says.

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Visitors check a BYD Seagull electric vehicle on display at the Beijing International Automotive Exhibition, or Auto China, in Beijing on April 26. XIAOYU YIN / REUTERS

Auto giants plug into China's battery power

Carmakers tap nation's cell chemistry, manufacturing scale and engineering talent

By MAY ZHOU in Houston, Texas
mayzhou@chinadailyusa.com

Tesla has recently added Sunwoda Electronic as its fifth global power battery supplier, according to a report by 36kr, a Chinese technology and new economy platform.

Sunwoda manufactures third-generation lithium iron phosphate (LFP) cells known for fast charging speed, and has begun shipping them to Tesla's Shanghai Gigafactory, according to the report. Those cells are going into Tesla cars built in Shanghai for export.

Tesla has a long-running relationship with China's CATL (Contemporary Amperex Technology Company), a global leader in renewable energy technology and the world's largest manufacturer of LFP and energy storage. It also sources LFP cells from BYD —including roughly 20 percent of the cells for its Shanghai Megafactory.

In September, Tesla signed a deal with China's EVE Energy to supply energy-storage cells for its European subsidiary from 2026 to 2030.

Industrial analyst Fred Lambert from Electrek said that by adding Sunwoda, "Tesla is prioritizing cost leverage over vertical integration" — the opposite of what CEO Elon Musk envisioned in 2020.

But Lambert considered Tesla's move "the right call" because Chinese LFP suppliers have been so efficient that it makes it "unnecessary" for Telsa to engineer its own.

Tesla is widely recognized as the largest single non-Chinese customer of the Chinese battery industry.

From multibillion-dollar joint ventures in Spain, Germany and Hungary to technology-licensing deals reshaping production in Michigan, the world's largest legacy automakers are increasingly dependent on Chinese cell chemistry, manufacturing scale and engineering talent.

They are racing to license, co-develop and source from Chinese battery champions — a realignment of the EV supply chain that puts Chinese chemistry, manufacturing know-how and capital at the center of the global EV transition.

European automakers have enjoyed the densest concentration of Chinese battery partnership outside Asia.

Global automotive group Stellantis formed a 50-50 joint venture with CATL to build a 4.1 billion euro ($4.8 billion) LFP gigafactory in Zaragoza, Spain. It is set to come online in late 2026 with capacity scaling toward 50 gigawatt-hours.

Stellantis makes American brands including Jeep, Ram, Dodge and Chrysler; European brands including Peugeot, Fiat, Citroën, Opel and Vauxhall; and luxury brands such as Maserati, Alfa Romeo, DS Automobiles, Lancia and Abarth.

Volkswagen has gone further by becoming the largest shareholder of Gotion High-Tech, a major Chinese battery manufacturer. It recently expanded its holding to more than 26 percent with a roughly $1 billion investment to fund a 2 GWh solid-state battery line targeted at next-generation VW and Audi vehicles.

In November, Gotion began mass production of the "unified cell" that VW selected as the standard format across most of its EV lineup. It is the cornerstone of Volkswagen's strategy to reduce battery costs by up to 50 percent across its entire vehicle lineup.

Thomas Schmall, chief technology officer of Volkswagen, speaking at Gotion's Unified Cell delivery ceremony in China last November, said that with the LFP unified cells now being produced in China and Germany, Volkswagen is "prepared to supply next-generation, highly competitive battery technologies across all Volkswagen brands".

"This makes Gotion a cornerstone of our global 'make-and-buy' battery strategy," he said.

A separate joint venture with Slovakia-based InoBat, in which Gotion owns 25 percent, is building a 20 GWh European plant scheduled to open in 2026.

BMW's largest cell partner since 2018 has been CATL. It has pivoted to all-electric models with its launch of Neue Klasse from 2025, and relies heavily on three Chinese manufacturers — SVOLT, CATL and EVE Energy — for battery supply.

According to industrial reports, the three Chinese battery companies have been building plants in Germany and Hungary to exclusively supply its next-generation cells in cylindrical 46 millimeter format that was designed by BMW.

It's estimated that BMW's Chinese cell content will exceed 60 percent of its global battery volume by 2027 when SVOLT, CATL and EVE are all fully ramped.

> "Combining our strengths allows us to develop products that set new standards globally."
>
> **Oliver Zipse,** chairman of the board of management of BMW AG

Oliver Zipse, chairman of the board of management of BMW AG, told Xinhua News Agency in September at the International Motor Show Germany in Munich that China's innovation is crucial for BMW's global strategy.

"Currently, the biggest innovations we see come out of China. Combining our strengths allows us to develop products that set new standards globally," Zipse said. "We have companies like CATL or EVE where we develop, blend and manufacture cells for our vehicles in China, but also outside of China."

In February, BMW and CATL signed an agreement to jointly develop and pilot the EU's Battery Passport — a digital traceability framework that will be required for European battery sales under the EU Battery Regulation from 2027 onward.

This is significant because it's an infrastructure-grade collaboration that goes beyond cell supply into shared compliance and sustainability tooling, industrial experts pointed out.

Another German automaker, Mercedes, formed a relationship with China's EV battery industry by acquiring an equity stake in China's Farasis Energy, which supplies batteries for Mercedes' flagship electric models. It also gets battery supplies from CATL's factory in Hungary.

In the US, Mercedes builds its EVs using cells from Envision AESC, a Chinese-owned battery maker.

In Asia, major automaker Toyota has a standing agreement with BYD to jointly develop battery-electric vehicles leveraging BYD's Blade Battery technology. Their partnership has produced China-market BEVs and is informing Toyota's broader LFP and solid-state roadmap.

It's another story in the US, where automakers are facing political pressure when it comes to using China's battery technology. That has led to far fewer US battery projects involving Chinese technology, compared to Europe.

In early 2023, Ford announced plans to build a $3.5 billion EV battery factory in Marshall, Michigan by licensing CATL's battery technology.

The deal immediately met challenges from US politicians who said that the deal could make an American company reliant on a Chinese company with links to the Chinese military. In 2025, CATL was listed as a Chinese military company by the US Department of Defense.

The battery factory, known as BlueOval Battery Park Michigan, also faced legal challenges from a group of local residents who argued against the project over issues of environment, rural identity, public participation in decision-making and national security.

Ford later scaled back the project and reduced its production capacity from 35 GWh to 20 GWh. Consequently, jobs were reduced to 1,700 from the planned 2,500.

Ford executives have repeatedly defended the project as the only viable path to building affordable LFP cells in the US at scale.

Lisa Drake, former VP at Ford and now president of Ford Energy, defended Ford's BlueOval Battery Park Michigan on various occasions.

She told Axios last June that "it probably would have taken us a decade to catch up and have LFP technology on our own with our own R&D."

"It's hard to innovate something when you've never seen it with your own eyes. That's why we need to bring it here," she said. "I'm convinced this is the right thing to do for the United States."

In December, Drake confirmed that Ford is widening the CATL relationship beyond automotive cells — Ford will use CATL-licensed LFP technology to manufacture stationary energy storage batteries at its Kentucky BlueOval SK facility.

"We have a licensing agreement, but we feel it's better to build these batteries in the United States with American workers, with our own Ford workers, and understand the IP, than import them like they're being done today," Ford CEO Jim Farley recently told Bloomberg. "The best way to compete with China is to get close to the IP and then run the plants at Ford."

In August, General Motors confirmed it will import CATL LFP cells to power the second-generation Chevrolet Bolt, which begins production at GM's Fairfax, Kansas plant in late 2025 and arrives in dealerships in 2026 at roughly $30,000.

GM said this deal was a stopgap before American production of LFP batteries can pick up the pace and replace the Chinese imports.

Representative John Moolenaar from Michigan publicly attacked the deal, calling GM's decision "disappointing to not only its customers and employees, but also to the American people."

In January, GM said its Fairfax plant will be transitioned to make other vehicles in mid to late 2027. The Bolt will be a limited-run model, and its production will end once the Fairfax facility transition is complete.

The US lost more than $34 billion in clean energy investment in 2025, of which $21 billion came from the EV battery sector, according to an analysis by E2, a US policy advocacy group of business leaders, investors and professionals.

While US politicians are finding ways to restrict China's battery technology to be employed by US automakers, the recent 2026 Beijing Auto Show revealed that China's EV battery technology has taken another big step forward.

Industrial experts attending the show said that a dozen battery manufacturers participated the event with massive booths — some larger than automakers — indicating the importance and central role of batteries in EV production.

CATL revealed six new battery technologies, and BYD unveiled Blade Battery 2.0 with a 625-mile (1,000 kilometer) range. They, along with EVE Energy, revealed new EV batteries that can be fully charged in five to 10 minutes.

BMW chair Zipse was at the Beijing Auto Show. He said in an TV interview that the auto show was "innovative" and "future oriented".

Zipse told Reuters in February that ignoring China, the world's top auto market, would put at risk future economic success, and cooperation with Beijing was fundamental.

"Those who close their minds to China's enormous market and innovation potential are missing out on great opportunities for global growth and economic success," he was quoted as saying.

The Iran war boosts Brazil's oil exports to China

By HÉLIO ROCHA
in Juiz de Fora, Brazil

Brazil's oil exports to China doubled in the first quarter as a result of the Iran war, according to federal government data compiled by the Brazil-China Business Council.

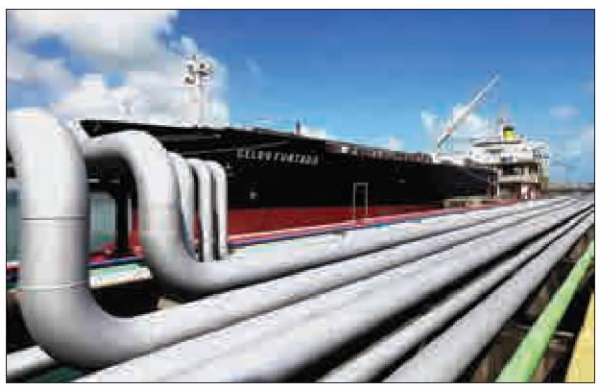
Oil export volume in the first three months totaled $7.2 billion, compared with $3.7 billion in the same period of 2025, an increase of 94.6 percent. In all, 16 million metric tons were shipped, a growth of 122 percent from the previous year.

The main reason, cited by producers and geopolitical experts, is the ease of shipping Brazilian oil compared with oil leaving the Persian Gulf. The war in the Middle East led Iran to close the Strait of Hormuz, through which most oil from Arab countries passes. Iran's war strategy appears to have offset the distance Brazilian oil must travel to reach China.

Marcio Felix, president of the Brazilian Association of Independent Oil Producers, told China Daily the sector was caught off guard.

"It's important to note that recent geopolitical events have indeed generated volatility and demand spikes in the international oil market," Felix said. "For independent producers in Brazil, the ability to respond to these moves is limited in the short term, since oil production is not easily adjustable on short notice, especially in mature assets."

Felix said, however, that "companies have sought to maximize operational efficiency, reduce unscheduled downtime and optimize their assets to capture market opportunities whenever possible" to cope with the unexpected increase in demand.



Oil tanker *Celso Furtado* destined for China is being loaded with oil off the Brazilian coast. TRANSPETRO / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The sector has acted with caution and planning. Facing a more uncertain international scenario, independent producers stress the importance of regulatory predictability and institutional stability, essential factors to enable medium and long-term investments."

Other sectors also grew in the wake of the Iran war, which indirectly affects the United States and the European Union. Beef sales totaled $1.3 billion, up 33.8 percent, while in the mining sector, iron alloys more than doubled in value to $478 billion, with niobium up 63 percent and nickel up 29 percent.

Felix explained that Brazil is reliable suppliers of raw materials and industrial goods to the world.

Brazil's Ministry of Development, Industry and Foreign Trade said in a statement: "China is Brazil's top trading partner. In 2025, exports reached $100 billion, and total trade flow reached $171 billion. Seasonality is a common factor in foreign trade for various products and destinations, but the trade level with China, especially exports, has remained high over the last 20 years, at a steady growth rate. Moreover, since 2013, China has been the top buyer of Brazilian oil."

Geopolitical analyst Marco Fernandes, a member of the BRICS Civil Council — the economic group bringing together the five emerging economies of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — argued that Brazil's oil exports also exposed some weaknesses in Brazil's oil industry.

"Brazil benefits from higher oil export values," Fernandes said. "Given that the price per barrel has doubled from December 2025 levels, Brazil could set an export record this year, especially if the war drags on. However, this situation also exposes a Brazilian weakness: the country's insufficient oil refining capacity."

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中國日報 TUESDAY, MAY 12, 2026

Special delivery



A Long March 7 rocket carrying the cargo spacecraft Tianzhou 10 blasts off from Wenchang Space Launch Center in South China's Hainan province on Monday. Tianzhou 10 is carrying supplies and propellants to China's Tiangong space station. The cargo craft successfully docked with the space station later on Monday. YANG ZHIYUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY **See story, page 3**

Trade dialogue key to global stability and growth

By ZHONG NAN
zhongnan@chinadaily.com.cn

A new round of China-US economic and trade talks is vital to reducing business uncertainties and improving global economic confidence amid persistent geopolitical and trade challenges, experts and business executives said on Monday.

According to information released by the Ministry of Commerce, Vice-Premier He Lifeng, who is also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, will lead a delegation to hold economic and trade consultations with the United States in the Republic of Korea on Tuesday and Wednesday.

As the Ministry of Foreign Affairs announced on Monday that US President Donald Trump will pay a state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday, market watchers said the high-level interactions in the ROK are expected to further stabilize bilateral economic ties and keep the channels of effective communication open.

According to the Ministry of Commerce, the two sides will be guided by the important consensus reached between the two heads of state at their meeting in Busan and during previous calls, and will hold consultations on economic and trade issues of mutual concern.

Experts said the consultations between the world's largest and second-largest economies are likely to focus on trade, technology and supply chain concerns amid heightened global tensions.

Zhang Yilun, a research associate at the Washington-based Institute for China-America Studies, said the talks might help to create a smoother atmosphere ahead of the leaders' meeting in Beijing.

Raj Subramaniam, chairman of the US-China Business Council, said that direct and sustained dialogue between the US and China is critical for addressing complex economic challenges and advancing long-term stability and growth.

Zhao Minghao, a professor and deputy director of Fudan University's Center for American Studies, said the US leader's visit to China will provide an important opportunity for both sides to explore channels of engagement.

Zhao said that these interactions not only contribute to greater stability in the China-US relationship, but also improve expectations for restoring efficiency and predictability across global industrial and supply chains, underscoring that dialogue remains essential for managing differences and supporting practical cooperation.

Edgard Kagan, senior adviser at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington and former US ambassador to Malaysia, said that Washington's priorities include securing expanded Chinese rare earth supplies and establishing a framework for future bilateral discussions on artificial intelligence risks and safety, while Beijing seeks more stable ties and predictable US tariff policies.

Wu Xinbo, dean of Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the Middle East conflict has heightened concerns over global energy security, shipping routes and regional stability, and both China and the US have strong incentives to prevent further escalation.

"Any consensus reached by the two sides on maintaining regional stability could carry broader global implications," Wu said.

Against this backdrop, Mei Xinyu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation in Beijing, said that stable China-US business ties would support international trade flows, ease supply chain disruptions and improve investor confidence amid intensifying strategic competition.

Echoing the sentiment, Ian Shih, president for China at US industrial automation company Rockwell Automation, said that China's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and continued high-level opening-up provide strong support for companies seeking long-term growth and diversified application opportunities.

Lin Chunmei, president and general manager of Corning China, said the US industrial materials manufacturer will deepen localized manufacturing and innovation in sectors including display, optical communications and automobiles in China.

Head-of-state diplomacy to guide relations

Xi to hold in-depth exchanges with Trump during US president's state visit to China

By ZHAO JIA in Beijing
and **YIFAN XU** in Washington

Beijing said on Monday that it was ready to work with the United States to expand cooperation, manage differences and inject more stability and certainty into a turbulent and changing world as it confirmed that US President Donald Trump will pay a three-day state visit to China starting from Wednesday.

According to Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun, President Xi Jinping will hold in-depth exchanges with Trump on issues concerning China-US relations as well as major issues related to world peace and development.

The visit will mark Trump's first trip to China during his second term in office and the first visit to China by a US president in nine years.

Noting that head-of-state diplomacy has played an irreplaceable strategic guiding role in China-US relations, Guo told a regular press briefing that China is willing to work with the US in the spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit to expand cooperation, manage differences and provide more stability and certainty for a transforming and volatile world.

Since Trump was reelected in November 2024, the two heads of state have spoken five times over the phone and held one face-to-face meeting, maintaining regular communication as Beijing and Washington seek to keep bilateral relations on a stable track.

Speaking on a television program on Sunday, Trump said that he was looking forward to visiting China again and believed the upcoming trip would be "amazing", adding that his relationship with President Xi was "very good".

Su Xiaohui, deputy director of the Department for American Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said head-of-state diplomacy has consistently served as the "anchor" of China-US relations.

Direct communication between the two leaders, she said, can help both sides better understand each other's intentions, avoid miscalculation, grasp the overall direction of bilateral ties and explore ways to build a stable relationship.

Diao Daming, a professor at Renmin University of China, said that given the complexity of China-US relations, the significance of Trump's visit lies not in resolving all issues at once, but in whether the two sides can use top-level communication to address each other's concerns and send more positive signals to the world.

Washington should view China objectively, develop a rational perception of China and work with Beijing in the same direction, rather than approach bilateral ties from a position of strength, he added.

He said that both sides should expand areas of cooperation, reduce the list of problems, and ensure that economic and trade ties continue to serve as a ballast and driver of bilateral relations rather than a source of friction and conflict.

Regarding the technological landscape, experts have pointed out a current "truce" that offers a window for structured dialogue.

Martin Chorzempa, a senior fellow at the Peterson Institute for International Economics, said during an event last week that "the technology front looks relatively calm compared to past administrations".

Chorzempa suggested that high-level engagement could help cement this atmosphere, noting that many restrictive measures have been "walked back or paused" over the last year.

Sourabh Gupta, a senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies, told China Daily that extending the trade and technology truces established at earlier high-level meetings remains a top priority.

*See **Visit,** page 3*

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STRAWBERRY ADDS FLAVOR TO SUMMER MUSIC SCENE

As festival season arrives, events across the country tap into the beat of China's creative pulse

By CHEN NAN
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On a bright morning on the outskirts of Beijing's Yanqing district, a dusty field was already stirring. Tents were being pitched, food stalls rolled into place, and festivalgoers arrived in small clusters, backpacks slung over their shoulders and sneakers dusted with dirt.

The Strawberry Music Festival, which has grown into a staple of China's summer music scene, was about to begin its three-day run on May 2.

Attendees, who had traveled from across the country, carried homemade banners, while others shared snacks on picnic blankets.

Among the visitors was Stephanie Daniels, a British musician who performs under the name SCAPA. It was her first visit to China. After a week of exploring Beijing's studios and collaborating with local artists, she found that the festival offered a more visceral indicator of the country's creative pulse.

"It felt very genuine," she said. "People were there for the music, for the vibe."



Audiences watch a performance at the Strawberry Music Festival in Dongguan, Guangdong province, on May 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The festival featured bands fusing local traditions with global influences. Daniels was particularly impressed by Sound Fragment, a six-member ensemble blending brass with traditional Chinese instruments.

Fans, many in their 20s, absorbed the performances with rapt attention.

"Even if I don't know the lyrics, I feel it in the beat," Daniels said.

By the late afternoon, the festival ground was abuzz with creative activity. Attendees tried out instruments at workshops, contributed to art installations and joined impromptu games of cards and badminton.

As the music shifted toward the evening sets, the air grew thick with energy, laughter and the smell of street food. Daniels moved through the crowd, observing, sampling snacks and soaking in the communal atmosphere.

"To my surprise, there was even a health pop-up at the festival," wrote Jiu Yue, who attended the festival on May 2, on her social media. "As people who love having fun, but also don't want to get exhausted, we discovered a completely different kind of music festival experience here. At the pop-up, we could get a health checkup and even try out a massage."

For many, the Strawberry Music Festival and events of its kind are living laboratories of youth culture — where global sounds meet local traditions, and temporary communities form out of shared curiosity and joy. By sunset, the field was a sea of blankets, instruments and smiling faces — messy, loud and imperfect, yet buzzing with a sense of life and artistry.

*See **Festival,** page 3*

Inclusive tech a must for common progress

WORLD WATCH
By Moiz Farooq

China has entered a new chapter in which innovation stands at the center of national progress. Once known mainly for its manufacturing strength, China has emerged as one of the world's key players in technology.

From artificial intelligence to next-generation communication networks, and from advanced industrial systems to green technology, China is making great contributions to global progress.

These achievements are not accidental. They are the result of long-term planning, stable governance and a national vision that prioritizes science, technology and innovation as a core driver of economic and social advancement.

In an increasingly competitive world, China's growing technological strength is creating new opportunities both at home and across the international community.

China's approach to innovation is guided by a clear vision for long-term development.

The country understands that high-quality growth requires strong scientific foundations and advanced technological capacity.

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INDEPTH





A vet examines recovering Chief Huang at Xuancheng Chongfuxin Pet Hospital on Friday. WEN QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY





Left: A screenshot from a video about the rescue shows a taxi driver carrying the injured stray Chief Huang from the bushes after the accident near Xuancheng Railway Station in Anhui province in April.
Middle: Visiting tourists pose with a cardboard image of Chief Huang at the station on Friday. WEN QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY
Right: Another screenshot from the video shows the list of donations made by taxi drivers with their license plate numbers and donation amounts.

Taxi drivers' dog rescue triggers tourism boom

Story of kindhearted efforts to save injured stray touches netizens nationwide

By **ZHU LIXIN** in Hefei
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Xuancheng — a city in Anhui province best known for producing quality paper — is experiencing a mini tourism boom thanks to a stray dog and a group of kindhearted taxi drivers who came to its rescue.

The story of "Chief Huang" a gentle rural mutt that had made Xuancheng Railway Station its home, has captured the country's imagination with tens of millions of online views.

On one platform, Douyin, a local animal rescue blogger Wang Mingxuan posted a video he filmed about the rescue, which received 368,000 likes and 100,000 shares and comments.

The dog was nearly killed after being hit by a car in mid-April, but was eventually saved by a group of local taxi drivers who banded together to pay the medical bill.

In what they have dubbed "boomerang love" tourists traveled to Xuancheng, a city of some 2.7 million people, during the May Day holiday, to return the act of kindness.

"It brought tears to my eyes," wrote one netizen. "In this fast-paced society, it's already a touching story that there's a group of people willing to stop and help a little dog. Moreover, these are people who rely on every minute to earn a living for their families. I'm grateful that there is such goodness in this world."

Little yellow dog

Taxi driver He Wei said he first noticed the little yellow dog hanging around the railway station in August or September of last year.

"At that time, it was very small and skinny, sometimes staying in the taxi waiting area, sometimes wandering around the square, quiet and gentle, never barking or running around," He said. "Over time, this little dog became fixed in many people's hearts."

Taxi drivers coming and going often played with it and brought it eggs and sausages to eat.

"As soon as one of the drivers called it, it would happily run over, wagging its tail," said He.

At first, the drivers called the puppy Xiaohuang, literally "little yellow". But as it grew, they gave it a more majestic name — Chief Huang.

By January, some of the local taxi drivers had pooled enough money to have the female dog spayed in a pet hospital. If the stray dog got pregnant, her life would become harder, the drivers reasoned.

"Chief Huang was a ray of light in my gloomy days," said He, who runs a poster design business online during the day, and drives for a ride-hailing service at night.

"One night, I parked my car near the square, lit a cigarette in frustration, and Chief Huang came to sit beside me. We sat quietly together for a long time," He said.

Every time he drove a taxi, He would go to the square to find the dog. Only after seeing it and playing with the dog, "just like an old friend," would he feel at ease.

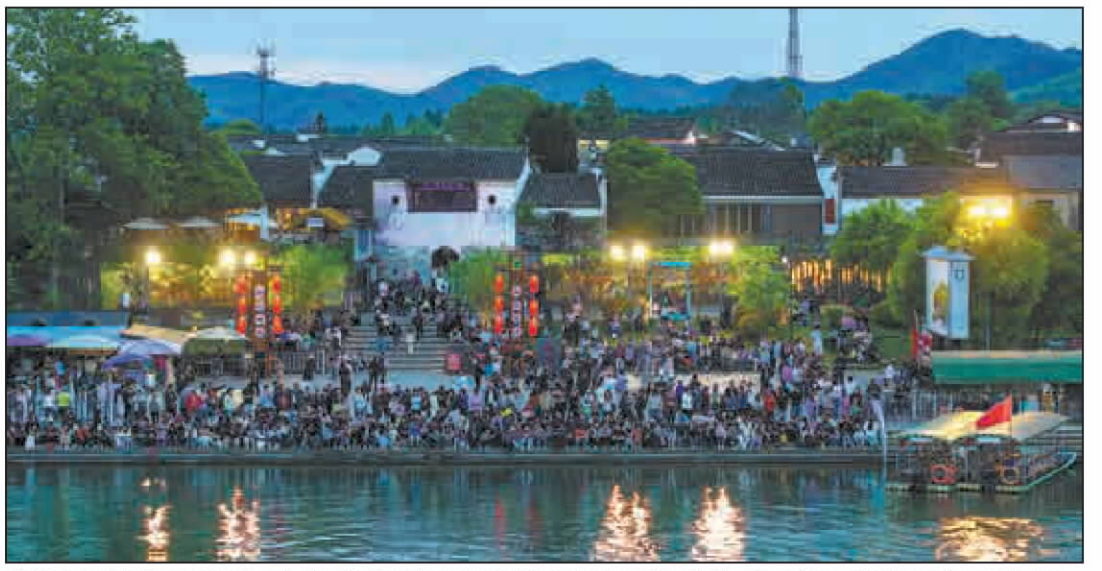
On the evening of April 15, He went to look for the dog but couldn't find it. He went back the next day but couldn't see Chief Huang.

"We wait for passengers at the station every day. Chief Huang quietly keeps us company. Over time, it has become like family to us," said Fan Bin, a taxi driver.

"Seeing it there each day gives us peace of mind; if we don't see it for one day, everyone starts asking each other about it," said Fan.

The accident

On April 17, Wang received a message online asking for help: a yellow dog near the Xuancheng Railway Station had been hit by a car and was unable to move, eat or drink.



Visitors flock to Taohuatan Scenic Area in Jingxian county, Xuancheng, on May 3. The city witnessed a boom in tourist numbers during the May Day holiday this year. ZHAO MING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"On April 18, I arrived at the station and was surprised by the scene," said Wang.

On the station square, a row of taxis was parked beside a traffic island covered in green shrubs. Dozens of drivers had gathered, not waiting for passengers, but anxiously discussing the little yellow dog curled up in front of them.

At one point, Fan took out a stack of cash and a handwritten donation list. The list had no names, only a series of license plate numbers and donation amounts varying from 20 yuan ($2.94) to 1,000 yuan ($147.10).

Several days earlier, the dog had been hit by a passing vehicle. After the taxi drivers found it, they took it to a pet hospital and were told it needed immediate surgery, costing more than 10,000 yuan.

"(It had) three fractures in the front and hind limbs. The right hind leg was the most severely injured, with bone dislocation requiring immediate surgery, or it would face amputation or even death," said taxi driver Zhang Xinming.

One of the initiators of the donations, Zhang personally gave 1,000 yuan. His monthly income from operating a taxi is about 3,000 yuan.

In the taxi waiting area at the west square of the railway station, two pieces of paper were eventually posted on the bulletin board, recording total donations of more than 4,000 yuan by 48 taxi drivers and eight generous individuals.

"Despite these donations, it was still not enough for the treatment, so after a simple anti-inflammatory treatment, we took the yellow dog back to the train station and continued to find ways to help," Zhang said.

The dog was in so much pain that it wouldn't eat or drink. The drivers were afraid it would be hit by another car, so they moved it into the shrubbery.



Taxi driver He Wei displays his handmade keychain and fridge magnet souvenirs dedicated to Chief Huang. WEN QIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Deeply moved

Wang had contracted pneumonia and was worried that sudden coughing might stress the yellow dog, so he asked a friend to remove the dog from the shrubs. He recorded the entire rescue with his phone camera and posted it online.

Wang and his friend took the dog to another animal hospital — Xuancheng Chongfuxin Pet Hospital — with a group of taxi drivers following closely behind.

Because there were too many people on-site, they finally selected four driver representatives to enter the hospital.

Upon learning about the donations raised by the taxi drivers, hospital director Zhu Jun was deeply moved and decided to do everything possible to treat the dog.

"We have been in pet medical care for many years, and this is the first time we have seen so many taxi drivers spontaneously raise money and wait outside the hospital for a stray dog," Zhu said.

The hospital decided not to charge more than 4,000 yuan for the operation. The subsequent treatment and recovery costs were all covered by the hospital.

On April 20, after two days of being treated with anti-inflammatories, Zhu and his colleague performed orthopedic surgery on Chief Huang. They successfully repaired three fractures and implanted an artificial ligament in the severely injured right hind leg.

After the surgery, the drivers left the hospital.

"In the following days, we drivers took turns visiting the hospital, bringing Chief Huang's favorite food, and quietly staying by her side, afraid she would feel lonely," Zhang said.

Spreading kindness

Chief Huang is still recuperating in the hospital, but her popularity has rocketed. Many people have not seen her online again.

He Wei has used his design expertise to make refrigerator magnets, key chains, and ornaments with images of the dog at his own expense. Initially, he gave them away for free to local taxi drivers and tourists who showed concern for the dog. But as more people asked for the merchandise, he started selling them at cost.

During the May Day holiday, many people came to Xuancheng and chose taxis as their preferred mode of transportation.

"A young passenger said he was touched by the story of this city. When he reached his destination, he was supposed to pay 13 yuan, but he quietly paid 20 yuan when getting out. When I reminded him, he ran off with his suitcase," said Fan.

The drivers said business during this year's May Day holiday was much busier than last year. It is roughly a three-hour drive from Shanghai, Hangzhou, and Nanjing, and its proximity makes it ideal for micro vacations.

To show their appreciation to local taxi drivers, some scenic spots offered them and their families free admission during the holidays.

Tourists who took taxis to scenic spots like Jingting Mountain and Shibawan Scenic Area were allowed to enter for free with a taxi receipt from the same day.

A number of restaurants and hotels offered discounts or reimbursed tourists' taxi fares. At the local Longquan Cave Scenic Area, taxi passengers had their taxi fare deducted from the ticket price.

From April 30 to May 5, Xuancheng Railway Station averaged 21,000 passengers per day, an increase of nearly 5 percent year-on-year.

The Xuancheng City Planning Museum received a total of 19,701 visitors from May 1 to May 5, with a single-day peak of 4,946, setting a new holiday record.

Serious considerations

Wang continues to rescue stray dogs almost every day. He said he did not intend to produce videos updating Chief Huang's condition, but is responding to enthusiastic requests from his followers about the dog's well-being.

"My original intention was to rescue stray animals, not to chase fame. The fame from Chief Huang's story belongs to our city," said Wang.

The dog's celebrity status has also posed some tough questions for the taxi drivers who love her so much — the chief one being someone's proposal to adopt her and their reluctance to part with the animal.

"She has been with us for so long, like family," Zhang said.

His life story is one of struggle and change. He was once a teacher, later worked for a State-owned enterprise, and after the enterprise went bankrupt, became a taxi driver.

"Adoption is possible, but the adopter must guarantee to treat Chief Huang well for her whole life," Zhang said.

Wang believes that if people want Chief Huang to return to the railway station, they should complete the adoption procedures, obtain a dog license, and comply with regulations.

Meanwhile, some government insiders revealed that after the May Day holiday, cultural and tourism proposals related to Chief Huang's fame had been stopped due to concerns about her welfare and overall stray dog management.

Some netizens have suggested the city should capitalize on Chief Huang's fame. "This is more effective than however many advertisements Xuancheng's cultural and tourism department could run. Who could resist such a warm city?" wrote one.

Another said: "Put Chief Huang's logo on the cars of these kindhearted drivers. From now on, choose them when you need a ride!"

Wang said there is a deeper issue to be addressed in the management of the city's stray animals. According to the Xuancheng government's dog management regulations, urban management departments are responsible for supervising and managing dog shelters and capturing stray dogs.

Stray cats and dogs caught by city officers should be neutered and then placed in appropriate institutions, such as stray animal placement centers cooperating with the government, to reduce the explosive growth of stray cats and dogs caused by uncontrolled breeding, Wang said, adding the government should establish public pet hospitals.

"In fact, the proliferation of stray cats and dogs largely stems from abandonment," Wang said, adding that the government should impose a stricter ban on abandoning domestic cats and dogs and raise the threshold for pet ownership as fundamental solutions to the problem.

Wen Qin of Anhui Daily contributed to this story.

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TOP NEWS

Cargo vessel to help advance space research

Tianzhou 10 delivers experimental supplies, equipment to country's Tiangong orbital post

By ZHAO LEI
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China launched on Monday the Tianzhou 10 cargo spacecraft to deliver scientific equipment and experimental supplies, including artificial human embryos, ultra-thin solar cells and a greenhouse gas monitor, to its orbiting Tiangong space station.

A Long March 7 rocket, carrying the cargo vessel, blasted off at 8:14 am from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in Hainan province, according to the China Manned Space Agency.

After a short flight, the Tianzhou 10 spacecraft separated from the carrier rocket and entered its designated orbit. At 1:11 pm, the cargo vessel docked with the Tianhe core module of the Tiangong space station, paving the way for Shenzhou XXI astronauts to enter the vessel and transfer payloads as scheduled.

Later in the day, Shenzhou XXI mission commander Senior Colonel Zhang Lu, spaceflight engineer Major Wu Fei and payload specialist Zhang Hongzhang entered the cargo vessel and began arranging the transfer of the payloads.

Tianzhou 10, which is the 20th spaceship and the ninth cargo vessel to dock at the space station, has delivered nearly 6.2 metric tons of daily necessities, scientific equipment and experimental supplies, as well as about 700 kilograms of fuel. The cargo includes a spacewalk suit, a treadmill and many instruments for scientific experiments and technological tests.

Mission planners at the China Academy of Space Technology said the Tianzhou 10 is designed to dock with the Tiangong space station for a whole year, making it the longest cargo mission in the history of China's space industry.

According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Technology and Engineering Center for Space Utilization, which is responsible for scientific missions on board China's space station, the Tianzhou 10 has delivered 67 sets of devices, experimental expendables, samples and spare materials, which have a combined weight of 768.2 kg and will be used to conduct 41 experiments.

The experimental cargo includes zebrafish embryos, mouse embryos and stem cell-derived artificial human embryos. The human embryos, although not true life forms, will help simulate the earliest stages of human development, according to reports from China Central Television.

The experiments in orbit will help establish a space-based embryo research system spanning lower vertebrates to higher mammals. The biological research will provide insights into how the space environment, specifically microgravity and radiation, affects reproduction and development, laying the foundation for long-term human habitation in space.

Among the payloads are flexible solar cells. With a thickness of just 80 micrometers — roughly the same as a human hair — these cells can be folded and rolled, allowing a greater number of solar panels to be packed into a given amount of space. Subjecting this new technology to the extreme space environment will help verify and improve its long-term power-generation stability, paving the way for supplying energy to China's large-scale satellite internet constellations.

The greenhouse gas monitor, developed under the leadership of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, is designed to track concentrations of carbon dioxide and methane across global middle and low latitudes.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Activist returns



Spanish activist Saif Abu Keshek, from a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, is welcomed on Sunday upon arrival at Barcelona airport after being released by Israeli authorities. Israeli forces had intercepted the Global Sumud Flotilla in international waters off Greece last week and detained Abu Keshek and Brazilian activist Thiago Avila, accusing them of having links with a "terrorist group". MANAURE QUINTERO / AFP

Innovation: Nation plays essential role in sharing technological achievements

From page 1

This is why China has invested heavily in research institutions, national laboratories, high-tech zones and innovation clusters that bring together industry, academia and government. These systems support a continuous cycle of research, invention, industrialization and global expansion.

This shift indicates a deeper transformation in which innovation is not merely a sector, but the main engine of national power.

One of the most striking examples of China's technological progress is its rapid advancement in artificial intelligence and intelligent computing. China is developing cutting-edge platforms in machine learning, deep neural networks, autonomous systems and supercomputing. Its research institutes and companies are building intelligent algorithms that can manage transportation systems, financial operations, healthcare diagnostics, smart cities and governance services. This progress demonstrates China's ability to integrate science with practical solutions for society, while AI is becoming a strategic resource for China's overall development and is also transforming global industry and digital ecosystems.

Furthermore, China is among the world's leaders in new-generation communication technologies.

After setting global standards in the expansion of fifth-generation networks, China is now moving forward with research and trials for sixth-generation systems. These technologies promise extremely fast communication speeds, stronger internet connectivity, and new possibilities in virtual reality, smart manufacturing and remote sensing. China continues to invest in satellite-based internet services, optical fiber networks and advanced communication equipment. These achievements enable the country to play an important role in building future global information infrastructure, and nations around the world are deepening cooperation with China to build reliable and affordable digital networks.

High-tech manufacturing is another area in which China is achieving robust growth. The country has become an important global hub for robotics, drones, electric vehicles, battery production, new materials, biotechnology and precision engineering. China's industrial transformation is supported by advanced equipment, skilled human capital and efficient supply chains. This new industrial system strengthens national competitiveness and enhances the country's ability to contribute to global markets. In addition, the progress in electric vehicles and battery technology is helping reshape the global transportation landscape, as Chinese innovation has made clean and smart vehicles more accessible to consumers across the developing world.

China's focus on green technology further strengthens its technological edge and global cooperative influence. The country is the world's largest producer of solar energy equipment, wind turbines and battery storage systems. It has built massive renewable energy bases, modern power grids and eco-friendly industries that reduce carbon emissions, and the country's approach demonstrates that technological advancement and environmental responsibility can progress together.

Through green innovation, China is offering solutions to global climate challenges and supporting the transition toward cleaner and more sustainable economies. This progress is of great significance for developing nations that need affordable and reliable green technology for long-term growth.

What's more, China also plays an essential role in sharing technological achievements and innovative experience with developing countries. Through cooperation projects in Asia, Africa and Latin America, Chinese companies provide modern technology, training and digital tools for nations' development. The affordable cost of Chinese equipment makes advanced technology accessible to countries that would otherwise struggle to adopt modern systems.

China's approach is based on partnership, respect and shared benefits. It helps build digital infrastructure, renewable energy capacity, industrial systems and modern knowledge-based economies. These contributions demonstrate the country's belief in global common progress and its willingness to support an inclusive technological ecosystem.

For Pakistan, China's growing strength in technology presents major opportunities.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor is not only about roads and energy projects. It is evolving into a powerful platform for digital transformation, AI cooperation, smart agriculture, advanced manufacturing and innovation-based industries. Pakistan can benefit from China's experience in financial technology, e-commerce, telecommunications, climate-smart agriculture, digital governance and high-tech manufacturing.

The next phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor will provide opportunities for technology transfer, research partnerships, joint innovation centers and capacity building programs. With China's support, Pakistan can build a modern economy that is competitive, sustainable and deeply connected to global technological trends.

China's advancements in AI can be particularly valuable for Pakistan. Intelligent systems can support urban planning, financial regulation, healthcare delivery and agricultural management. Cooperation in robotics, digital education and high-tech manufacturing can generate employment and modernize industrial capacity. Furthermore, China's experience in digital governance and smart cities can help Pakistan improve public services and strengthen transparency. These areas of partnership show that China's technological rise is not only beneficial for its own future, but also contributes to the progress of friendly countries that share a vision for common development.

China's global technological impact extends beyond products and industries. It represents a broader philosophy of cooperation, peaceful development and shared prosperity. The country encourages other nations to work together in scientific research, environmental protection, digital trade and modern industrial systems. The idea of a community with a shared future for humanity guides China's approach to technology and development. It promotes unity, fairness and mutual respect in international relations, and this is a refreshing alternative to competition-based narratives that create divisions and hinder global progress.

The author is executive editor of Pakistan Economic Net and Daily Ittehad media group. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Hands-on experience



Children try their hand at Chinese-style painting on Sunday in Rome, Italy, during a traditional Chinese cultural experience event. Visitors not only enjoyed performances such as Chinese folk music and lion dance, but also participated in activities including calligraphy, paper-cutting and tea art. WANG KAIYAN / XINHUA

Visit: Risk management in AI could figure in talks

From page 1

Gupta said that artificial intelligence has emerged as a significant area where both nations recognize a mutual interest in risk management.

Scott Kennedy, senior advisor and trustee chair in Chinese business and economics at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the US, said during a news briefing earlier that the current trajectory reflects a period of relative confidence. He said that as the two sides prepare for senior-level dialogues, "China has the right to be confident that they are doing very well bilaterally".

While both sides are seeking to expand cooperation, managing differences and sensitive issues — particularly the Taiwan question — is also expected to be high on the agenda.

During a phone conversation with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio in late April, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said the Taiwan question concerns China's core interests and remains the biggest risk in China-US relations.

Bonny Lin, director of the China Power Project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, said that stability in the overall relationship is predicated on mutual understanding. Referring to official positions, Lin pointed out that fulfilling international obligations on this question is viewed as "a necessary prerequisite for the stable, sound and sustainable development of China-US relations".

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Festival: People don't come just for music

From page 1

Over the course of the summer, the Strawberry Music Festival will make stops in a number of Chinese cities, including Taiyuan in Shanxi province on May 23 and 24, Changsha in Hunan province on May 30 and 31, and Harbin in Heilongjiang province on June 13 and 14.

The Strawberry Music Festival is just one of several music events that define China's summer landscape. Across the country, festivals have developed distinct identities. The Youth Music Festival, held in Dezhou and Weifang, both in Shandong province, focuses on rock bands, attracting fans who mosh and trade stickers. The Northward Music Festival in Changchun, Jilin province, highlights hip-hop and rap, providing a platform for underground artists to reach new audiences.

For attendees, these festivals are about more than music. Market stalls sell band merchandise, pop-up art projects invite participation, and picnic blankets and sofas create informal social spaces.

Shen Yue, vice-president of Modern Sky, the company behind the Strawberry Music Festival, described the event as a cultural space for a new generation.

"People come not just for music, but to meet friends, experiment with fashion and express themselves," he said. "For many young people, festivals are a temporary escape — a place to feel free, to belong and to create."

China, US jointly cut off drug trafficking corridor

By YANG ZEKUN
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Narcotics control authorities from China and the United States recently cracked a cross-border drug smuggling and trafficking case, arresting five suspects and cutting off a transnational drug route, China's Ministry of Public Security said on Monday.

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Views, **page 7**

In early April, the ministry's Narcotics Control Bureau and the US Drug Enforcement Administration jointly handled the case, according to a statement issued by the ministry. Coordinated operations were carried out in Liaoning and Guangdong provinces in China, as well as the states of Florida and Nevada in the US. Five suspects — two Chinese nationals and three US nationals — were arrested.

The ministry said the operations successfully dismantled a drug smuggling and trafficking route covering China and the US. It added that the case marked another major result of practical cooperation between Chinese and US antidrug agencies, demonstrating the two countries' shared determination to control drug-related crimes.

The China-US antidrug cooperation has continued to advance in recent years through intelligence sharing, joint case handling, technical exchanges and tighter control of narcotics-related substances and chemicals.

On Jan 30, 2024, the two nations launched the China-US Counternarcotics Working Group in Beijing, identifying priority areas for cooperation. On July 31 the same year, a Chinese interdepartmental delegation visited the US for the first senior officials' meeting of the working group, helping to build mutual trust and advance practical cooperation. Since 2024, China's Narcotics Control Bureau has maintained routine hotline contact and regular exchanges with US antidrug agencies. The two sides have exchanged more than 100 intelligence leads.

Technical cooperation has also deepened. Since 2024, China and the US have held several meetings of antidrug technical experts and established a scientist exchange mechanism. Experts from Chinese and US agencies have shared drug-testing experience and discussed ways to strengthen technical support for addressing the fentanyl issue.

In February, cross-departmental antidrug delegations from the two countries held the 11th China-US antidrug intelligence exchange meeting in the US. They discussed issues including the global and regional drug situation, removal of online illicit information, joint case handling, chemical control, and anti-money laundering efforts related to drug crimes.

Joint case handling has produced concrete results. In February 2025, Chinese antidrug authorities and the China Coast Guard, acting on tips from the DEA, seized more than 4,900 kilograms of methamphetamine and arrested seven suspects in waters near Huangyan Island in the South China Sea.

China has also strengthened control of narcotics-related substances and precursor chemicals. In July 2024, the nation placed 46 new psychoactive substances under control, while in September that year, it added seven chemicals, including three fentanyl precursors, to its controlled precursor chemicals list.

In November 2025, China adjusted its export management catalog for precursor chemicals to specific countries and regions, adding the US, Mexico and Canada to the list and placing 13 additional precursor chemicals under export controls for those destinations.

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GLOBAL LENS







Left: Workers who helped clean up contamination from the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant disaster hold flowers before placing them on a monument to their fallen comrades near the plant in Ukraine on April 21.
Right from top: Volodymyr Vechirko (center), 62, one of the workers sent to clean up contamination from the Chernobyl plant, pours vodka during lunch near the plant on April 21.
Vechirko rides in a bus with fellow workers for a visit to the region ahead of the 40th anniversary of the disaster in Chernobyl on April 21. PHOTOS BY EVGENIY MALOLETKA / AP

SCARRED FOR LIFE

40 years on, Chernobyl still questions humanity on how to safely harness nuclear energy

Radioactive Contamination! No Entry!

The warning sign at the entrance to the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve in Belarus' southern Gomel Region, near the Ukrainian border, is impossible to miss.

Its bold lettering and stark trefoil radiation symbol seem to fix their gaze on every visitor, discouraging any attempt to proceed.

On April 26, 1986, Reactor No. 4 at the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant in the former Soviet republic of Ukraine exploded, releasing more than 8 metric tons of highly radioactive material. Over 60,000 square kilometers of land were contaminated, and more than 3.2 million people were affected to varying degrees. It remains the most severe nuclear disaster in the history of civilian nuclear energy.

Belarus, itself a former Soviet republic at the time, suffered the brunt of the nuclear fallout.

As the iron gates of the exclusion zone at the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve in Belarus creaked open, the vehicle moved slowly along a narrow village road, as if crossing a boundary between present and past.

The road was scarred by years of neglect. Fallen trees lay scattered through the forest, while nameless wildflowers bloomed quietly in the marshes. The hum of the tires felt intrusive, breaking the heavy, almost unnatural silence.

"This was a school — a place where visitors now come to take photos," said Alexey Kazakov, head of the reserve's information department. After the disaster, then-Soviet authorities evacuated all settlements within a 30-kilometer radius of the plant, including the village of Dronki, where the school once stood.

Inside the abandoned classrooms, shattered glass and crumbling plaster covered the floor. Yellowed textbooks lay open to lessons frozen in time, and dusty backpacks still waited for children who never returned. A faded slogan — "Long Live May Day!" — hung on the wall, a haunting reminder that the joy of the 1986 holiday was abruptly stolen by radiation. For residents in the contaminated zone, life was permanently divided into "before" and "after".



An abandoned classroom in the village of Dronki in the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve in Gomel Region, Belarus, on April 22. HENADZ ZHINKOV / XINHUA

As the vehicle moved deeper into the exclusion zone, the radiation monitor's reading climbed, and its beeping warning grew increasingly urgent.

"There is no completely safe place here; we are always exposed to some radiation," explained Maxim Kudin, deputy director of the reserve. However, because tourist areas are grass-covered and relatively dust-free, short visits carry limited risk.

Revisiting history

To this day, what lingers most deeply from this disaster are the people who came to help back then. Four years after the disaster, 600,000 people joined the dangerous cleanup.

Helicopters hovered above the exposed radioactive core, dropping sand and other materials to smother the fire. Workers washed radioactive dust from buildings and roads, buried poisoned machinery, cleared forests and hunted animals to slow the spread of radiation.

A group of the workers who live in Ukraine's Poltava region returned ahead of the 40th anniversary of the accident for a one-day trip to Chernobyl.

Volodymyr Vechirko, 62, was sent to Chernobyl in summer 1986 to clear away topsoil, clean buildings and make the other still-functioning reactors on the site safe. He has been ill for much of his life, which he attributes to working at the disaster site, including chronic dizziness, weakness and frequent pain.

Because of his poor health, he said, he lost touch with colleagues. "Being back here now, the emotions are overwhelming," he said. "It's incredibly sad to compare what this place was to what it is now."

Oleksii Harbuz, 72, a medical officer during that time, was close to the human costs of the disaster. Returning for the first time in decades, he recalled colleagues who have since died and the bonds formed among survivors.

"This 40th anniversary represents both a deep tragedy and a vital chance to reunite with my brothers-in-arms," he said. "So many of our colleagues have passed away over the years, but those of us remaining hold on."

Scientific research

Since 2018, about 5,000 people have visited the reserve. Scientists accompany visitors, helping them understand the radiation levels, risks, and the gradual recovery of the ecosystem.

Over four decades, Belarus has worked to mitigate the disaster's impact. By 2025, it had implemented multiple national programs, significantly reducing contamination; about half of the affected agricultural land had been restored.

Advances in research have also improved detection and monitoring of radioactive elements, with the reserve's laboratories ranked among the world's best in this regard.

Experimental economic activities — including horse breeding, forestry, and beekeeping — have been introduced into less-contaminated areas. Researchers study how radioactive elements transfer through ecosystems while ensuring strict safety controls. According to Kudin, it is possible to produce goods that meet national safety standards under controlled conditions. The goal is to develop models for safe economic use of affected land.

In the reserve, horses graze calmly, and apiaries produce several tons of honey each year, "just as sweet as anywhere else", a beekeeper noted.

From a fire watchtower, the distant outline of the Chernobyl plant is visible, its reactor encased beneath a gleaming arch. Around it, forests have returned to life.

Yet the scars of the disaster remain. Environmental healing could take centuries, and the question of how to harness nuclear energy safely continues to challenge humanity.

XINHUA—AGENCIES







From top: Stanislav Tolumnyi, 65, a firefighter who worked to decontaminate areas near the Chernobyl Nuclear Power Plant after the 1986 disaster, poses for a photo in a nearby abandoned town, on April 21. Volodymyr Vechirko, 62, also one of the workers, poses for a photo near the plant on April 21. Workers who were sent to clean up contamination after the disaster pass through a radiation inspection point during a gathering on April 21. PHOTOS BY EVGENIY MALOLETKA / AP







From left: A worker tests samples on April 22 in the Polesie State Radiation-Ecological Reserve, a radioecological reserve in Belarus' southern Gomel Region created to enclose the territory most affected by radioactive fallout from Chernobyl plant. A radiation monitor in the reserve on April 22. Warning signs at the entrance to the reserve on April 22. PHOTOS BY HENADZ ZHINKOV / XINHUA

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WORLD

US dismisses 'unacceptable' Iran demands

Uncertainty persists, tensions deepen as Washington rejects Tehran's terms

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

Washington has dismissed Tehran's response to its peace proposal as "totally unacceptable", likely complicating talks to end a war that has significantly ruptured the global economy and prompting a rethink on regional security.

"I don't like it — totally unacceptable," United States President Donald Trump said in a social media post on Sunday, without giving further details.

Iran's state broadcaster IRIB reported that the response included the necessity for the US to pay war damages to Iran, the recognition of Iran's sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, the lifting of US sanctions, and the release of Iran's blocked assets by the US.

While more details have yet to emerge from the US side, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian has outlined three of Iran's postwar strategic options, according to the Mehr News Agency.

Pezeshkian said Iran faces three distinct paths — entering negotiations with dignity and strength to claim Iranian rights; remaining in a state of neither war nor peace; or continuing on a path of conflict and confrontation.

He framed Iran's openness to diplomacy not as a concession but as a calculated posture, citing the words of Imam Ali in *Nahj al-Balaghah* — if an enemy calls for peace, one should not reject it, but equally should never become complacent, optimistic or trusting of that enemy after peace is established.

Nahj al-Balaghah is a collection of sermons, letters and sayings attributed to Ali ibn Abi Talib, the fourth Rashidun caliph and the first Shia imam.

"The rational and logical preference, grounded in national interest, is for the victory secured by the Armed Forces on the battlefield to be completed in the diplomatic arena, with the rights of the Iranian people established from a position of dignity and authority," Pezeshkian said.

On Monday, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei defended Tehran's proposals as "reasonable and generous" and blamed the US for insisting on "unreasonable demands", Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported.

Baghaei told reporters that Iran uses both military and diplomatic tools as needed to secure its national interests, without seeking others' approval, adding that the country has participated in the diplomatic processes "with good faith and reason".

The US must prove its seriousness, he said, highlighting its record of breaking commitments. He cited the 2018 withdrawal from the nuclear deal and the US attacks over the past year, while negotiations were underway, Mehr reported.

"We fight whenever necessary and we use the weapon of diplomacy whenever we deem it right," Baghaei said.

War 'not over'

While the US and Iran iron out their differences in reaching a deal, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said the Iran war "is not over" in an interview with US media CBS aired on Sunday.

"It's not over, because there's still nuclear material — enriched uranium — that has to be taken out of Iran. There are still enrichment sites that have to be dismantled," he said.

When asked how the uranium could be removed, Netanyahu suggested, "You go in, and you take it out."

Meanwhile, Seoul condemned an attack on a South Korean cargo ship in the Strait of Hormuz, saying it plans to respond once the source of the attack is identified, Reuters reported.

Namu, the vessel operated by the shipper HMM, was not in violation of any rules in effect at the time in the waters off the United Arab Emirates, according to the report.

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Making heads turn



Participants in the World Hat Walk — an international event held in up to 60 cities worldwide to promote creative headwear — pose for photographs in Bucharest, Romania, on Sunday. VADIM GHIRDA / AP

Beijing leads way in improving entry policies as visa-free travel burgeons

By **LIU JIANQIAO** and **GUO JIATONG**

China continues to expand its visa-free travel options, resulting in a growing number of foreign arrivals.

Immigration authorities across the country are rolling out ways to streamline the customs process and accommodate the increase in travelers, aiming to make a more convenient experience.

During the May Day holiday, border inspection authorities nationwide processed more than 11 million cross-border trips by Chinese and foreign nationals, averaging 2.26 million trips a day, up 3.5 percent year-on-year, according to the National Immigration Administration.

China currently grants unilateral visa-free entry to citizens of 50 countries, has mutual visa-free arrangements with 29 countries, and has expanded its 240-hour visa-free transit policy to travelers from 55 countries.

From May 1 to 5, Beijing's ports of entry recorded 111,000 inbound and outbound trips by foreign nationals, up 20.5 percent year-on-year, according to official data.

Among them, more than 37,000 people entered China under visa-free policies or the 240-hour temporary entry permit arrangement, accounting for 74.7 percent of all foreign arrivals during the period, a year-on-year increase of 50.2 percent.

In response, the Beijing General Station of Immigration Inspection has introduced a series of measures to ensure efficient and orderly entry.

"To actively cope with the surge in inbound and outbound passenger flows during the May Day holiday, we've continued to optimize our service measures to ensure smooth and efficient clearance for all travelers," said Zhao Kun, captain of a patrol unit at the station.

"By monitoring passenger flows at ports of entry in real time and dynamically adjusting inspection channels in response to traffic volumes, we ensure staff resources are allocated in line with passenger demand," she said.

"During peak hours, inspection channels are opened in advance and operated at full capacity to reduce passenger wait times."

Fast-track inspection channels operate around the clock and provide on-site registration services, enabling eligible travelers to complete clearance more efficiently, she said.

"We are also fully implementing facilitation measures, such as the 24-hour visa-free transit policy and online entry card processing for foreign nationals, while optimizing the one-stop processing system for temporary entry permits and immigration clearance procedures to further improve efficiency for travelers," she added.

Providing help

The station has also strengthened passenger guidance and traffic management outside inspection counters, while promptly assisting elderly passengers, children and other travelers in need.

"Multilingual service teams have been fully mobilized to provide on-site policy consultation services for international travelers, further enhancing the overall clearance experience," Zhao said.

Phuc Huynh Thien, a visitor from Vietnam, said the convenient policies provided "a perfect start to my trip to Beijing".

"The airport's multilingual services also offered clear policy guidance, making the customs clearance process even smoother," he said.

Popova, a Russian tourist who only provided her surname, was visiting China for the first time with her child. She said police officers helped them throughout the process, from arrival to customs clearance.

"I didn't expect everything to go so smoothly, and my child is very happy," she said. "This experience of clearance has made me even more excited about the rest of our trip in China."

International flights to Beijing's airports continue to grow since the start of the summer-autumn schedule.

Beijing Capital International Airport has gradually increased flight frequencies on more than a dozen European routes, including Brussels, Istanbul and Dublin, while further enhancing connectivity across Asia.

Meanwhile, Beijing Daxing International Airport plans to operate routes to 44 international and regional destinations, aiming to better meet the diverse demands of travelers.

An Australian athlete said he was in the country to compete in a diving event.

"I've been to China before under the visa-free policy, and the entry process was very smooth," he said. "Policies like this can attract more international visitors to China."

He added that he was particularly interested in experiencing Chinese culture. "The culture here is quite different from Australia's, and that's something I really enjoy because I like experiencing new things," he said.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

PM Starmer vows to stay on after loss in local polls

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
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United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer has vowed to stay in office and take action on "the big challenges facing the country" after his Labour Party suffered huge losses in last week's local elections, with voter unhappiness at his leadership being identified as a vital factor.

Local elections have no effect on the makeup of the national parliament, but the results, coming after nearly two years of Labour rule, are a clear expression of nationwide sentiment toward the central government.

Across England, hundreds of Labour councilors lost their seats. In elections for the Welsh Parliament, known as the Senedd, the party suffered its worst-ever results. In Scotland too, it performed poorly, prompting Scottish Labour leader Anas Sarwar to repeat his call, first made in February, for Starmer to step down.

In a speech to Labour members of parliament on Monday, Starmer acknowledged that he had "doubters" and "some people are frustrated with me ... I know I need to prove them wrong and I will".

The government would "face up to the big challenges" and "make the big arguments" to try and persuade voters that theirs was the best way forward, he said.

He also picked out the populist policies of the left-wing Green Party and right-wing Reform UK, which enjoyed significant success in the local elections, saying: "We're battling the despair on which they (play), despair that they exploit and amplify. And so analysis matters, argument matters, but so too does emotion ... people need hope."

One Labour member, Paula Barker, has said she will challenge Starmer unless he steps aside. She told *BBC Breakfast* that the UK "had stopped listening" to him and that he was "a very nice man but he's an awful politician".

"It's becoming increasingly clear that our Labour government can no longer succeed if we have Keir at the helm," she said.

Barker has never held a senior position, so her challenge would be symbolic rather than meaningful, but if she goes through with her threat, it will give Starmer's opponents an opportunity to make their position clear.

The person regarded as his most serious rival, Andy Burnham, who stood as a candidate to be Labour leader in 2015, is currently not a member of parliament, having quit Westminster in 2017 to seek election as mayor of Greater Manchester, a post in which he is serving his third term.

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Pavilion bridges past, future at Venice event

VENICE, Italy — The China pavilion at the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy, is drawing crowds with a presentation that bridges the past and the future.

Since joining the Venice Biennale in 2003, the China pavilion has become an important platform for Chinese contemporary art to meet an international audience.

Themed "Dream Stream", the pavilion this year tries to deliver a sense of crossing time and space. The theme was named after *Dream Stream Essays*, an encyclopedia written by Shen Kuo in the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

The exhibition combines calligraphy, video, digital art, multimedia installations and a robot display to present Chinese tradition in new forms.

Artist Xu Jiang said Dream Stream includes elements from the treasure house of Chinese culture, which are presented through imagination.

One of the highlights was a robot that writes the Chinese characters of Dream Stream with a writing brush. Its mechanical arm guides the brush with rhythm across the paper, showing the force and beauty of Chinese calligraphy, with visitors gathering around to take pictures.

Italian visitor Vanna Rossetti said Chinese calligraphy moved her deeply, calling it "a beautiful form of communication".

Matteo Salvini, Italian deputy prime minister and minister of infrastructure and transport, said he admires Chinese culture and praised the exhibition as "wonderful", noting that it showed both China's historical culture and its vision for the future.

After receiving the robot-written calligraphy, he said he liked the fragrance of Chinese ink and would place it in his office.

Laura Fincato, former Italian deputy foreign minister, said the China pavilion reflects openness, dialogue and connection, as well as the creativity of the artists.

Art and culture remain important forces in building bridges when the world needs more communication and mutual understanding, she said.

Li Xiaoyong, charge d'affaires of the Chinese embassy in Italy, said China and Italy, both ancient civilizations, will continue to deepen exchanges in art, cultural heritage protection and other fields, strengthening people-to-people exchanges to develop bilateral ties.



A robot writes a character at the Chinese pavilion during the pre-opening of the 61st International Art Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia in Venice, Italy, on Wednesday. MARCO BERTORELLO / AFP

The China pavilion's exhibition will run through November.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Head-of-state diplomacy can continue to chart stabilizing course for Sino-US ties

The upcoming visit by US President Donald Trump, scheduled from Wednesday to Friday, will be the first to China by a US president in nine years. Such top-level face-to-face exchanges are essential for the stable development of bilateral ties.

Over recent years, head-of-state diplomacy has played an irreplaceable role in guiding the development of China-US relations. The multiple telephone conversations between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump, and their meeting in Busan, the Republic of Korea, in October last year provided strategic direction for the management of differences and the expansion of cooperation.

Under the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy, the two sides have carried out six rounds of economic and trade consultations since May 2025 — in Geneva, London, Stockholm, Madrid, Kuala Lumpur and Paris — and are holding the seventh round in Seoul from Tuesday to Wednesday immediately ahead of the summit meeting.

The frequency of the trade discussions reflects both sides' recognition that coordination on economic and trade issues between the world's two largest economies remains among the most important stabilizing factors in bilateral relations. Since economic and trade frictions escalated last year, maintaining close communication has become essential to prevent the broader relationship from being damaged by negative spillover effects.

It is noteworthy that the United States imposed sanctions on three Chinese companies on Friday, accusing them of "assisting Iran". China firmly opposes such illegal unilateral sanctions that lack a basis in international law and it will protect the companies' legitimate rights, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday.

The top priority should be to make every effort to prevent the resumption of hostilities in the Middle East, rather than exploiting the conflict to smear or entangle other nations, Guo added.

China and the US have common interests in promoting early and proper resolutions of hotspot issues, which is in line with the world's expectations.

They also have common interests in making joint efforts to reduce trade and investment barriers to each other in some sectors, and exploring more stable and institutionalized frameworks for long-term cooperation.

Such endeavors could potentially pave the way for broader tariff suspensions, more confidence-building measures in some key fields and reciprocal reductions of restrictive policies, so as to help stabilize supply chains.

It should be borne in mind that pragmatic cooperation between China and the US has continued in other areas despite the existing differences between them. A joint counternarcotics operation carried out by related departments of the two sides in early April underscored the shared determination of both countries to combat drug-related crimes and safeguard public security through practical cooperation.

What matters is not that the two major countries have differences and their respective core concerns — that is only natural — but rather how they perceive and approach those differences, and how they show due concern to each other's core concerns. Among them, the Taiwan question is the most important and sensitive issue in China-US relations. The US should handle it with utmost prudence.

Stable China-US relations are not only in the interests of the two countries, but also vital to global peace, stability and development. The momentum with which the two sides maintain their exchanges and sustain their coordination on issues of common concern has sent a positive signal: dialogue and cooperation remain the mainstream aspiration on both sides of the Pacific.

As Guo said on Monday in reply to questions on Beijing's expectations for the upcoming visit by Trump, China stands ready to work with the US to expand cooperation and properly manage differences, based on the principles of equality, mutual respect and reciprocity.

Confrontation does not serve the interests of either side. Guided by a commitment to mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation, China and the US can sustain their communication, expand the space for collaboration, and increase the areas where their interests converge.

Lai taking dead-end path at cost of Taiwan

The Democratic Progressive Party authorities of China's Taiwan region have been at the center of a heated debate over their proposed arms procurement bill. Initially seeking to allocate a staggering NT$1.25 trillion ($40 billion) for military spending, the DPP authorities' ambitions met with strong resistance from opposition parties and the public alike.

The passage on Friday of a revised bill, with the budget reduced to NT$780 billion, once again demonstrated that the "Taiwan independence" forces cannot ignore mainstream public opinion on the island.

Taiwan's taxpayers are still footing the bill for the gamble of the DPP's push for "Taiwan independence". There is growing anxiety within Taiwan society over the dire consequences of the DPP authorities' secessionist policies.

Lai Ching-te, the secessionist-minded head of the DPP authorities, has pledged to raise the island's security budget to 5 percent of GDP by 2030, describing the initiative as a "necessary investment" aimed at addressing "regional security challenges" and strengthening so-called "asymmetric warfare" capabilities.

Critics within Taiwan have rightly argued that Lai is attempting to justify his secessionist policies with lies falsely framing Taiwan as a "vulnerable" entity.

During a hearing of the Senate Committee on Armed Services last month, Admiral Samuel Paparo, head of the US "Indo-Pacific" Command, bluntly stated, "It's not a chicken and the egg, because you're not going to get chicken or eggs if you starve the chicken." He urged Taiwan to pass its stalled defense budget as soon as possible to avoid starving the US military-industrial complex.

The DPP's planned military spending is akin to paying "protection fees" to the US at the cost of the island's education, healthcare and social welfare.

The DPP authorities are also actively aligning with Japan, aiming to leverage its support for their secessionist cause. Lai has frequently made shameless shows of reverence for symbols of the Japanese colonial era, even going so far as to kneel in gratitude before a statue of a de facto Japanese occupier during a public ceremony over the weekend.

The Lai authorities intentionally downplay the impact of Japanese colonial rule — it is estimated over 600,000 people in Taiwan lost their lives in the struggle against Japan's colonial rule and in the broader effort to restore the Taiwan region to China from 1895 to 1945 — to sever the island from its cultural and historical roots.

Lai portrayed Japanese invaders and colonizers as "saviors", when in fact they were killers and robbers. He also characterized US arms dealers as "protectors", though they are nothing more than exploiters.

Such words and deeds are evidence of the deceptive nature of the DPP authorities, whose diehard secessionist stance means the political foundation for Taiwan to participate in the World Health Assembly does not exist, as the spokesman for the Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

To uphold the one-China principle and defend the seriousness and authority of the relevant United Nations General Assembly and World Health Assembly resolutions, the Chinese mainland has decided not to agree to Taiwan's participation in this year's WHA as an observer.

Notably, to advance the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and enhance the kinship and well-being of compatriots across the Strait, the mainland has recently rolled out a package of 10 policies and measures — spanning infrastructure, travel, trade and culture.

The DPP authorities have been going to great lengths to smear the aforementioned policies and measures that serve the common interests of both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Their actions are a blatant attempt to call black white.

Taiwan's future lies not in relying on external forces, but in advancing peaceful development and deepening dialogue and cooperation across the Taiwan Strait. That represents the rational path forward and the shared aspiration of compatriots on both sides of the Strait.

Any attempt by "Taiwan independence" forces to seek separatist agendas through foreign support is doomed to failure.

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Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Restitution law recognition that respect begins at home

France's decision last week to simplify the restitution of cultural artifacts acquired through illicit appropriation is an admission that history leaves debts that must be honored.

The French Parliament's overwhelming approval of the legislation — 343 votes in favor and none against in the Sénat, following unanimous passage in the Assemblée Nationale — shows the country's willingness to reconcile itself with its past.

The importance of this law lies not only in what it permits, but in what it dismantles. For generations, France's doctrine of the "inalienability" of public collections functioned almost as a secular catechism of the republic. Once an object entered the national collection, it became virtually untouchable, requiring painstaking parliamentary intervention for every single restitution. The Louvre, Quai Branly and countless provincial museums became guardians not merely of art, but of imperial memory itself.

Now, for the first time, France has established a legal framework enabling the return of cultural objects acquired through looting, coercion or colonial expropriation between 1815 and 1972.

Across the West, debates over colonial history have grown increasingly polarized. The United Kingdom continues its endless evasions over the Parthenon Marbles and the Benin Bronzes. It is not surprising that Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian expressed China's appreciation that France has stepped up to its responsibility in returning lost artifacts to their countries of origin, regarding the issue as an opportunity for dialogue and "mutual learning between civilizations".

These remarks point toward something deeper. Cultural restitution is not merely about objects. It is about the right of nations to tell their own stories through the artifacts that embody their memory.

Few episodes symbolize this more vividly than the destruction of the Old Summer Palace in Beijing in 1860 by Anglo-French Alliance Forces during the Second Opium War (1856-60). The looting of that palace, which is called Yuanmingyuan Park today, remains one of the traumas in modern Chinese historical consciousness.

In 1861, French writer Victor Hugo wrote a letter to his friend Captain Butler, one of the leaders of the Anglo-French forces, describing the looting of the Old Summer Palace as a crime against civilization, damning it as the act of "two bandits" — "One plundered, the other burned".

"The day will come," he wrote, "when France, once freed and cleansed, will return this plunder to China."

Although the sentence now reads like prophecy, the step toward its realization took more than one and a half centuries. And France is not now emptying its museums. The law excludes military objects and certain archaeological materials, and restitution cases will still require extensive review. Nor does this legislation erase the asymmetry of centuries of colonial extraction.

But symbols matter in diplomacy. What France has recognized is that cultural diplomacy cannot survive on nostalgia alone. A museum is not morally neutral simply because it is beautiful.

This is why French Senator Catherine Morin-Desailly captured the significance of the legislation when she said the law "opens a path where memory is no longer confiscated but shared, where the wounds of history become the foundations of a renewed dialogue between nations".

France at least understands something that many of the Western colonial powers still struggle to accept: that status comes not from the trappings of display but from respect.

And respect cannot be earned by displaying heirlooms stolen from others.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Social assistance upgraded to help more in need

Editor's note: *The country's new law on social assistance will come into effect on July 1. China.org.cn spoke to Yang Lixiong, a professor in the School of Labor and Human Resources at Renmin University of China, to gain insights into the new legislation. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Until now, social assistance in China was limited to those facing extreme hardship or qualifying for minimum living allowances. The new law expands coverage to include special hardship support for families close to qualifying for minimum living allowances and those facing difficulties in paying rigid expenditures, as well as other groups identified by local governments as needing assistance.

A significant change in the new law is the recognition of diverse assistance needs and the introduction of new forms of support. One notable development is the inclusion of service-based assistance, which will now include basic living necessities, essential nursing services, medical care and burial services.

In the past, social assistance mainly relied on the distribution of goods or cash payments. The new law recognizes service-based assistance as a legal right, significantly broadening the scope of social assistance. The challenge now lies in effectively providing such services, which will be a key issue in the development of the social assistance system.

The property ownership criteria have also been revised. In the past, many people with incomes at or below the minimum living standard were unable to qualify due to strict property rules. Some local governments have now lowered the asset threshold, allowing more people to receive assistance.

The methods for verifying income and assets have also become more diversified. Previously, social assistance staff members mainly relied on home visits and neighborhood inquiries, but such methods often proved inaccurate. In today's society, it is much harder to obtain reliable information through such traditional approaches. Therefore, verification methods have become more varied. Digital verification platforms not only reduce the workload for staff members but also improve the accuracy of the process.

At present, different forms of social assistance overlap, particularly because minimum living allowance status is tied to many other welfare benefits. The new legislation therefore stresses the importance of self-reliance among beneficiaries. However, without concrete supporting measures, which include broader welfare reform, achieving this goal will be difficult.

For now, the law mainly sets out broad principles and clarifies government responsibilities. The staff members can be held accountable if they fail to provide assistance to those who qualify or ensure basic support where needed. At the same time, they will also bear responsibility for incorrectly approving assistance.

However, the law remains relatively vague when it comes to the rights and obligations of aid recipients themselves, making implementation more challenging in practice. Defining a clear balance of rights, responsibilities and obligations for recipients will likely require further detailed rules.

The next step involves drafting implementation regulations, since the law itself sets out broad principles. Many provisions need clearer definitions. The immediate priority, therefore, is for the relevant departments to formulate detailed implementation rules for the law on social assistance.

Another priority is strengthening training at the grassroots level. The quality of frontline personnel determines the quality of social assistance work. Conditions and challenges vary widely across regions, and the capabilities of local staff members also differ considerably.

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VIEWS

Zhang Yongan

Partners needed in war against drugs

More than a century ago, China and the United States learned a critical lesson: drug trafficking is a global problem and no country, however powerful, could fight it on its own.

One of the earliest steps toward international cooperation came in 1909, when representatives from 13 countries gathered in Shanghai for the International Opium Commission.

It was the first time the international community collectively addressed the opium issue. The meeting adopted a set of resolutions aimed at restricting opium cultivation, limiting production and controlling distribution. In that effort, US advocacy and China's active participation became key drivers of the emerging international drug-control framework.

This momentum continued with the signing of the International Opium Convention in The Hague in 1912, which established international rules governing opium production and trade and called on countries to limit opium use strictly to medical and scientific purposes.

Both China and the US remained important contributors to subsequent international conventions aimed at regulating the manufacture and trade of narcotics.

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese government launched a nationwide campaign against drug abuse and trafficking.

Within a few years, the widespread narcotics problem that had plagued the country was effectively eliminated. China has maintained a zero-tolerance policy toward drugs.

Modern China-US counternarcotics cooperation began following the normalization of bilateral relations in the 1970s. During the then US president Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972, the two sides held their first discussions on drug control cooperation.

After diplomatic relations were established in 1979, practical collaboration soon followed, including exchanges on customs interdiction techniques and law-enforcement training.

In the following decades, bilateral cooperation deepened and counternarcotics efforts became one of the most constructive and stable pillars of China-US relations.

Yet the drug landscape has evolved. Between 2012 and 2024, new synthetic drugs and psychoactive substances spread rapidly and potent synthetic opioids, particularly fentanyl, moved to the center of global counternarcotics discussions.

In the US, opioid abuse escalated into a major public health crisis, placing immense pressure on medical systems and social governance. China and the US maintained close technical communication on drug trends, with regular exchanges on investigative leads, counternarcotics policies and emerging challenges.

In October 2017, the eighth China-US counternarcotics intelligence meeting discussed issues of mutual concern, including fentanyl and new psychoactive substances.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

At the G20 summit in Buenos Aires in 2018, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump reached important consensus on strengthening law enforcement cooperation in drug control.

China then took a significant step. On May 1, 2019, it became the first country in the world to impose full control over fentanyl-related substances. According to the US International Narcotics Control Strategy Report of 2025, there have been no seizures of fentanyl-related substances directly entering the US from China since then.

The two countries also advanced collaboration in law enforcement. In 2017 alone, China's National Narcotics Control Commission shared more than 400 investigative leads related to fentanyl procurement and over 500 concerning US customers purchasing new psychoactive substances. Joint investigations helped crack several transnational drug cases.

Information exchange and case coordination became central to bilateral cooperation, making fentanyl governance a model of international counternarcotics cooperation.

However, cooperation was disrupted when the US imposed sanctions on China's National Narcotics Laboratory over what it described as "human rights issues" in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

In August 2022, after then US House Speaker Nancy Pelosi visited Taiwan, China-US counternarcotics cooperation was suspended.

As China-US ties stabilized in 2023, drug control was one of the first areas where dialogue resumed. Both sides agreed to establish a China-US counternarcotics working group, bringing cooperation back on track.

At its first meeting in Beijing in January 2024, the working group identified priority areas for cooperation. China subsequently placed 46 new psychoactive substances under control and strengthened oversight over seven chemicals used in fentanyl production.

However, new challenges emerged when the US imposed an additional 20 percent tariff on imports from China in early 2025, citing concerns over fentanyl precursor chemicals. The unilateral move disrupted not only global trade but also the fragile framework of anti-drug cooperation.

China responded with restraint while continuing to strengthen regulatory controls. In March 2025, it released a white paper outlining its policies and achievements in regulating fentanyl-related compounds. Gradually, cooperation regained momentum.

During the China-US economic and trade consultations held in Malaysia in October 2025, the two sides reached an important consensus on fentanyl governance.

High-level engagement soon followed. After the two presidents met in the Republic of Korea, the US lifted the additional "fentanyl tariffs", while China tightened controls over exports of specific precursor chemicals to the US, Mexico and Canada.

In November 2025, FBI Director Kash Patel visited China to discuss drug control cooperation.

It was the first time in over a decade that an FBI director had visited the country, marking the restoration of key communication channels. Shortly afterward, cross-agency teams from both countries held online consultations to coordinate future efforts to address the fentanyl challenge.

The resumption of cooperation demonstrates the resilience of China-US counternarcotics collaboration.

Looking back over more than a century of interaction — from the Shanghai International Opium Commission to today's fentanyl challenge — China-US counternarcotics cooperation has evolved from early diplomatic dialogue into a practical law enforcement partnership.

The lesson is clear: Unilateral pressure cannot stop the flow of drugs or dismantle transnational production and distribution networks.

The China-US experience demonstrates that cooperation, rather than confrontation, is the most effective way forward.

Going ahead, China-US counternarcotics cooperation will continue to face complex conditions. But as long as both sides remain committed to mutual respect, equality and the shared goal of protecting human well-being, cooperation can withstand uncertainties and sustain positive momentum in global governance.

Working together toward a drug-free, healthier and more peaceful world, the two countries can open a new chapter in international counternarcotics cooperation.

The author is the director of the International Center for Drug Policy Studies at Shanghai University.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Denis Simon

China-US engagement conducive to global stability

At a time of mounting geopolitical uncertainty and economic fragmentation, renewed high-level engagement between China and the United States remains essential for global stability. As the world's two largest economies and most consequential technological giants, their relationship continues to shape the trajectory of the international system.

Even amid strategic competition, pragmatic cooperation between Beijing and Washington is not only possible but necessary.

A comparison between US President Donald Trump's visit to China in 2017 and the upcoming visit in 2026 illustrates how profoundly the structural foundations of the bilateral relationship have changed — and why engagement today carries different but significant possibilities.

First, renewed China—US engagement can contribute to global stability by reestablishing channels of high-level dialogue and reducing the risks associated with unmanaged strategic competition.

In a world marked by regional conflicts, supply-chain disruptions, and energy volatility, ongoing communication between major countries is a critical stabilizing mechanism.

Recent diplomatic contacts between US and Chinese officials ahead of Trump's visit have focused on trade disputes, agricultural exports and strategic materials such as rare earths, signaling that both sides recognize the value of dialogue in preventing further escalation.

Such engagement has implications beyond the bilateral relationship.

When China and the US communicate effectively, they help anchor the global economy and mitigate the risk of geopolitical shocks cascading into systemic crises.

Cooperation on issues such as energy security, climate governance, and financial stability is essential because the two nations have considerable influence over international institutions. Even limited progress in bilateral relations can generate positive spillover effects for the global system.

Global Lens

Second, despite persistent tensions, there are opportunities for cooperation in trade, science and technology and education.

Trade and investment ties between the two countries remain deep and resilient, reflecting decades of integration.

Even during periods of heightened friction — including the tariff escalation of recent years — both governments have continued negotiating arrangements designed to stabilize economic relations.

In 2025, for example, the two sides agreed to a temporary trade truce that reduced tariffs and export restrictions while encouraging increased Chinese purchases of agricultural products from the US.

This shows that both countries have an incentive to pursue cooperation in areas where interests converge. There are three main benefits of this approach.

The first is trade stabilization. Businesses on both sides want predictability rather than further tensions.

Maintaining tariff ceilings, reducing non-tariff barriers, and reopening suspended economic dialogue mechanisms could gradually rebuild confidence.

The second is supply-chain resilience. The pandemic and geopolitical tensions have exposed vulnerabilities in global production networks.

Rather than pursuing complete decoupling that is costly and disruptive, Washington and Beijing could work toward "smart openness" by continuing cooperation in key sectors while diversifying risk.

The third is cooperation in global economic governance. From energy markets to financial stability, the world economy requires coordination among major powers.

The current volatility in oil supply and shipping routes underscores how disruptions in one region quickly affect the entire global system.

In this context, even limited coordination between China and the US can stabilize markets and reassure investors.

Yet the nature of engagement today differs fundamentally from that of a decade ago. Trump visited China in 2017 when economic interdependence defined the core of China-US relations.

Although concerns about trade imbalances and technology competition were emerging, the relationship remained largely cooperative.

The visit in 2017 featured extensive ceremonial diplomacy, including meetings in Beijing and cultural events at the Forbidden City, reflecting an atmosphere that emphasized partnership and economic opportunity.

The context of the upcoming 2026 visit is far more complex. The bilateral relationship has seen a shift toward more pronounced strategic competition, set against a backdrop that has always included both integration and tensions.

At the same time, the continuing dialogue shows that competition has not eliminated the need for cooperation.

Unlike the Cold War rivalry between the US and the former Soviet Union, the China-US relationship is deeply embedded in the global economy.

Trade flows, financial interdependence, and scientific collaboration continue to link the two countries in ways that make complete disengagement impractical.

The difference between Trump's first visit and his upcoming second visit is expected to reflect a broader transformation: from engagement driven primarily by economic globalization to engagement aimed at managing strategic competition.

In 2017, the goal was to expand economic ties and resolve trade disputes within a framework of partnership.

Now, the objective is more modest but also more urgent — preventing rivalry from spiraling into confrontation while preserving areas of mutually beneficial cooperation.

This evolution does not imply that the bilateral relationship is declining. Rather, it suggests that China and the US must adapt their diplomatic approach to a new reality.

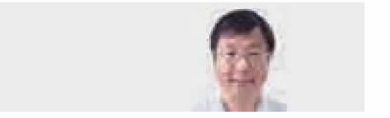
Engagement today not only involves building trust through direct negotiation and consultation, but also includes establishing guardrails that prevent competition from destabilizing the international system.

In this sense, a renewed China-US engagement is indispensable. The world's two largest economies may compete in technology, security and influence, but they also share the responsibility to ensure global stability.

By sustaining dialogue, pursuing pragmatic economic cooperation, and acknowledging the structural changes that have reshaped their relationship, Beijing and Washington can keep competition within bounds and ensure that the international system continues to function in ways conducive to enhanced global peace and prosperity.

The lesson from the past decade is clear: even in an era of sustained competition, engagement is not a concession but a strategic necessity.

The author is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Kang Bing

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No-waste cities will turn trash into treasure

The city of Shenzhen has reportedly started mining a landfill long believed to be the largest in China. Since 1983, the landfill served as Shenzhen's primary dumping place.

By the time it stopped operations in 2005, it had accumulated some 2.55 million cubic meters of trash that rose to a 110-meter-high hill. That towering pile of rubbish is located barely a kilometer away from a high-speed train station now under construction.

According to the new plan, about 6,000 cubic meters of trash will be excavated from the landfill daily. The reusable stuff will be recycled while the remainder will be sent to a power plant as fuel.

In a few years, the trash hill will get removed, and the venue will be turned into a science and technology zone focused on artificial intelligence and the digital economy. I look forward to witnessing how Cinderella turns into Snow White.

The Shenzhen project is part of China's efforts to develop no-waste cities, a program that aims to significantly decrease solid waste in urban centers. When the program kicked off in 2019, 16 cities and regions, including Shenzhen, were chosen as pilot zones.

Public awareness campaigns were rolled out, urging people to prioritize environmental protection. Waste classification drives were conducted, free plastic bags were restricted and excessive packaging was curbed. At the same time, a central government-owned company was established to strengthen the recycling sector.

The efforts proved fruitful, and within three years, the pilot program was expanded to 121 cities and regions. Today, nearly 200 urban centers are part of the program and plans are to cover the entire country by the end of 2035.

The Shenzhen project is part of China's efforts to develop no-waste cities, a program that aims to significantly decrease solid waste in urban centers.

Since China embarked on its reform and opening-up nearly 50 years ago, the authorities have followed a trial-first approach to solving major issues in the country. With a population of over 1.4 billion and great disparity in development levels and cultural backgrounds, sweeping programs cannot be rolled out at one go.

The same is true for the manner in which the no-waste city program is being implemented.

Turning waste into a national resource is not an easy task, especially because the project requires full cooperation from the public.

It needs people to change their waste disposal habits, which may affect the interests of different social and economic groups.

When waste classification was introduced about 10 years ago, we were told to classify household waste into four categories — recyclable, hazardous, kitchen waste and others — and throw them into four different bins. Initially, compliance was high.

But after some time, when we realized that nobody was supervising our garbage disposal and when we saw neighbors breaking the rules without getting punished, we lazybones followed suit. There are four trash bins at the exit of our apartment building though we have long given up the classification at home.

That, however, does not mean the waste goes without being classified.

The garbage collector in our compound meticulously searches all the bins to ensure that plastic bottles, packaging boxes, clothes and metallic items are set aside for sale before he takes the remaining waste to the community collection station on his electric tricycle.

With recyclable materials collected from a dozen or so trash bins in our complex for over a decade, the garbage collector has not only raised his family in Beijing but also supported his son's higher education.

To the middle-aged collector, the trash bins are a small but steady source of income. And he allows no interference from outsiders in his livelihood. I once saw him confront an outsider who attempted to "mine" the bins without his permission.

Most of the waste coming out of China's households is now classified not by families but by the waste collectors.

This is very different from the original design of the classification campaign, though the end result is acceptable if all reusable items are sent for recycling and lead to a decrease in solid waste.

We still have a long way to go to realize the dream of no-waste cities. On the way, we may even go astray sometimes. But now that we are aiming in the right direction, I firmly believe we will eventually get there. Trust me.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

EHIZUELEN MICHAEL MITCHELL OMORUYI

Practical enabler

In a world where trade is increasingly politicized, China's zero-tariff approach offers an alternative vision — one based on openness, partnership and shared development



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



At a time when protectionism, geopolitical fragmentation and industrial rivalries are impacting the global economy, China's decision to grant zero-tariff treatment to the 53 African countries with which it maintains diplomatic relations stands out as both strategic and consequential. It is more than a trade adjustment — it is a clear signal about the future direction of South-South economic cooperation. China's approach signals a move away from traditional North-South hierarchies toward more horizontal, partnership-based models of cooperation that emphasize mutual benefit, market access and shared growth.

Global trade is under growing strain. The World Trade Organization reports continued uncertainty in trade policies into 2026, alongside uneven and fragile growth. Against this backdrop, China's move to eliminate tariffs on exports from the 53 African countries it has diplomatic ties with offers a clear alternative: It reaffirms that openness — rather than fragmentation — remains significant to sustainable growth.

Recent WTO monitoring trends indicate new tariffs and other import measures increased more than fourfold from mid-October 2024 to mid-October 2025 compared to the prior 12-month period, marking the highest coverage in over 15 years of WTO trade monitoring. China's zero-tariff policy therefore can function as a stabilizing countermeasure, preserving export opportunities for African economies in an increasingly restrictive global trade environment.

This policy reinforces China's role as a leading practitioner of South-South cooperation, shifting the emphasis from assistance to market-driven opportunity. It aligns with broader development goals while giving African economies direct access to one of the world's largest consumer markets.

The scale of China-Africa engagement underscores the importance of this initiative. According to China's General Administration of Customs, bilateral trade between Africa and China exceeded $348 billion in 2025, with continued expansion into 2026 driven by commodity exports and manufacturing linkages. Africa is deepening its integration into global value chains, with China acting as a central partner. Removing tariffs strengthens this trajectory by lowering costs, improving competitiveness and encouraging export growth. Moreover, China's increasing share of African exports in some key sectors means that the tariff removal not only boosts trade volumes but also reduces price volatility risks for exporters, enabling more predictable planning and investment decisions.

For African economies, the implications are immediate. In agriculture, duty-free access enhances the competitiveness of products such as cocoa, coffee, sesame, tea and fresh produce. China's middle-income group — now numbering more than 400 million — continues to drive demand for high-quality imports, creating opportunities for African exporters. The expansion of agricultural exports, including products such as Kenyan avocados, shows how improved market access can generate tangible gains.

At the same time, a core challenge persists across the "farm to market" system: Many African farmers produce more than ever but capture limited value because they remain confined to fragmented local markets, dependent on intermediaries and disconnected from global pricing and demand. By eliminating tariffs, China's policy can help transform this dynamic into a "farm to global market" system, creating stronger demand signals, improving price competitiveness and encouraging investment in logistics, processing and digital trade platforms that connect producers directly to international buyers. This shift is particularly significant for smallholder farmers, who constitute the majority of Africa's agricultural workforce.

In the minerals sector, the impact is even more strategic. Africa holds significant reserves of lithium, copper and rare earth elements — resources essential for the green transition and advanced manufacturing sectors. Zero tariffs improve price competitiveness and can attract further investment in extraction and processing in Africa. However, long-term benefits will depend on whether some African countries can move beyond raw material exports to value-added production, which underscores the importance of industrial policy coordination.

Manufacturing also stands to gain. Light industries such as textiles, garments and leather goods can leverage tariff-free access to enter the Chinese market, supporting job creation. Those African countries investing in industrial parks and export-oriented production are particularly well positioned to benefit. Emerging sectors, including processed foods, pharmaceuticals and consumer goods, offer additional opportunities for diversification. Historical experience from export-led economies suggests that preferential market access can serve as a catalyst for industrial take-off when combined with supportive policies such as skills development, infrastructure investment and access to finance.

Beyond sectoral gains, the policy has broader developmental implications. By facilitating trade, it supports industrialization, employment and income growth. It also complements existing cooperation frameworks, including infrastructure investment and industrial partnerships, creating a more integrated model linking trade, investment and capacity-building. This reflects a broader shift toward development ecosystems, where trade policy, infrastructure, finance and technology interact to produce cumulative economic effects rather than isolated gains.

Yet a deeper challenge remains: coordination across fragmented markets. In some African economies, increased production and trade integration have not translated into proportional gains in income or value capture. This is because producers, exporters, logistics providers, financiers and regulators operate in poorly aligned systems marked by information gaps and weak linkages. As a result, companies struggle to scale production, meet standards and move up value chains.

In this context, China's zero-tariff policy goes beyond conventional trade liberalization. By guaranteeing large-scale market access, it reduces uncertainty, anchors demand and creates stronger incentives for coordination. Lower tariffs make it possible for companies to invest more in logistics, quality upgrading and market integration, aligning incentives across supply chains. When combined with digital tools — such as e-commerce platforms, digital payments and logistics tracking systems — this can help overcome coordination failures and connect fragmented markets. Digital coordination infrastructure further enhances this process by enabling real-time communication, improving transaction efficiency and increasing transparency across supply chains.

To fully benefit, however, African countries must address structural constraints. Logistics inefficiencies, high transport costs and non-tariff barriers — including certification requirements and customs procedures — continue to restrict trade potential.

Maximizing the benefits of zero tariffs will therefore require complementary policies. African countries must invest in productive capacity, strengthen their regulatory systems and deepen regional integration through initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area. Upgrading value chains and improving export quality will also be essential to translate market access into sustained growth.

Therefore, China's zero-tariff policy should be seen not as an endpoint, but as an enabling framework. It opens the door to deeper economic engagement and practical regional cooperation.

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MA HANZHI

African quick step

China's zero-tariff initiative exemplifies its sustained support for developing countries both in multilateral trading system and industrial development





WU PING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Starting May 1, China extended zero-tariff treatment to the 53 African countries that have diplomatic relations with China. Concurrently, it will advance the negotiation and signing of China-Africa Economic Partnership for Shared Development and upgrade green lanes to further expand the access of African agricultural exports to the Chinese market.

According to an announcement by the Customs Tariff Commission of the State Council, from May 1, 2026 to April 30, 2028, China will apply zero-tariff treatment to in-quota goods imported from 20 African countries that have established diplomatic ties with China and are not classified as the least developed countries, provided they comply with the rules of origin and hold the required certificate of origin.

For the 33 least developed African countries that have diplomatic ties with China, the Chinese government has extended zero-tariff treatment to 100 percent of their tariff lines, effective Dec 1, 2024. This makes China the first major economy in the world to grant unilateral, full-coverage zero-tariff treatment to all African countries that have diplomatic relations with it, and to all least developed countries that have diplomatic ties with it. This initiative is key to upgrading China-Africa trade and economic cooperation.

First, the zero-tariff treatment meets Africa's strong desire to expand exports to China. For too long, some African goods have faced unstable export channels and relatively high market access barriers, making it difficult to reach markets consistently. China's zero-tariff policy can help smooth these channels and share the opportunities of the Chinese market with the continent. This move can also help enhance the competitiveness of local African products and create profits for businesses on both sides.

In the short term, zero-tariff treatment will notably help African agricultural, mining and light industrial products enter the market more easily. Countries with production advantages in agriculture, such as Kenya, South Africa and Cote d'Ivoire, are particularly well-positioned to benefit directly.

For example, China and Kenya have signed the Early Harvest Arrangement of the Agreement on Economic Partnership for Shared Development. Under this arrangement, Kenyan tea, coffee and avocados entered the Chinese market duty-free and quota-free starting May 1. Similarly, under the early harvest arrangement between China and the Republic of the Congo, 100 percent of tariff lines were zero-rated for Congolese goods, allowing agricultural specialties such as tuckahoe, peanuts and cocoa beans to enter the market more quickly, while the Republic of the Congo will also further open its market to Chinese goods.

As the largest developing member of the World Trade Organization, China has long actively supported the integration of developing countries into the multilateral trading system. The zero-tariff initiative is undoubtedly the latest example of this effort.

Second, the zero-tariff initiative opens new doors for Africa to better harness its critical mineral wealth. Against the backdrop of the global green energy transition, Africa's rich deposits of cobalt, platinum group metals, and other key minerals have made it a vital hub for resource supply. Yet, due to limited processing capacity, fragmented industrial chains and poor infrastructure, some African nations remain trapped in the "resource curse" — exporting raw materials with low value addition while struggling to achieve economic transformation.

The zero-tariff policy can inject new dynamic into the upgrading of African mineral resources. Previously, Chinese companies preferred to import raw ores from Africa, as processed mineral products faced high tariff barriers, making local processing economically unappealing. Now, under the zero-tariff framework, processed African minerals — such as refined metals and precursors — can enter China duty-free, provided they meet the rules of origin. The requirement of "regional value content of not less than 40 percent" is achievable, since local ores, African-origin materials, and even Chinese-origin inputs exported to Africa all count toward the threshold.

This differential cost makes deep processing in Africa more profitable than simply exporting raw ores, thereby incentivizing Chinese companies to shift from "buying ores" to "investing in processing chains" — building complete mineral supply chains in Africa, from exploration and extraction to processing, along with integrated upstream and downstream industrial parks. This transformation not only enhances Africa's local processing capacity but also helps turn its resource advantages into genuine development strengths.

Third, this preferential access paves the way for a closer shared China-Africa market. Zero tariffs mark only the beginning of deeper pragmatic cooperation. The ultimate goal is to move both sides toward a free trade-oriented partnership. So far, China has signed new framework agreements on economic partnership for shared development with 34 African countries, creating long-term, stable and predictable institutional safeguards for deepening China-Africa trade and investment.

As the benefits of zero tariffs fully materialize, each side will come to better recognize the value of the other's market. That growing recognition will, in turn, accelerate the implementation of existing framework agreements, pave the way toward bilateral free trade agreements and eventually lead to a free trade area between China and African countries.

Against the backdrop of building a China-Africa shared market, cooperation on production capacity between the two sides is poised for unprecedented major opportunities. China has the world's most complete industry chains, while Africa is home to the largest number of developing countries. They are highly complementary in their industry and supply chains.

Zero-tariff policies and institutional arrangements will work in tandem, helping Chinese enterprises go deeper into the African market.

From a market access perspective, zero tariffs will lower the export costs of products made by Chinese-invested factories in Africa. Locally processed goods that meet rules of origin can enter the Chinese market duty-free, improving the expected profitability and economic viability of value-added processing investments in Africa.

From an investment security standpoint, signing agreements on economic partnership for shared development gives Chinese companies stronger legal protections when investing in or building factories across Africa. This reduces risk and creates a stable, predictable environment for long-term operations. Together, these two forces will help the continent build its own manufacturing base. The result is a collaborative model — Chinese technology plus African resources, localized production — that raises Africa's position in the global industry chains.

The deep integration of Chinese capital and technology with African resources will give rise to more "Made in Africa" goods. This will not only meet Africa's own development needs, but also keep such goods flowing into the Chinese market, helping the continent attract investments from China and other countries, move toward a new height in global manufacturing and establish itself as the next world production hub. In this sense, one important role of zero tariffs is to build confidence in the deep integration of the two large markets of China and Africa for a shared future in multilateral trade.

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BUSINESS

Qwen-Taobao integration to boost 618 shopping

By **CHENG YU**
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Chinese tech company Alibaba Group said on Monday it has fully integrated its artificial intelligence chatbot Qwen with its super e-commerce platform Taobao, allowing users to search for products, compare items and complete purchases through natural language conversations.

The move marks a major step from Chinese tech firms toward turning AI chatbots into full-scale shopping gateways and intensifying the global race in AI commercialization, especially when there are only a few days ahead of China's annual 618 shopping festival.

Under the new move, users can open the Qwen app and ask the AI assistant to recommend products, compare prices and place orders directly on Taobao. Within the Taobao app itself, users can also access Qwen, offering functions such as AI-powered virtual try-ons, discount calculations and automatic low-price deal hunting.

In a trial, China Daily found that the Qwen app was able to handle multi-turn conversations and refine recommendations based on evolving user preferences, signaling how AI systems are moving beyond chat interfaces into tools capable of executing real commercial transactions and services.

In March, ByteDance began testing the integration of its Doubao AI chatbot with Douyin e-commerce, enabling users to complete purchases and payments directly inside the Doubao app without jumping to the short-video platform.

The timing is significant. China's annual 618 shopping festival, one of the country's largest online retail events, is about to begin, with both Alibaba and ByteDance positioning AI as the front door to online shopping.

According to QuestMobile data for the first quarter, ByteDance's Doubao had 345 million monthly active users, compared with 166 million for Qwen. The gap has increased pressure on Alibaba to secure a foothold in AI-driven shopping by tightly integrating Qwen with Taobao's vast product ecosystem, helping prevent users from drifting toward rival AI platforms.

The integration also marks a broader restructuring inside Alibaba aimed at accelerating AI commercialization. In March, the company established the Alibaba token hub business group to unify AI model development, platform services and consumer applications under a more coordinated strategy.

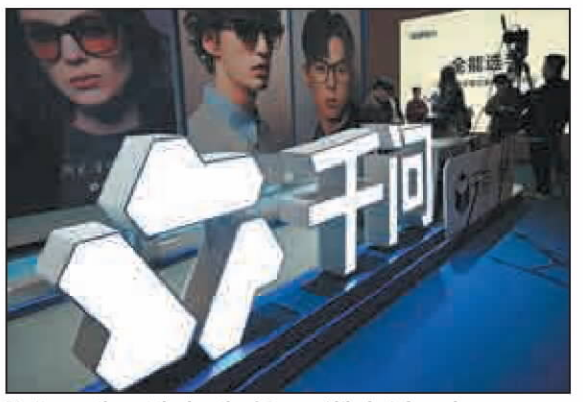
Alibaba has been laying the groundwork for AI commerce for months. During this year's Spring Festival holiday, it launched a heavily promoted campaign offering billions of yuan in subsidies, allowing users to order items such as milk tea through AI voice commands for as little as 1 fen (0.15 cent).

According to the 2026 Government Work Report delivered at this year's two sessions, China will "advance and expand the AI Plus Initiative", and for the first time, the country will "create new forms of smart economy".

The country will also promote faster application of new-generation intelligent terminals and AI agents and encourage large-scale commercial application of AI in key sectors and fields, so as to foster new forms and models of AI-native business, the report said.

Lu Ming, an economist and a member of the 14th National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, said AI-powered products and services are lowering the cost of making purchasing decisions by simplifying interactions between users and digital platforms in China.

"AI is breaking the traditional boundaries of consumer groups and geographic regions. It is evolving from a chat tool into an assistant that can actually complete tasks," Lu said. "To some extent, AI is also driving consumption by expanding user groups."



Visitors gather at the booth of Qwen, Alibaba's large language model, during a high-tech expo in Shanghai on March 12.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



An aerial image shows Piraeus Port in Greece. The port's annual throughput has exceeded 5.6 million TEUs so far, ranking 25th globally. XINHUA

Piraeus Port rises on back of stronger ties

Efforts from major SOE bear fruit as Greek trade terminal reverses losses

By **REN QI**
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> "These 10 years mark the decade in which the port of Piraeus moved from a corner of the Mediterranean to a global hub."
>
> **Han Chao,** chairman of Piraeus Port Authority

Since China COSCO Shipping Corp officially took over its operations a decade ago, Piraeus Port in Greece has transformed from an aging facility into a highly coordinated global hub, achieving remarkable growth in capacity, revenue and technological advancement.

In 2016, the annual container throughput of the port was approximately 680,000 TEUs (twenty-foot equivalent units), ranking 93rd globally with outdated facilities and limited capacity. Today, it has become one of the busiest ports in the Mediterranean, with annual throughput exceeding 5.6 million TEUs, ranking as high as 25th globally.

Over the past decade, the transformation of the port's "hard power" has been the most intuitive. Terminals have been continuously extended, deep-water channels dredged, automated equipment gradually put into use, and bridge cranes and yard systems constantly upgraded. The once scattered and inefficient operational scenes have gradually transformed into a highly coordinated modern operating system.

Piraeus Port has now become the fourth-largest container port, the second-largest cruise homeport, and the largest ferry port in Europe, as well as an important roll-on/roll-off automobile hub and ship repair center in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"These 10 years mark the decade in which the port of Piraeus moved from a corner of the Mediterranean to a global hub," said Han Chao, chairman of the port operator Piraeus Port Authority SA.

In recent years, the port's revenue and profit have continued to grow, reversing a long-term trend of losses. COSCO Shipping has invested over 10 billion yuan ($1.47 billion) locally, creating thousands of direct jobs and generating tens of thousands of indirect employment opportunities.

"It has changed not only the port itself, but also the relationship between the city and its people," said Yannis Moralis, mayor of Piraeus.

According to the recently released financial report of Piraeus Port Authority, the company's total revenue in 2025 reached approximately 251 million euros ($295.5 million), a year-on-year increase of 8.6 percent; operating profit stood at 132 million euros, up 2.2 percent year-on-year.

Savvas Sanozidis, secretary of the board of directors of Piraeus Port Authority, said the transmission and integration of COSCO Shipping's corporate values have effectively strengthened supervision over management, promoting transparency, prudence and a high sense of responsibility in all aspects of work, providing a strong guarantee for the company's long-term sustainable development.

Stefanos Gkikas, deputy minister of maritime affairs and insular policy of Greece, stated that the fruitful cooperation between COSCO Shipping and Piraeus Port Authority over the past decade has significantly enhanced the port's competitiveness and further consolidated Greece's position in the international shipping sector.

The development path of the port is also quietly transforming. Stepping into the office building of the container terminal, one can see large screens displaying vessel dynamics, operational progress, and equipment status in real time.

According to Han, the port has built a digital monitoring platform covering the entire port area and introduced 5G and artificial intelligence technologies, driving the production organization method to evolve from "manual planning" to "intelligent coordination".

Looking ahead to the next decade, the development blueprint for Piraeus Port is clearly defined.

"The future port will be smarter and greener," Han added.

According to Han, the construction of the COSCO Shipping Piraeus Port park project was officially launched in April. Once completed, it will become a modern center integrating sports, leisure, and social activities.

Saint Laurent restarts sales in Hangzhou

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Luxury fashion brand Saint Laurent has resumed normal sales to an area in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, previously reported as "blacklisted" amid concerns over high return rates and livestreaming-driven consumption patterns.

Tests conducted by The Paper on the brand's official Tmall flagship store on Monday showed that addresses in the Yingfeng Street area of Xiaoshan district, which had previously been denied service, could once again place orders.

A report on Sunday by The Paper found that 20 addresses in Yingfeng were rejected for sale by Saint Laurent, while changing the shipping address to other Hangzhou districts allowed orders to go through.

Yingfeng subdistrict, dubbed the "Manhattan of Hangzhou", was established in mid-2020 and spans 23.1 square kilometers. It hosts a dense cluster of cultural media companies and livestreaming e-commerce agencies. The area has become a focal point of the fast-growing livestreaming economy in the e-commerce capital.

Earlier reports highlighted that some merchants, facing behaviors such as "wear and return" by livestreaming consumers, had implemented self-protective measures including regional blacklisting.

The story quickly attracted widespread attention. The controversy over Saint Laurent has now drawn attention to other luxury brands. The Paper also found that Miu Miu, the Italian label under the Prada Group, also limits sales of some items on its Tmall flagship store to at least three Hangzhou subdistricts.

Some merchants defend such measures as risk management, citing high return rates and disputes. Yingfeng's permanent population exceeds 220,000, with roughly 15,000 registered enterprises and a youth demographic of around 70 percent, far above local averages — factors that may contribute to elevated return activity. Courier staff told The Paper that the concentration of livestreaming businesses in Yingfeng may explain the region's high return incidence.

Industry experts stress the fine line between business autonomy and consumer rights.

Cheng Weixiong, a fashion analyst and founder of Shanghai Liangqi Brand Management Co Ltd, said from the merchant's perspective, facing repeated instances of malicious and abnormal returns from the region, blacklisting is indeed a last resort.

However, Cheng noted that from the consumer's standpoint, implementing a blanket ban that punishes everyone for the actions of a few is fundamentally unfair.

Cheng said: "Of course, platforms cannot simply wash their hands of the matter.

"They must promptly halt such regional blacklisting while implementing precise risk controls. The goal should be to prevent a minority from acting badly, ensuring that everyone else does not have to foot the bill."

A clothing goods seller, Cathy Huang said that blacklisting entire subdistricts was often their self-protective measure after individuals kept breaking restrictions via alternative accounts. "As a seller, I can only avoid risks this way," she said.

Some e-commerce operators described frequent returns of worn items, sometimes bearing perfume or makeup. "Some consumers treat returns as a free way to showcase clothes in livestreams, leaving merchants to clean items for resale," Huang said.

Brazil's visa waiver to enhance bilateral partnership

By **LI JING**
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> Brazil is the most distinctive destination in South America for Chinese tourists, and its cultural attractions such as football and Carnival have long appealed to Chinese visitors."
>
> **Xu Ning,** general manager of the Australia, Americas and Africa division at Beijing-based travel agency UTour

Brazil's decision to grant short-term visa-free entry to Chinese citizens is expected to do more than stimulate tourism demand. Analysts say the move lowers barriers for business travel and will help deepen trade and investment ties between the two major developing economies.

The Brazilian government announced on Thursday that holders of ordinary Chinese passports would be allowed to enter the country visa-free for stays of up to 30 days starting Monday. The policy will remain in effect through Dec 31.

Following the announcement, Chinese online travel platforms reported an immediate rise in interest in Brazil. Data show searches for Brazil-related destinations climbing sharply within hours, with cities such as Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Salvador among the most searched by Chinese travelers.

"Brazil has become one of the fastest-growing long-haul destinations for Chinese travelers in recent years," said Yang Han, a researcher at Chinese travel platform Qunar's big data research institute.

During the just-concluded May Day holiday, Brazil ranked among the top 10 outbound destinations for Chinese tourists, with flight bookings from China to Brazil rising 95 percent year-on-year, Yang said.

Travel agencies expect the visa waiver to further boost demand, particularly during the upcoming summer travel season and the Mid-Autumn Festival and National Day holiday period later this year.

"Brazil is the most distinctive destination in South America for Chinese tourists, and its cultural attractions such as football and Carnival have long appealed to Chinese visitors," said Xu Ning, general manager of the Australia, Americas and Africa division at Beijing-based travel agency UTour.

Because Brazil often serves as a gateway to the region, Xu added that easier entry could also encourage multi-country trips across South America, including itineraries covering countries such as Argentina, Chile and Peru.

Beyond tourism, analysts say the visa waiver could reduce frictions in commercial exchanges between China and Brazil, where face-to-face visits remain important for negotiations, site inspections and investment discussions.

"Visa-free travel will facilitate the entire commercial process — from market research and negotiations to factory inspections and post-investment personnel mobility," said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, during an earlier interview with China Daily.

The policy comes as economic ties between the two countries continue to deepen. Data from the Brazilian Ministry of Development, Industry, Trade and Services show bilateral trade volume reached $171 billion in 2025, an increase of 8.2 percent year-on-year. The figures cement China's status as Brazil's largest trading partner for 17 consecutive years.

Brazilian businesses are also viewing the policy as a practical step toward smoother commercial engagement.

"Local companies, especially in tourism, trade, services and real estate, see the policy change as positive, as it reduces administrative barriers and facilitates short-term travel from China," said Gabriela Lima, a labor partner at Brazilian law firm TozziniFreire.

Businesses that rely on international mobility see the measure as enabling exploratory visits, negotiations and client engagement, she said.

Lima added that easier travel could increase the frequency of site visits and early-stage investment discussions, helping companies move projects forward more quickly.

Analysts say sectors where China and Brazil have strong economic complementarities may benefit most from easier travel.

China has advantages in manufacturing, equipment supply and infrastructure construction, while Brazil is a global powerhouse in agricultural exports such as soybeans, beef and iron ore.

As companies seek new partnerships, sectors including infrastructure, energy, agribusiness and technology may see more dynamic engagement, Lima said.

Beyond goods trade, analysts say easier mobility may also support growth in service-sector cooperation, such as finance and education, areas where bilateral exchanges remain relatively limited.

Despite the expected boost to exchanges, analysts caution that visa facilitation alone will not remove deeper structural barriers affecting bilateral commerce.

Under the policy, visa-free entry is limited to stays of up to 30 days and does not permit work activities.

"In practice, more regulated sectors are likely to remain attentive to the limits of the measure, particularly the restriction on work activities under visitor status," Lima said.

The temporary nature of the policy could also limit long-term planning for some firms, requiring companies to monitor whether the arrangement will be extended beyond the end of 2026.

"Visa facilitation is not a cure-all," Zhou said. "But it is a clear signal — and an important step toward stronger bilateral cooperation."

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BUSINESS

Real estate shows signs of rebound

Sector's strengthening being driven by second-hand home sales in key cities

By JIANG XUEQING
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China's real estate market is navigating a pivotal transition toward more sustainable growth, with early signs of stabilization emerging as policy support gains traction and market confidence gradually strengthens.

While the sector's adjustment has weighed on home sales and mortgage demand, the moderation in lending reflects a broader shift toward improved asset quality and more prudent risk management.

Against this backdrop, annual reports from listed banks show that by the end of 2025, the combined outstanding balance of residential mortgages at China's six largest State-owned commercial lenders stood at about 24.48 trillion yuan ($3.6 trillion), down 711.52 billion yuan from the end of 2024, a year-on-year decline of 2.82 percent.

Among them, the outstanding balance of residential mortgages at Industrial and Commercial Bank of China fell by 207.31 billion yuan to 5.88 trillion yuan; China Construction Bank declined by 196.53 billion yuan to 5.99 trillion yuan; Agricultural Bank of China dropped by 168.24 billion yuan to 4.82 trillion yuan; Bank of China declined by 106.48 billion yuan to 3.98 trillion yuan; Bank of Communications fell by 24.15 billion yuan to 1.44 trillion yuan; and Postal Savings Bank of China decreased by 8.81 billion yuan to 2.37 trillion yuan.

These six major banks are the backbone of China's mortgage lending market. According to the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, the outstanding balance of residential mortgages across financial institutions stood at 37.01 trillion yuan at the end of the fourth quarter of 2025, down 1.8 percent year-on-year, with a full-year decrease of 676.8 billion yuan.

All six banks reported negative growth in mortgage balances last year, though to varying degrees. The smallest decline was at PSBC (0.37 percent), followed by BOCOM (1.65 percent) and BOC (2.6 percent), while larger declines were seen at ICBC (3.41 percent), ABC (3.38 percent) and CCB (3.18 percent).

Xue Hongyan, a special researcher at Jiangsu Su Merchants Bank, said the decline in mortgage balances is a natural result of the real estate cycle adjustment, reflecting both weak demand for new mortgages and the runoff of existing loans.

Wang Pengbo, chief analyst at market consultancy Botong Analysys, echoed this view, noting that the decline was driven by a combination of early mortgage repayments by households and subdued homebuying demand last year.

Affected by macroeconomic conditions and the downturn in the property sector, nonperforming mortgage loan ratios have generally risen across the banking industry. By the end of 2025, among the six largest State-owned commercial lenders, only BOC saw its nonperforming mortgage loan ratio edge down by 0.01 percentage point to 0.6 percent, while the other five recorded increases. ICBC's ratio rose by 0.33 percentage point to 1.06 percent, and BOCOM's ratio increased by 0.43 percentage point to 1.01 percent.

Wang Jingwu, senior executive vice-president of ICBC, said that amid economic restructuring, property market adjustment and temporary imbalances between supply and demand, the bank's nonperforming residential mortgage loan ratio has entered a short-term upward trend, which is broadly in line with the banking industrywide trend.

However, he emphasized that China's economic fundamentals remain solid, with strong resilience and significant potential, and that the long-term positive outlook remains unchanged. Risks in personal lending are therefore manageable. He added that ICBC is closely monitoring real estate market trends and implementing national policies aimed at establishing a new development model for the property sector, promoting better housing and stabilizing the market.



Potential homebuyers examine floor plans, prices and promotional offers in front of a model of a residential complex in Huizhou, Guangdong province, on May 1. ZHOU NAN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Clients apply for personal housing provident fund loans at a branch of Industrial and Commercial Bank of China in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region on Sept 19, 2024. FAN SHAOGUANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Wu Jian, executive vice-president of BOC, said that despite increasing external uncertainties, the underlying conditions supporting China's long-term growth remain intact. BOC will strengthen forward-looking risk assessment, firmly guard against systemic risks, further optimize its credit structure, and enhance risk management in areas such as real estate, local government debt and structural imbalances in key industries.

Zhang Hui, president of BOC, said the bank supported efforts to stabilize the property market last year by issuing more than 500 billion yuan in residential mortgages. This year, it is steadily expanding both mortgage lending and non-housing consumer loans, promoting coordinated development across products, customer segments and consumption scenarios to build a comprehensive consumer ecosystem.

From late 2025 to early 2026, the real estate market exhibited new characteristics: on the one hand, the reduction in interest rates for existing mortgages and housing provident fund loans has pushed the cost of home purchases to a new low; on the other hand, further targeted, effective and sustainable policy support is still needed to bolster market confidence, said Li Yong, an analyst at Soochow Securities.

Zhou Wanfu, executive vice-president of BOCOM, noted that while the real estate market experienced a brief upswing in the first quarter of last year, with mortgage loans growing year-on-year, it remained in a period of deep adjustment in the first quarter of this year, and BOCOM saw mortgage repayments exceed new disbursements, resulting in negative growth. However, he also pointed out that the volume of mortgage applications at the bank has risen significantly since March, up around 15 percent compared with both the first two quarters and the latter half of last year.

Zhou believes this signals a stabilization in the property market. If the trend continues, mortgage lending could gradually return to positive growth this year, helping drive retail loan growth toward target levels.

Supported by a series of ongoing policy measures, China's real estate market showed a trend of steady improvement in the first quarter. Transaction volumes for existing homes in some major cities have rebounded significantly since March.

On March 22, the number of contracts signed at second-hand home agencies in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, hit a five-year high for a single day. On April 11, Shanghai's daily online transaction volume for second-hand homes also reached a five-year high. Some institutions view this as a positive signal that the real estate market is likely to bottom out by the end of 2026.

Data from real estate information provider CRIC show that the transaction area for second-hand homes in 20 major cities nationwide reached about 17.97 million square meters in March, up 117 percent month-on-month and 6 percent year-on-year. In April, the transaction area for second-hand homes in the 20 key cities was approximately 17.93 million sq m, up 17 percent year-on-year. The cumulative transaction area for the first four months in these cities was approximately 59.18 million sq m, an increase of 8 percent year-on-year.

Analysts said this is not merely a short-term rebound from an oversold market, but rather a sign that market confidence is steadily strengthening as mortgage rates are gradually lowered and home purchase policies are gradually relaxed. Furthermore, this trend is likely to continue into the second quarter.

Nation's 'Big Six' banks upgrading consumer credit business

By JIANG XUEQING

Guided by policies aimed at expanding domestic demand and stimulating consumption, the personal credit business of China's six largest State-owned commercial banks has undergone notable structural changes.

Personal consumer loans and personal business loans at several banks have achieved double-digit growth, becoming key drivers of overall personal lending expansion, while personal mortgage loans and credit card businesses have contracted to varying degrees.

By the end of 2025, the outstanding balance of personal consumer loans at China's "Big Six" lenders totaled approximately 3.34 trillion yuan ($491.3 billion), an increase of 569.71 billion yuan from the previous year-end, up 20.56 percent year-on-year. Outstanding personal business loans reached 9.36 trillion yuan, increasing by 1.26 trillion yuan from the previous year-end, up 15.63 percent year-on-year.

This trend broadly aligns with the People's Bank of China's statistical report on the credit structure of financial institutions. By the end of the fourth quarter of 2025, outstanding household loans in renminbi and foreign currencies totaled 83.28 trillion yuan. Specifically, outstanding operating loans grew by 4 percent year-on-year to 25.11 trillion yuan, recording an increase of 937.8 billion yuan. Outstanding consumer loans excluding personal housing loans totaled 21.16 trillion yuan, up 0.7 percent year-on-year, marking an increase of 180.2 billion yuan.

In contrast, outstanding RMB property loans fell to 51.95 trillion yuan by the end of the fourth quarter, down 1.6 percent year-on-year. Among them, outstanding personal housing loans totaled 37.01 trillion yuan, down 1.8 percent year-on-year, with a full-year decline of 676.8 billion yuan.

Yang Haiping, a nonresident research fellow with the Beijing Wealth Management Industry Association, said that despite continued policy support for the property market and signs of recovery in housing sales, the share of residential mortgages in banks' asset allocation is still likely to trend downward.

By the end of 2025, the outstanding balances of personal consumer loans and personal business loans at the "Big Six" banks had both recorded strong year-on-year growth. In personal consumer lending, with the exception of Postal Savings Bank of China, the other five largest banks all achieved double-digit growth. China Construction Bank posted the fastest growth rate at 29.41 percent, followed by Bank of China and Agricultural Bank of China at 28.35 percent and 26.95 percent, respectively.

In personal business lending, four of the "Big Six" banks achieved double-digit growth. CCB again recorded the fastest growth rate at 28.77 percent, followed by ABC and Industrial and Commercial Bank of China at 19.92 percent and 15.03 percent, respectively.

Notably, the growth rates of personal consumer loans and personal business loans at the six largest State-owned commercial lenders were significantly higher than the average growth rate for financial institutions disclosed by PBOC, China's central bank.

Dong Ximiao, chief economist at Merchants Union Consumer Finance, said that large banks, backed by extensive branch networks and strong brand recognition, are able to attract deposits at relatively low costs. This gives them a competitive advantage in offering consumer and business loans at interest rates that small and medium-sized banks struggle to match.



A staff member at the personal loan center of a China Construction Bank branch in Hai'an, Jiangsu province, processes a personal mortgage loan for clients on May 17, 2024. XU JINGBAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Since 2024, large banks have seen a marked acceleration in personal consumer lending growth, while some small and medium-sized banks have experienced sharp declines in consumer and business lending due to factors such as new regulations on loan facilitation. This reflects the growing divergence in the retail credit structure across China's banking sector, Dong said.

In terms of asset quality, the nonperforming loan ratios for personal consumer loans among the "Big Six" banks showed mixed trends last year. By the end of 2025, CCB's nonperforming personal consumer loan ratio had fallen from 1.09 percent at the end of 2024 to 1.07 percent, while ABC's ratio had declined from 1.55 percent to 1.46 percent, indicating improved asset quality. Meanwhile, the nonperforming personal consumer loan ratios at Bank of Communications, ICBC, BOC and PSBC all increased. BOCOM recorded the largest increase, rising 0.65 percentage point to 1.77 percent.

During the same period, except for CCB, whose nonperforming personal business loan ratio edged down from 1.59 percent to 1.58 percent, the other five large State-owned commercial lenders all reported increases in their nonperforming personal business loan ratios. BOCOM saw the sharpest rise, climbing 0.73 percentage point to 1.94 percent.

Li Jianjiang, executive vice-president and chief risk officer of CCB, said that in response to rising risks in the retail banking sector in recent years, CCB has significantly optimized its retail credit risk management mechanisms, strengthened risk controls at key stages of the lending process and advanced centralized retail risk management practices. These measures began to show results in 2025, with the pace of increase in nonperforming personal loans narrowing year-on-year.

Li added that risk prevention and control in the retail segment will remain one of the bank's key priorities going forward. As various control measures are further implemented and refined, the bank's asset quality is expected to remain generally stable.

Wang Jingwu, senior executive vice-president and chief risk officer of ICBC, said that with the implementation of policies such as trade-in programs for consumer goods and interest subsidies for personal consumer loans — along with the accelerated rollout of broader policy support measures — the market foundation for personal lending is expected to gradually improve, and the asset quality of personal loans should return to more reasonable levels.

Wang said ICBC has adjusted its internal organizational structure and functions by establishing a dedicated personal credit business department, promoting greater centralization and specialization in personal lending operations. The bank has also strengthened digital and intelligent risk management tools, expanded product innovation and supply in consumer and business lending, actively resolved hidden risks and intensified efforts in the disposal of nonperforming assets.

Through coordinated efforts, the deterioration trend in the bank's personal loans has already begun to slow, he said.

Leading national joint-stock commercial lenders are also stepping up risk management for consumer loans. China Merchants Bank, known for its strong retail banking business, reported a nonperforming loan ratio of 1.22 percent for its small and micro business loans as of the end of 2025, up 0.43 percentage point from the previous year-end. In its 2025 annual report, the bank stated that it will closely monitor market developments, improve its ability to assess risk trends, continuously enrich risk monitoring data dimensions, and iteratively upgrade quantitative risk control models to enable early identification, early warning and early resolution of risks in high-risk businesses.

At the same time, CMB has actively responded to consumption-boosting policies and adopted multiple measures to support consumer spending, resulting in steady growth in its consumer lending business with risks remaining generally manageable.

By the end of last year, the bank's consumer credit business, including credit card loans and consumer loans, had outstanding nonperforming loans totaling 20.72 billion yuan, an increase of 46 million yuan from the previous year-end. However, the NPL ratio declined by 0.02 percentage point to 1.52 percent.

Xu Mingjie, executive vice-president of CMB, said risks in retail lending are still on the rise in 2026, and the asset quality of credit card loans continues to face certain pressures.

CMB emphasized in the report that it will continue to improve its refined risk management strategy for the consumer credit business. The bank will maintain differentiated customer selection standards before loan issuance, focusing on quality customers with stable long-term incomes while continuously expanding data sources and rapidly upgrading risk assessment strategies. It will also strengthen post-loan monitoring, enrich monitoring dimensions, upgrade its models to improve the accuracy of risk identification and closely track changes in customer risk profiles through big data-driven quantitative risk control technologies.

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CHINA

Swan haven



A mute swan forages and frolics with several cygnets at Beilong Lake wetland park in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on Sunday, creating a lively early summer scene that attracted many curious citizens. Since the migration of seven mute swans in 2019, the park has become home to about 120 of the elegant birds, including seven nests of newly hatched cygnets this spring. HAN ZHANGYUN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Military official emphasizes innovation, self-reliance

By **JIANG CHENGLONG**
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A senior official at one of China's top military universities has called for stronger efforts in emerging and frontier technologies to secure breakthroughs in core technologies and "fundamentally reverse dependence on others".

Zhang Zhan, political commissar of the National University of Defense Technology, made the remarks in an article published on Wednesday in Study Times, a newspaper administered by the Party School of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China.

He said China should integrate high-quality innovation resources and strengths to achieve that goal, noting that the country is facing a severe and complex innovation environment and security situation in high-tech fields.

Zhang said China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) outlines the need to accelerate the building of strategic capabilities in emerging fields and promote the efficient integration and mutual reinforcement of new quality productive forces and new quality combat capabilities.

He said this is a major step to "address complex security threats and secure national strategic advantages", and an important guarantee for achieving the centenary goal of the People's Liberation Army on schedule.

A new round of technological and military revolutions is accelerating worldwide, Zhang said, noting that emerging technologies such as quantum information and bio-interdisciplinary technologies are making breakthroughs in multiple areas, driving the reorganization of global resources, the reshaping of economic structures and changes in the military landscape.

"We must firmly seize the opportunity, build on the momentum, coordinate and allocate resources from all sides, and advance deployment and development in emerging fields," he said.

The senior official called for the vigorous development of new industries, forms of business, models and capabilities in frontier and emerging fields such as artificial intelligence, quantum information, aerospace science and technology, and deep-earth and deep-sea exploration, in order to continuously strengthen the country's economic and defense capabilities.

Zhang also highlighted the importance of supplying high-end talent, calling for integrated development of education, science and technology, and talent cultivation in emerging fields.

He suggested optimizing disciplines and talent training models in line with scientific and technological innovation, industrial development and national strategic needs in emerging fields.

China should accelerate the development of basic, emerging and interdisciplinary disciplines in key areas such as integrated circuits, AI, new energy and new materials, he said.

He also encouraged enterprises to increase investment in basic research in emerging fields and improve their participation and influence in major scientific and technological innovation decision-making for the country and the military.

Separately, the Chinese navy has recently commissioned several types of new warplanes that can be integrated into the combat system of aircraft carrier groups, drawing widespread attention on Chinese social media.

The aircraft include stealth carrier-based fighter jets, multipurpose catapult-launched carrier-based fighter jets, fixed-wing carrier-based early warning aircraft, fixed-wing electronic warfare aircraft and anti-submarine helicopters.

Defense Ministry spokesman Jiang Bin said at an online news briefing on Saturday that the new aircraft are an important part of building systematic combat capabilities for aircraft carrier groups and a major achievement in the Chinese navy's accelerated transformation.

Since entering the new era, the modernization of the Chinese navy has advanced steadily and rapidly, he said.

From the air to underwater, and from near seas to far seas, various weapons platforms have continued to improve in type and function, providing stronger support for safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, Jiang said.

"Whether in escort missions in the Gulf of Aden, international humanitarian rescue, or the hospital ships' Mission Harmony operations, practice has proved that a strong Chinese navy is always an anchor of peace and a bridge of cooperation for the world," he said.

China is ready to work with the navies of other countries to make new and greater contributions to maritime security and world peace, Jiang added.

Taiji gravitational wave program makes breakthrough

A Chinese research team has announced a key breakthrough in the space-based gravitational wave detection program named Taiji, according to the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Mechanics.

The team designed a full-function interferometer optical bench for the Taiji program, constructed a first-generation Taiji interferometer OB and ground test system, and conducted preliminary testing and calibration.

The research program Taiji aims to study gravitational waves from the merging of binary black holes and other celestial bodies, according to the institute.

The full-function interferometer OB can effectively mitigate interference from temperature fluctuations in the measurement. Boasting picometer-level measurement accuracy, it can detect tiny variations equivalent to one ten-thousandth of the diameter of a human hair, the research team said.

Also, tests show that the equipment's noise level has been greatly reduced and its measurement stability has been enhanced tenfold, with key indicators fully meeting the requirements for the Taiji-2 mission, according to the research.

The relevant findings were recently published in the international academic journal Research, providing technical support for China's future space-based gravitational-wave detection.

CAS set out a three-step strategy to implement the Taiji program. Taiji-1, China's first satellite in the program, was launched in August 2019 and has been performing well in orbit, according to the institute.

XINHUA

Experts mull over AI role in education

Digital conference participants agree tech cannot replace human qualities

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
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Leading officials and experts gathered in Hangzhou on Monday for the 2026 World Digital Education Conference to discuss how artificial intelligence is reshaping learning, while emphasizing that it cannot replace human qualities such as moral judgment, creativity and social interaction.

Themed "AI+ Education: Transformation, Development and Governance", the two-day event aims to build an open and inclusive global dialogue platform and promote consensus on AI governance in education.

In his opening address, Vice-President Han Zheng said China has implemented a national strategy on digital education, accelerating the transformation of education through digital technologies and sharing high-quality digital education resources with learners around the world. China is also working with all parties to build a fairer, more inclusive and more sustainable global digital education ecosystem, he said.

Han noted that the integration of digital technologies such as AI with education represents both a major opportunity for global education development and a common challenge for all countries.

China stands ready to work with all sides to explore the vision and governance approaches for digital education, improve rules and standards and jointly promote the transformation and innovation of digital education, he said.

Han made four suggestions: first, a people-centered approach that stays true to the essence of education; second, inclusive and equitable access that ensures education is accessible to all; third, AI for good with safe and orderly development, ensuring AI truly serves learners' holistic growth; and fourth, open collaboration to promote mutual learning among civilizations.

The United Kingdom's Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State Olivia Bailey said the UK government is determined to ensure AI safety supports teachers. "AI and tech must also earn the trust of parents," she said.

Minister of Education Huai Jinpeng said AI can help students acquire knowledge, master skills and broaden thinking, but it cannot replace the ability to tell right from wrong, address conflicts or shoulder responsibilities. Nor can it replace physical exercise, labor practice or social interaction, he added. "The more AI evolves, the more precious human-specific qualities become," he said.

Huai also posed a fundamental question: when machines may surpass humans in learning and memory, and knowledge shifts from scarcity to abundance, where does human wisdom originate? "Knowledge matters, but cultivating wisdom and innovation matters more. Knowledge can be copied, but thinking cannot; answers can be generated, but creativity cannot," he said.

John Michael Kosterlitz, a Nobel laureate in physics and professor at Brown University and Soochow University, gave an example of his granddaughter using ChatGPT to solve geometry problems. "AI can present several ways of thinking about the same problem — it's very powerful," he said. However, he expressed concerns about plagiarism and assessment, noting that with AI, a student's homework may be partly or entirely written by a machine, making detection difficult. "If AI changes learning, we must also reconsider assessment," he added.

Kosterlitz noted that AI is becoming part of the discovery process itself, as seen in recent Nobel prizes in physics and chemistry. This prompts a larger question: "If machines become better at calculation, explanation and discovery, what should we learn to do best? My answer is this — we must become more responsible in judgment, ethics, imagination and purpose."



Guests attend an exhibition on digital education achievements during the 2026 World Digital Education Conference, which opened in Hangzhou on Monday. LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Meteorologists warn of hotter, wetter summer ahead

By **LI MENGHAN**
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China is expected to experience higher-than-average temperatures during the upcoming flood season, with a precipitation pattern characterized by flooding in the north and drought in the south — trends that warrant attention but not excessive concern against the backdrop of global warming, meteorologists said.

According to the National Climate Center, temperatures across large parts of the country will be higher than normal from June to August, with highs exceeding 35 C, especially in southern China and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

Floods and droughts are expected across different regions during this period. Areas such as Hebei, Liaoning, Jilin, Heilongjiang, Zhejiang, Fujian, Guangdong and Hainan provinces, as well as Beijing and Tianjin, are predicted to receive 20 to 50 percent more precipitation than usual, with the potential for extreme heavy rainfall and flood disasters. Meanwhile, periodic drought conditions may affect Hubei and Hunan provinces, as well as Chongqing and Xinjiang.

Responding to recent online assertions that 2026 will see "the hottest summer with persistent extreme heat across large areas", Chen Lijuan, a senior forecaster at the National Climate Center, said such claims are exaggerated and that subjective expressions like "collapsing heat" have unnecessarily fueled public anxiety.

Chen said above-average temperatures do not indicate an uncontrollable situation, as heat waves are limited in both space and time. Some areas in northern China, for instance, are expected to experience high-temperature days in early summer, while southern China will see notable heat and drought in midsummer. During those periods, there may still be occasional cooling spells or rainfall events.

This aligns with recent weather forecasts, which suggest a periodic heat wave.

Cities in the provinces of Shandong, Henan, Shanxi, Shaanxi and Hebei are expected to experience maximum temperatures above 35 C between May 9 and 13. If the forecast proves accurate, the high temperatures will arrive more than 10 days earlier than average. However, a cold spell is expected to interrupt the heat later this week.

El Nino factor

Zheng Fei, a researcher at the Institute of Atmospheric Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said high temperatures and precipitation patterns expected over the next three months are part of the broader trend of global warming.

"While this is expected, it still requires attention, as the global average surface temperature increased around 0.6 C over the past century, with a 0.24 C rise in 2023 alone," he said.

Zheng said the potential development of El Nino conditions could be a major factor influencing climate patterns from June to August.

El Nino — a climate phenomenon marked by unusually warm sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific — is highly likely to emerge this month, contributing to rising global average temperatures. It is expected to bring a slightly stronger-than-normal East Asian summer monsoon and a more intense western Pacific subtropical high extending farther west and north, resulting in increased moisture transport from the ocean and pushing the rain belt farther north.

"The El Nino event is expected to intensify during summer and autumn, reach moderate-to-strong intensity, peak this winter and then weaken the following spring. However, the probability of it developing into a super El Nino — comparable to the extreme events of 1997 or 2015 — is only about 10 percent," Zheng said.

"It is currently predicted that the global mean surface temperature in 2026 will be between 1.43 C and 1.52 C above preindustrial levels, and it is highly likely to exceed 2025 levels, ranking among the top three warmest years since 1850," he said.

Notably, El Nino typically affects regions around the tropical Pacific first, with its thermal effects taking several months to reach Asia. Therefore, "the global mean surface temperature is predicted to reach a record high in 2027, making it the warmest year on record," Zheng said.

Cheng Lijing, a researcher at the Institute of Atmospheric Physics, also warned of more frequent and extreme weather disasters associated with El Nino, as substantial heat accumulated in the eastern tropical Pacific is released through evaporation and atmospheric circulation during such events.

"Weather disasters in recent years have been characterized by high intensity and short duration, so the possibility of destructive severe convective weather, like the heavy rainstorm in Beijing in 2025, cannot be ruled out," Cheng said.

Although such weather events remain extremely difficult to predict, the monitoring network is being continuously improved with artificial intelligence-driven technology, enabling more accurate forecasts, earlier warnings and better preparedness, he said.

"Therefore, the public need not be overly concerned," he added.

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Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Shennongjia's monkeys make golden return

Caretakers help in bringing secretive subspecies back from the brink

By LI MENGHAN
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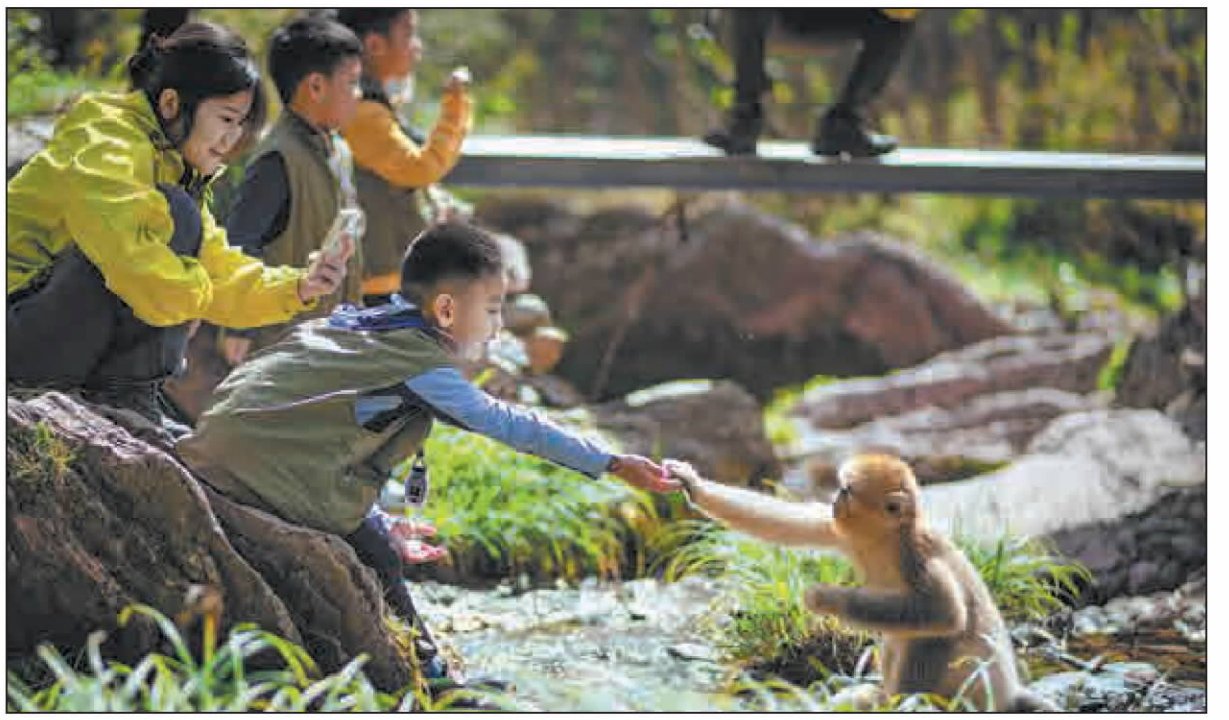





Clockwise from top: A child interacts with a golden snub-nosed monkey at Dalongtan Golden Snub-nosed Monkey Research Base in Shennongjia, Hubei province, in September 2024. WANG CHUNYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY Researchers record monkeys' behavior at Shennongjia National Nature Reserve. LI SHUHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY A researcher observes monkeys at the Dalongtan base in May 2024. LIU KANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Attracted by the caretaker's closed fist, a 65-centimeter-tall golden snub-nosed monkey swings gracefully through the branches of Shennongjia in Central China's Hubei province.

When the fist reveals nothing, the monkey — a 25-kilogram male named Beike (meaning "conch") — taps the caretaker and tugs at his sleeve. He eventually finds two peanuts in the other hand, swiftly seizing and cracking the rare treat.

"This monkey recently won a battle to become the new head of his family," said Yang Jingyuan, director of the scientific research institute at the Shennongjia National Nature Reserve. He looks on as dozens of monkeys dart through the canopy, grooming one another and occasionally tussling in the dappled sunlight.

After four decades of conservation, the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey, the rarest subspecies of the golden snub-nosed monkey, has bounced back from near invisibility.

Its population has tripled to 1,618 individuals across 11 groups, roaming a habitat of 401 square kilometers — a resurgence made possible by policy support, scientific management and technological empowerment.

The comeback

With a life span of around 20 to 25 years, the golden snub-nosed monkey is classified as a first-class State-protected wildlife species.

In 1978, the belief that golden snub-nosed monkeys did not inhabit Hubei due to the region's climate and geographical conditions was challenged when a group of Chinese scientists unexpectedly collected two specimens in Shennongjia.

In 1980, Professor Liu Minzhuang from East China Normal University in Shanghai confirmed the presence of golden snub-nosed monkeys in Shennongjia, extending the species' distribution eastward by around 500 km from Sichuan province into Hubei.

However, the discovery coincided with a period of severe deforestation and hunting. By the 1980s, the population of this subspecies had plummeted to just 501 individuals clinging to a mere 85 sq km of habitat. To stem the tide, Shennongjia was designated a provincial reserve in 1982 and upgraded to national status in 1986. In 2024, the subspecies was officially designated as an independent conservation management target, reflecting its unique genetic diversity and morphology, including its iconic upturned nose and a tail that often exceeds its body length.



A golden snub-nosed monkey breastfeeds her infants in Shennongjia, Hubei province. LI MENGHAN / CHINA DAILY

"The 2024 designation recognized both the culmination of decades-long field research and the species' protection value," caretaker Yang said. As early as 2005, scientists had selected one of the 11 groups — the very group that includes the family Beike now leads — as their focal study group for long-term behavioral and ecological monitoring.

At that time, the group had 105 individuals and inhabited a natural valley in Dalongtan, northeast Shennongjia. The group had a well-organized social structure of eight family units and one all-male unit.

Golden snub-nosed monkeys typically have a hierarchical social structure. Each group consists of dozens to hundreds of monkeys, organized into several family units and one or more all-male units. Each family unit is led by an adult male, who lives with its wives and kids. The all-male unit, made up of adult males who have lost their position as family head and those who have left their families after the age of four, is responsible for the security of the whole group and for training the younger males.

For close observation, researchers built simple living quarters, set up monitoring plank walks and established the Dalongtan Golden Snub-nosed Monkey Research Base in 2005. Through continuous tracking and observation, they identified winter food shortages as one of the key factors driving the population toward endangerment.

To address the problem, the research team conducted a diet supplement experiment, where apples, oranges and pine nuts were stuck onto branches and coated with moss to mimic wild fruits. But no monkey dared to approach — a stalemate that was finally broken when a male, later named Dadan (meaning "bold"), became the first to take the food.

A few months later, the monkey group began to regularly accept the supplemental food, which opened the door for researchers to systematically observe their feeding, reproduction, social behavior and even individual personalities.

Yao Hui, deputy director of the scientific research institute, said that the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey typically lives at altitudes above 1,600 meters, where vegetation is limited — about 60 percent of their diet is tree bark and lichen, supplemented by bird eggs, insects and soil for protein and trace elements.

"As a result, during winter when food intake is severely insufficient and nutrition is lacking, their fur turns grayish; around July and August, however, it becomes a beautiful golden color," Yao said.

Yao underscored that human intervention remains minimal — researchers only provide a small amount of supplemental food during extreme winter shortages. The overall approach is to let the monkeys live as naturally as possible while working to restore their natural habitat.

Measures included the construction of 25 ecological corridors, which facilitate the reconnection of fragmented habitat patches and promote gene exchange among different monkey populations. Additionally, more than 20 sq km of degraded habitat has been restored to expand their living area.

For residents living in areas where the monkeys are distributed, the reserve has relocated them and organized skills training to help them transition to new livelihoods. Training programs focus on ecotourism, herbal medicine cultivation and green agriculture, empowering former forest dwellers to step out of the deep mountains and embrace sustainable lives.

For those living in peripheral regions, they receive alternative energy subsidies to replace coal and firewood with electricity, reducing the human impact on the monkeys' habitat. Additionally, a comprehensive electrification transformation project at the Dalongtan base was completed in 2024, with a large number of photovoltaic panels installed to power most daily needs such as cooking and heating. This initiative not only reduced fire risks but also further minimized human disturbance to the monkeys' habitat.

"Most rescue cases at the local rescue station are reported by villagers — a vivid microcosm of the shift from loggers to guardians," Yao said.

Tech empowerment

Peng Linpeng, director of the information management center at the Shennongjia reserve, highlighted the importance of a rounded, three-dimensional monitoring network for the recovery of the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey population.

Established in 2025, the network goes beyond regular patrols, integrating satellite remote sensing to monitor broad habitat changes like forest pests and diseases. Drones, being more precise and cost-effective, support routine comparative monitoring, deter illegal activities, and collect high-definition three-dimensional geographic data for emergency command and dispatch.

"Considering the species' lofty living requirements, we have set up water quality monitoring stations at the sources and outlets of rivers flowing into the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers, as well as air quality monitoring stations at elevations ranging from 600 to 3,000 meters," Peng said, adding that highly sensitive smoke detectors have been installed to warn of fire risks.

For real-time wildlife tracking, high-altitude cameras equipped with artificial intelligence have been deployed, offering a detection range of up to 1,000 meters to automatically track, identify and record animals upon their appearance. Over 700 infrared cameras have been installed, with 50 of them capable of real-time transmission. Supplemented by acoustic detectors, monitoring has turned from manual tracking in the past to a highly efficient, precise and automated approach.

"All technological means are designed and deployed for the sole purpose of wildlife protection, rather than for purely academic research," Peng said.

As a flagship species, the recovery of the Shennongjia golden snub-nosed monkey from the brink reflects the ecological prosperity of the reserve — which, with just 0.03 percent of the national land area, is home to more than one-tenth of China's vascular plant and vertebrate species — a thriving reality under the watchful eyes of caretakers, local villagers and cameras.

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Yunnan model creates biological sanctuary for province's wildlife

By YAN YUJIE and **LI YINGQING**
in Kunming

A 21-year-old white-browed gibbon named Dingding has become the latest international face of China's conservation achievements. A video of the primate "chatting" with staff at the Taiyanghe National Forest Park recently garnered over 44 million views on global social media platforms, highlighting a burgeoning era of harmonious coexistence between humans and endangered species in Southwest China.

While the video touched netizens with its heartwarming interaction, experts say the scene is a microcosm of a much larger ecological shift in Yunnan province.

The tranquil life enjoyed by Dingding and his peers is underpinned by rigorous policy. During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Yunnan adopted the "forest chief" system, a centralized strategy that has established one of the country's most extensive wildlife protection networks.

According to the Yunnan Forestry and Grassland Administration, the province serves as a sanctuary for 928 key wild animal and plant species under State protection. At Taiyanghe, this protection translates into a sprawling 216.23-square-kilometer habitat with a forest coverage rate of 97.45 percent.

Taiyanghe has evolved into more than just a forest; it is a center for rescue and mutual healing. Among its residents is Yuanyuan, a white-cheeked gibbon whose presence is a testament to the vigilance of local forest police. After being rescued from life-threatening conditions in its early years, Yuanyuan now thrives alongside other rare species, such as Zhaocai and Jingbao — a pair of binturongs classified as national first-class protected wildlife.



White-browed gibbon Dingding sits on the head of Fu Ziqian, a worker at the Taiyanghe National Forest Park in Pu'er, Yunnan province. WANG YUEDING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The animals here enjoy being close to people because they feel secure," said Xu Yanfang, a staff member who works closely with "Princess" Nana, one of the park's rhinoceroses. "Working with them is a healing experience. It's a fascinating dynamic where the caretakers and the animals support each other's well-being."

The park's success is also visible in the longevity of its inhabitants. At 21, Dingding is considered an elderly gibbon, equivalent to over 90 human years. His playful interactions — insisting on being carried or demanding peeled grapes — reflect a level of care usually reserved for domestic seniors.

Fu Ziqian, a veteran staff member, noted that the dietary preferences of the animals often mirror the region's rich natural offerings. "Dingding enjoys local specialties like fish mint and gotu kola," Fu said. "It shows how well-integrated these animals are into the local Yunnan ecosystem."

The conservation effort has moved beyond government agencies and into the hearts of the public. Supporters like 42-year-old Wang Xueyun travel hundreds of kilometers from Xishuangbanna every month to bring fresh fruit to the gibbons.

"I wish for Dingding, Shanshan and Yuanyuan to remain healthy," Wang said. "I hope the other animals can live freely and happily on this land."

As Yunnan prepares to transition into future conservation frameworks, the high-definition cameras and livestreamed sessions led by young operators like 23-year-old Lou Zihan ensure that the message of protection reaches a global audience. For Lou, the mischievous antics of the binturongs she monitors are not just content for social media, but proof that China's "green revolution" is working — one nuzzle at a time.

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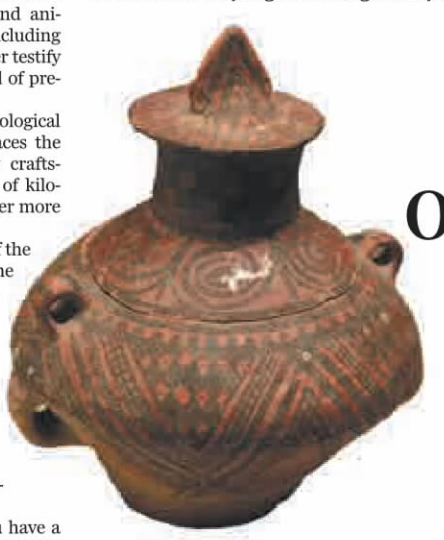
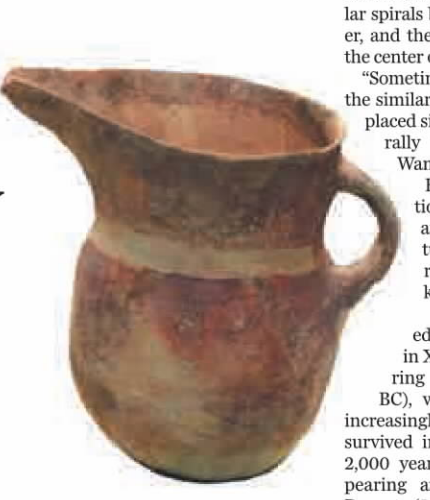
CULTURAL HERITAGE



Above: Pottery items demonstrating the westward spread of prehistoric craftsmanship from the Yellow River Basin to today's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region are on show. **Below:** A pottery jar (left) from the Siba culture, in Gansu province, and a Bronze Age pottery jar unearthed in Xinjiang are among the objects on display. PHOTOS BY FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY





The journey of painted clay

Exhibition reveals how prehistoric ceramic traditions traveled to shape early civilization, report **Fang Aiqing** and **Mao Weihua** in Urumqi.

Thousands of years ago, Neolithic painted pottery culture from the middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River traveled westward along the Hexi Corridor — in today's Gansu province — before spreading across the northern and southern foothills of the Tianshan Mountains in what is now the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. Here, it blended with local traditions and continued radiating further west.

Artifacts demonstrating this remarkable journey are on display in an exhibition that opened on April 10 at the Xinjiang Museum.

The exhibition, *From the Yellow River Basin to Tianshan Mountains: Tracing the Westward Journey of Prehistoric Painted Pottery*, features 175 sets of pottery from the collections of the Gansu Provincial Museum, Xinjiang Museum, and 13 other cultural heritage institutions across the two provincial-level regions. The exhibition, running through July 10, was previously displayed at the Gansu museum.

Against ocher and reddish-brown surfaces, ancient craftspeople expressed extraordinary creativity.

Delicate geometric grids, flowing spirals, fish motifs, petals and abstract deity patterns reveal a striking command of line and form. Elegantly curved vessels and animal-shaped decorations, including eagle and goat heads, further testify to the imagination and skill of prehistoric artisans.

Based on years of archaeological findings, the exhibition traces the spread of painted pottery craftsmanship across thousands of kilometers from east to west over more than 3,000 years.

Wang Nannan, director of the exhibition department at the Gansu Provincial Museum and one of the exhibition's curators, says Gansu and Xinjiang are geographically linked and share deep cultural roots, exemplified by the westward expansion of painted pottery culture, which carried early people's aesthetic ideals and passion for life.

Both Xinjiang and Gansu have a significant east-west expanse: Xinjiang stretches nearly 2,000 kilometers and Gansu about 1,500 km.

The upper reaches of the Yellow River flow some 900 km in eastern Gansu. To the west, the long and narrow Hexi Corridor — "Hexi" means "west of the Yellow River" in Chinese — has served, since ancient times, as a key route linking the Central Plains with the country's western regions and beyond.

Wang notes that the prehistoric routes of painted pottery transmission through the Hexi Corridor largely overlapped with the ancient Silk Road, as both relied on the same geographical artery.

Building on this geographical and archaeological reality, scholars have named the east-to-west expansion of early Chinese culture — represented by painted pottery — the "Painted Pottery Road".

Han Jianye, professor at the School of History, Renmin University of China, has studied this topic for years and published a collection of essays on it.

According to Han, painted pottery from present-day Shaanxi and Gansu provinces spread westward from the 4th to the 1st millennium BC. Divided by the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the routes branched into a northern path — spreading to Central Asia and beyond via Xinjiang — and a southern path toward the Kashmir region.

"The Painted Pottery Road was the primary channel for early cultural exchanges between China and the West and can be regarded as a precursor to the Silk Road," he writes.

The ongoing pottery exhibition highlights the evolution of painted patterns and vessel shapes, offering a visual thread for understanding this westward transmission.

The middle and upper reaches of the Yellow River were among the birthplaces of prehistoric painted pottery. At the Dadiwan archaeological site in Qin'an county, eastern Gansu, archaeologists have unearthed pottery dating back around 8,000 years. These vessels are typically round-bottomed, or tripod bowls decorated with red bands around the rim, with pigments usually applied before firing. They are among the earliest decorated pottery discovered in China.

Between 7,000 and 5,000 years ago, the Yangshao culture flourished in the Central Plains. Its pottery featured black-painted patterns of straight lines, geometric shapes, fish, petals, and leaves. Around 5,500 years ago, its iconic petal patterns — seen on Miaodigou-type pottery of the mid-Yangshao period — had already spread across much of present-day Gansu and eastern Qinghai provinces.

In eastern Gansu, Yangshao traditions evolved into the Majiayao culture, which thrived some 5,300 to 4,000 years ago. During this period, painted pottery reached an artistic peak.

On display at the exhibition are pieces featuring exquisitely intricate patterns such as lozenges, spirals, gourd-shaped grids, birds and deities, which cover the entire vessels.

During the late Majiayao period, painted pottery — along with the agricultural culture that produced and used it — kept advancing into multiple regions.

The branch that extended toward the Hexi Corridor developed into the Siba culture. Dating back around 3,900 to 3,400 years, it marked the transition from the Neolithic period to the Bronze Age. Its western reach stretched to the Hami Basin in eastern Xinjiang, where it interacted with the local Tianshanbeilu culture.

Double-handled jars unearthed from the Tianshanbeilu cemetery site feature hanging straps and large grid patterns similar to those found in Siba culture pottery. Square spirals and fret motifs seen on late Majiayao and Siba wares also appear in Iron Age relics discovered in Hami.

Around 3,000 years ago, painted pottery flourished in central Xinjiang cultures, including Subeixi in the Turpan Basin and Chawuhu, mainly distributed in the Bayingolin Mongolian autonomous prefecture. Artifacts from these areas provide evidence of eastern influences and local adaptation.

The small-mouthed, bulging-bellied design of Subeixi single-handled jars retained the influence of the Yellow River Basin. At the Chawuhu ancient tomb complex, pottery with red paint on a light background featured a bottom design better suited for hanging and carrying, reflecting the needs of nomadic life.

In Xinjiang, many vessels were found with a *liu* (spout) for easy and smooth pouring.

Wang notes that compared with Yangshao and Majiayao pottery, Xinjiang's prehistoric ceramics featured simpler decorative patterns but more practical functions.

"As painted pottery spread westward, the vessels became smaller but more practical," he says, adding that this change reflected adaptation and integration — evidence of the strong inclusiveness of Chinese civilization.

He explains that the exhibition is organized around geographical nodes, allowing visitors to easily trace the deep connections between ancient communities in Xinjiang and the Central Plains. For example, visitors can observe striking similarities between two single-handled vessels — one from a late Majiayao site in Gansu and another from Bronze Age remains in Xinjiang.

The late Majiayao piece is barrel-shaped, with the handle attached near the top. Its upper part outlines triangular layouts with bold lines, set apart by three horizontal lines, while the lower part features vertical zigzag patterns.

The Xinjiang artifact, on the other hand, has triangular patterns above horizontal dividing lines and circular spirals below; its body is rounder, and the handle is positioned at the center of one side.

"Sometimes it's hard to describe the similarities in words, but when placed side by side, one can naturally feel the resemblance," Wang says.

He adds that the exhibition presents a complete and tangible chain of cultural transmission that requires little specialist knowledge to appreciate.

It is believed that painted pottery began to decline in Xinjiang around the Warring States Period (475-221 BC), with patterns becoming increasingly cursory. This art form survived in the region for nearly 2,000 years before almost disappearing after the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24).

Li Zheng, director of the Xinjiang Museum's exhibition department and another curator of the exhibition, says the emergence, spread, and development of painted pottery fully demonstrate Xinjiang's important role in the cultural development of Chinese civilization.

"Although these artifacts were scattered across a vast expanse along the Painted Pottery Road, they shared similar aesthetics and craftsmanship," Li says.

"The routes connected the Yellow River Basin and the Tianshan Mountains in a millennia-long dialogue, vividly illustrating how Chinese civilization is diverse yet unified, continuous, and enduring," he adds.

The exhibition will travel to Bayingolin and later to Hami.

Marbuya Abdureyim contributed to this story.

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Yangshao discovery fills gap in Shanxi history

By **DENG ZHANGYU**
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From left: Wang Shuang, an archaeologist, identifies an ash pit belonging to the Neolithic Yangshao culture in Yirang village, Yangquan, Shanxi province; an uncovered pottery shard preserves distinctive red grid patterns. PHOTOS BY LIU SHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Archaeologists working in the dusty fields of Yirang village, Yangquan, in North China's Shanxi province, have uncovered a major discovery that offers fresh insight into the region's Neolithic past.

In March, a small team of researchers used traditional Luoyang spades — long-handled tools designed to extract soil samples — to probe the earth. Among the soil layers, they recovered fragments of painted pottery, weathered but clearly marked with distinctive red grid patterns.

According to Han Lizhong, director of the Yangquan Archaeological Research Center, these fragments date to the late Yangshao culture, a Neolithic civilization that flourished along the middle reaches of the Yellow River roughly 7,000 to 5,000 years ago. The culture is famous for its painted pottery, often decorated with geometric motifs and occasional human or animal figures.

This marks the first confirmed discovery of a Yangshao culture site in Yangquan.

"It fills a gap in the region's Middle Neolithic cultural record, expands the known distribution of the Yangshao culture, and demonstrates close cultural exchanges between Yangquan and areas that are now Jinzhong in Shanxi as well as parts of Henan," says Han.

The site lies on the northern bank of the Taohe River, where local farmers had previously uncovered ancient stone axes. "Our ancestors would have found this spot ideal for settlement," Han adds.

Han recalls that archaeologists had surveyed the area several times since the 1990s without success. That changed in March when researchers stumbled upon painted pottery fragments near a newly dug grave. As they expanded their search, they found layers containing pottery from different periods, including pits dating to the Yangshao era.

The site now covers an area of approximately 129,000 square meters — roughly the size of 20 football fields.

"When the first painted shard was found, everyone almost jumped for joy," says Wang Shuang, one of the six field team members. Over the past months, the team repeatedly trekked across hills and valleys, studying the terrain and interviewing villagers for clues about possible artifacts.

The archaeological survey began in November 2024 as part of a special initiative to explore Yangquan's early cultures.

So far, the team has identified three ash pits and one kiln, along with a remarkably continuous cultural sequence spanning the Yangshao culture, Longshan culture, Xia Dynasty (c. 21st century-16th century BC), Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC), and Eastern Zhou Dynasty (770-256 BC).

In Yirang village, time appears layered in the earth: painted pottery from 5,000 years ago, black Longshan pottery from 4,000 years ago, and Shang and Zhou pottery from 3,000 years ago. Together, they reveal a settlement that appears to have remained inhabited for thousands of years without interruption.

Han says Yirang village has a long history, with multiple cultural relic sites still visible. In October 2024, the team had already excavated two Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) tombs there, and recovered 34 artifacts. The current survey, launched the following month, aims to systematically investigate the region's early cultural layers.

The recovered artifacts include pottery, stone tools and bone-and-shell objects. Painted pottery makes up a high proportion, with fine red grid-and-band patterns. Researchers have also identified vessel forms, such as bowls, jars and basins, alongside smaller objects including pottery rings and perforated shell knives.

By comparing these artifacts with discoveries from similar sites, archaeologists have preliminarily dated the settlement to the late Yangshao period.

"The discovery of remains here from the Yangshao culture, Longshan culture, Xia and Shang dynasties, and Eastern Zhou periods establishes a continuous cultural sequence from the Neolithic era onward," Han says.

"It provides valuable clues for understanding the evolution and development of prehistoric societies in the Taihang Mountains."

Zhu Xingxin in Shanxi province contributed to this story.

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LIFE

Tang canal rises as a glowing destination

Once the cradle of China's industrial revolution, site gets a makeover, turning it into a hub of tourism and tradition, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Tangshan.



The boat glides slowly along the Tangjin Canal, a waterway that once connected the industrial cities of Tangshan in Hebei province and Tianjin. On either side, hundreds of Tang Dynasty-styled lanterns rise in formation, their crimson glow chasing away the last chill of an April evening as it illuminates the countless bricks and latticed windows lining the streets.

A massive Ferris wheel with playful expressions flashing across its digital screen looms ahead. The air is filled with the distant melody of Pingju Opera, a centuries-old folk tradition born in this very region.

For a moment, it is easy to believe you have traveled back in time to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), an era celebrated as the golden age of Chinese art, culture and cosmopolitan ambition.

But this is not Xi'an in Shaanxi province, the ancient capital most associated with the Tang. It is Hetou Laojie (Hetou Old Street), a water town in the city, better known as a cradle of China's modern industrial revolution.

And, just a few years ago, this waterway was silent.

"Please lower your head," boat guide Shi Jia gently cautions her guests as the vessel approaches a low bridge adorned with a glowing light belt.

It is a practical safety reminder. But for the creative team behind the old street, it has become something of a metaphor.

After more than a decade of lying "low" as a lackluster commercial project, this place has raised its head, blossoming into one of the most dazzling nighttime tourism destinations in the province.

In 2025, the street welcomed 8 million visitors, with a single day reaching 166,000. On a typical Monday night in April, the street is crowded with travelers as if it were a holiday.

Since opening in 2023, it has been recognized as a national tourist and leisure street and received the 2025 China Cultural Tourism Pioneer Award from the China Association of Amusement Parks and Attractions.

The 2,000-*mu* (133-hectare) site is the result of a partnership between the Fengnan district government and Kaige'er Group, a local cultural tourism enterprise. It now offers a fully immersive Tang experience, where visitors can eat, stroll, shop, and watch performances in a meticulously re-created historical atmosphere.

As the boat continues its journey, passengers pass multiple performance installations along the banks, where singers, dancers, acrobats, and actors in Tang-era costumes create vivid scenes that unfold as a scroll painting brought to life.

"The performers are inheritors of intangible cultural heritage, and they perform to audiences' reactions," Shi emphasizes.

She often recommends her guests stay for a short Pingju Opera performance, which originated from Tangshan.

In addition to the dynamic performance, the giant lanterns are eye-catching, each standing about 7 meters tall and featuring patterns from *The Court Ladies Adorning Their Hair with Flowers*, a Tang Dynasty painting now housed in the Liaoning Provincial Museum.

About half an hour's drive from Hetou Old Street, Tangshan Feast, also known as the Tangshan Food Culture Museum, pleases the palate of even the most discerning gourmand.

The 40,000-square-meter indoor complex features 150 varieties of Tangshan snacks and more than 20 types of foods crafted with intangible cultural heritage skills, all spread across "five streets, two alleys, and one river" on its ground floor.

"Tangshan Feast is what we call 'an edible museum'," says Wang Caitong, a guide at the complex.

"It was originally a disused shopping mall. The creative team reshaped the space and built a 'super scene' with cultural tourism appeal — small bridges, flowing water, pavilions, towers, and the hustle and bustle of traffic," she adds.

In 2025, it attracted 5.5 million visitors, 70 percent of whom came from outside Tangshan. On its busiest day, it welcomed 50,000 people.

Old wooden houses, some more than a century old, have been dismantled and reassembled here. In re-creations of some "grandpa" or "grandma" shops, elderly artisans demonstrate traditional crafts.

"We collected six century-old houses from the countryside," Wang says. "Every brick and tile carries the trace of time. These scenes are designed to evoke childhood memories and to make people feel something."

On the second floor, a replica of Xiaoshan'er, a commercial district that once rivaled Beijing's Dashilar and Tianjin's Quanyechang in the 1930s, has been rebuilt.





From top: One of the highlights of a night show at Hetou Old Street in Tangshan, Hebei province, features performers suspended from cables, gliding across the sky on mechanical phoenixes while molten iron showers down around them. Acrobatic performances have helped transform Hetou Old Street into a bustling tourist destination. A giant Ferris wheel draws visitors taking in the view during a nighttime boat ride along the canal in Tangshan. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Literally meaning "Little Hill", Xiaoshan'er rose to prominence in the late 19th century as the northern terminus of the Tangxu (Tangshan-Xugezhuang) Railway, China's first standard-gauge railway. A commercial explosion then ensued, with department stores, bathhouses, theaters, teahouses, and restaurants packed into just a 500-meter-long stretch.

"In those days, if you came to Tangshan and didn't visit Xiaoshan'er, you hadn't really been to Tangshan," she says.

Every snack at Tangshan Feast has a story. For instance, *gezha*, a mung-bean pancake, is said to have been named by the Empress Dowager Cixi.

"The Empress had a habit of taking at most two bites of any dish. When she tried *gezha*, she liked it so much that she took a second bite and said '*ge zhe*' — meaning 'set it aside'. The eunuch thought she was naming the dish — and the name stuck," Wang recounts.

The "Fourteenth Prince" dry-braised chicken derives its name from Emperor Kangxi's 14th son, who was sent to guard the Qing tombs in Tangshan.

"He didn't have much appetite until the palace chef took a local dry-braised chicken recipe and combined it with imperial roast chicken techniques. The prince ate with great pleasure, and the dish has been passed down for 300 years," Wang says.

The success of Hetou Old Street and Tangshan Feast did not happen in a vacuum. They are the products of a deliberate, province-wide strategy to turn Hebei into a weekend destination for the 110 million people living in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region.

For years, Hebei was overlooked by tourists despite being home to several UNESCO World Heritage sites and containing all seven major landform types, notes Wang Rongli, deputy director of the Hebei provincial department of culture and tourism.

That began to change in 2022, when Hebei launched a strategic push to become the "weekend leisure destination of choice" for residents of Beijing and Tianjin. The slogan, "So close, so beautiful — spend your weekend in Hebei", was elevated to a provincial development strategy.

But traffic comes and goes quickly. "For a brand to last, it must rely on products and services," Wang emphasizes.

Since 2023, Hebei has become one of the first provinces to offer free expressway for tour buses traveling on weekends and public holidays. By 2025, the policy had saved tour operators more than 510 million yuan ($75 million) and covered more than 3.4 million buses, local authorities report.

"The fee reduction isn't large for any single tourist, but it sends a signal that Hebei genuinely welcomes you, and we're even willing to save you the tolls," she explains.

The province has also launched a luggage delivery service called "Easy Hebei Tour", allowing visitors to check in their bags at Beijing West Railway Station and find them already waiting at their Hebei hotel.

"The most durable, most powerful, and most cost-effective marketing is always word-of-mouth," Wang says.

Midway through Hetou Old Street, the night erupts. Along a stretch of the canal transformed into a battlefield, six former fishing boats have been refashioned into Tang Dynasty warships. On and around them, more than 500 performers charge on horseback, spin towering flags, and hurl themselves into staged combat.

From both ends of the canal, actors suspended from cables glide across the night on mechanical phoenixes, their robes streaming behind them as they pass through cascades of molten iron. The iron, heated to 1,600 C, is flung by hand against a brick wall, a thousand-year-old folk tradition called *da tie hua*. It explodes into a blizzard of white-orange sparks that rain down over the water, the boats and the upturned faces of the crowd.

For Shi Jia, the boat guide, the performance captures something essential about Hetou Old Street.

"For 12 years, this place was nothing. Now people come from Shanghai and Guangzhou, Guangdong province, just to see this," she says.

The low bridges are still there. So is her warning: "Please lower your head." But when the phoenixes fly, no one is looking down.

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Female storyteller carries forward invaluable cultural legacy

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **DAQIONG** in Lhasa



Nestled in the high-altitude pastures of Tsonyi county in Nagchu, Xizang autonomous region, Sinchung's life has been one of courage, resilience, and an unyielding commitment to preserving an ancient cultural legacy.

A female storyteller of King Gesar — a rarity in itself — Sinchung has overcome social challenges and geographical relocations to bridge the mythical Tibetan hero king, Gesar, with modern-day audiences.

Born to a nomadic family reliant on herding yaks and sheep, storytelling formed an integral part of Sinchung's childhood. Though King Gesar storytellers were virtually absent in her community, inspiration came closer to home through her father, himself a King Gesar storyteller.

King Gesar is a legendary figure in Tibetan culture, immortalized in the *Epic of King Gesar*.

"When herding together, my father would narrate the fascinating tales of King Gesar," recalled Sinchung. "The stories captivated me so much, I memorized them after hearing them just once."

It was from these herding expeditions that her love for the epic began to take root. By the age of 12, she would hum verses to herself, unaware of their meaning at times, yet deeply influenced by the themes of heroism and spirituality.

A turning point came when Sinchung's mother took in a blind, childless elderly woman.

"This grandmother would often share proverbs and folktales with me, leaving a lasting impression that prepared me for storytelling later in life," she says.

Curiosity about the epic grew further during her teenage years as her family owned a cherished copy of *Horse Race Norbu Chadun*, a King Gesar book.

Unable to read the Tibetan language at the time, Sinchung would pore over the book's illustrations, feeling a personal connection to the legendary characters. "Although I couldn't read, the images felt alive — like family members I had yet to meet," she says.

Determined to learn, Sinchung taught herself the Tibetan alphabet at 14. Scribbling letters into the sand while tending to livestock, she grew proficient over the years.

Reading books about King Gesar became a natural progression, even as she faced skepticism from her community.

"At first, elders appreciated my storytelling, but others mocked me or insisted that such tales were not meant to be sung by a woman," says Sinchung, describing challenges that ranged from societal taboos to outright hostility.

"Some even cursed my family, warning of disastrous consequences," she says.

For a time, the criticism silenced her. Public storytelling stopped, but in solitude, she carried on, practicing Gesar's tales while herding. The process, she says, brought her solace and happiness during those trying years.



Left: Sinchung (third from right) was invited to present her storytelling of King Gesar at an art performance show in Sinpori, Gongkar county, Xizang autonomous region in 2025. **Right:** Sinchung gets ready for her performance. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Between the ages of 17 and 25, Sinchung dove deeper into the epic. Borrowing books from other storytellers, she expanded her knowledge of the king's journey from his celestial birth and struggles on Earth to his victorious battles against enemies.

During this time, she endured mysterious illnesses that seemed to ebb only when she immersed herself in the poetic verses of King Gesar.

Her marriage at 26, followed by the responsibilities of family life, led to another hiatus. Storytelling took a backseat, especially under her husband's disapproval.

However, WeChat rekindled her passion, providing a new platform to share her art. Singing and rapping Gesar's tales in group chats garnered widespread recognition and won over audiences.

In 2020, Sinchung's family relocated to Sinpori, an ecological resettlement community in Xizang's Gongkar county, as part of a government program to improve the living conditions of high-altitude nomads.

The move to a more community-oriented environment gave her a new platform.

"With my neighbors living close by, it was easy to gather people for storytelling," says Sinchung. The teahouses of Sinpori welcomed her performances, and she eventually established a dedicated King Gesar Storytelling House.

Visitors from near and far listened to her accounts of the heroic king's exploits, bridging ancient glory and contemporary life.

However, Sinchung believes her storytelling alone is not enough to protect this intangible cultural treasure. Embarking on a new mission, she is documenting her knowledge in writing to ensure its preservation for future generations.

With government policies emphasizing the protection and promotion of cultural heritage, she found the encouragement she needed.

"By publishing books, I am ensuring that this invaluable cultural legacy doesn't perish with me," she says. "These stories will serve as an inheritance for future generations, enabling them to connect with and celebrate their identity."

Plans for additional publications are already in motion, ranging from collections of proverbs to compilations of Tibetan riddles.

For Sinchung, storytelling transcends entertainment; it is a living, breathing link to a storied past, and an enduring gift to posterity.

"If I live longer, I hope to contribute more. These stories are not just history, they're a part of us."

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CULTURE



The curiosity and passion of actress Juliette Binoche

French star discusses her love of movies and China, **Xu Fan** and **Shi Futian** report.

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Juliette Binoche, the French actress who served as jury president of the 16th Beijing International Film Festival's Tiantan Awards, shares her thoughts on cinema and her impressions of the country with China Daily. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Relaxed, easygoing, and always passionate about cinema — that sums up the first impressions of Juliette Binoche, the French screen legend who recently seized the spotlight in China as jury president of the 16th Beijing International Film Festival's Tiantan Awards.

At the climax of the festival's closing ceremony, Binoche walked onstage alongside iconic Chinese director Zhang Yimou to present the Best Feature Film award — one of the biggest Tiantan Awards — to the British film *Dragonfly*. In a sudden burst of energy, the 62-year-old actress slapped her trouser legs and exclaimed, "Let's find out who the winner is!" — a spontaneous gesture that drew applause from the audience.

After eight days of intense viewing and discussions, she and her six fellow jurors, including French-Vietnamese director Tran Anh Hung and British composer Simon Franglen, voted on 10 awards in total from 16 shortlisted films, selected from a record 1,826 submissions spanning 139 countries and regions.

"I felt great. We watched all the films. I almost forgot I was the jury president, because I was so in touch with the films. I forgot myself," Binoche said, describing her experience.

The festival also reflected the industry's growing preoccupation with artificial intelligence, establishing an AIGC Unit — the first of its kind in the world to focus on AI-generated films. This year, the section received nearly 2,840 submissions from 14 countries and regions — an 89 percent increase from the previous year.

Binoche is unworried about the emergence of AI in filmmaking, believing that it is simply a new tool and that plot and characterization are still the most important aspects.

"At the end of the day, AI is a way of telling a story. When you watch a film, it stays in your mind, heart and body somehow. Technique is just there to help the story. You have to go back to the core of making a film."

For Binoche — the first figure in cinema history to have won Best Actress honors at all three major European festivals: Venice, Berlin and Cannes — enthusiasm remains central to her approach to cinema. Fame and success, it seems, have never dulled her curiosity.

In an interview a few days before the closing ceremony, she discussed the jury's task with China Daily. "What we're trying to do in the festival is to find a diamond of a film — something that people have never seen before. It can be the story, the way it's done, or the acting — but it's something that is going to enrich the viewers and take them somewhere they've never been before."

That search for the unfamiliar has guided her through a remarkable range of collaborations over an acting career spanning more than 40 years: Polish director Krzysztof Kieslowski's *Three Colors: Blue* (1993), in which she played a woman undone by grief; British filmmaker Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* (1996), where she portrayed a dynamic army nurse; and Swedish director Lasse Hallstrom's *Chocolat* (2000), starring her as a single mother skilled at making chocolate.

Binoche also worked with the late director Hou Hsiao-hsien on *Flight of the Red Balloon*, a 2007 film recounting the story of a French family through the eyes of a Chinese student.



Above: Binoche and director Zhang Yimou present the Best Feature Film award to the British movie *Dragonfly* during the festival's closing ceremony. **Below:** Several of Binoche's films have been aired on China Movie Channel, captivating local fans.



In an attempt to accurately portray the role — a harried single mother who runs a small avant-garde puppet theater and performs all the voices — Binoche devoted a full month to preparation. She took classes at a puppet theater, underwent voice training, and even suggested dyeing her hair blonde.

She recalled that Hou once asked her to bring personal objects from her own home to the set, so that the space would feel lived-in — as if she were staying in her own quarters.

"You just have to dare to open the door to find the magic inside of you," she said, describing her philosophy of performance. "The actor has to believe deeply in their own being and in their heart, gut, cells and mind. There has to be a layer of spirituality."

Binoche has visited China many times since 2009 — attending the Festival Croisements that year, making a guest appearance on Hunan Television's popular variety show *Happy Camp* in 2018, and sharing insights about her directorial debut, *In-I In Motion*, during the 2025 Beijing Culture Forum.

Asked what has impressed her most, she replied without hesitation: "Just meeting people. What are their lives and everyday experiences? Basically, there's a story in each of us. I've traveled to different places, and I'm always moved because some places are still unchanged.

"I love seeing villages where there is this sense of kindness and simplicity, and there are also some traditions that I really love in China."

Binoche also talked about the countryside, the mountains and Taoist legends. "For me, it brings so much awareness of why we are here on Earth. It's a way to prolong your thoughts and to connect with nature and the beauty of nature."

She even confessed an unexpected fondness for the Chinese *kang* — the traditional heated brick platform that serves as a bed, table and social anchor of the northern Chinese home. "I slept in it. I loved it. It was so peculiar and special," she said, recalling her visit to a house that had one.

As an actress with more than 60 films to her name, Binoche has worked with a stellar lineup of international stars, including Ralph Fiennes in *The English Patient*, Johnny Depp in *Chocolat*, and Ethan Hawke in *The Truth*. She has also stepped behind the camera, making her directorial debut with *In-I In Motion*, distilled from 170 hours of raw and archival footage documenting her dance-theater collaboration with British choreographer Akram Khan.

So what kind of role still draws her — actress or director?

"I have experienced so many. I have been very lucky. I have worked with wonderful directors and actors. As an actor, you have to give a lot of yourself, otherwise nothing will come out," she said.

For all her accolades, Binoche admitted to moments of doubt. Sometimes, she wakes at 6 am and asks herself the same question: "Why did I choose this work?"

The answer, even after all these years, returns with quiet clarity. "At the end of the day, it's worth it because it gives a sense of purpose. It makes you happy and lighter in a way. The lightness comes from being really on your own path and choosing a path that is meaningful to you and to others as well," she says.

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Spy thriller *Black Silk* deepens cross-border film ties with Russia

MOSCOW — On the outskirts of Moscow, the set of the spy thriller *Black Silk* is more than a filming location — it offers a glimpse into a growing cinematic partnership between China and Russia.

During a recent visit to the set, Russian Minister of Culture Olga Lyubimova described such large-scale international cooperation as "unimaginable" a decade ago. She noted that the task now is to employ modern cinematic language to create emotional resonance for audiences in both countries.

The collaboration is underpinned by a strategic action plan signed in May 2025, in which film authorities from China and Russia committed to a long-term road map for cooperation through 2030. The plan prioritizes joint productions and cross-border film exchanges to deepen cultural ties through cinema.

At the production site, actors from China, Russia, Serbia, Japan and Germany are preparing for their roles. Costumes from different eras and regions coexist, while scripts annotated in multiple languages reflect the multilingual nature of the set.

Black Silk follows the success of its predecessor, *Red Silk*, a flagship project under the China-Russia Years of Culture framework. With earnings of $1.8 million, *Red Silk* topped the rankings of the highest-grossing Russian films of 2025 at the foreign box office.

The new production aims to build on that momentum with enhanced scale and quality.

Set in 1930s Shanghai, *Black Silk* unfolds against a backdrop of international intrigue, centering on a high-stakes search for a mysterious cargo.

While rich in action, the film also draws on historical narratives. Screenwriter Maria Nefedova said the creative team seeks to present history in a way that resonates with contemporary audiences. "Russia and China share a long history of good-neighborly relations. We have faced challenges together, and I hope the film reflects the mutual support between our peoples," she said.





Left: A moment from the opening ceremony of the 16th Beijing International Film Festival in Beijing on April 16. XIE HAN / XINHUA **Right:** A still from the film *Red Silk*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To re-create scenes at sea, the production team constructed a large vessel mounted on a hydraulic platform, equipped with a water discharge system to simulate waves and storms. The set allows for dynamic, immersive filming conditions.

Chinese actress Zheng Hanyi, who also appeared in *Red Silk*, said the experience goes beyond filmmaking. "It is also a process of cultural exchange. You can feel the two cultures learning from each other," she said, expressing hope for more joint projects in the future.

Lyubimova said films play an important role in cultural exchange. She expressed confidence that *Black Silk* will further advance cooperation between filmmakers of the two countries.

Production is currently ongoing, with the film slated for release in 2027.

According to Svetlana Balanova, CEO of National Media Group in Russia, film projects jointly produced by Russia and China are strengthening bilateral ties and promoting cultural dialogue.

Balanova highlighted *Red Silk* as a milestone in advancing a systematic approach to jointly promoting national cinema and producing works that reflect shared values.

Last year marked the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the Soviet Union's Great Patriotic War. According to Balanova, Russian audiences were drawn to the film's dynamic storyline and performances, while Chinese viewers were attracted by its portrayal of resilience in harsh Siberian conditions.

She added that the sequel will retain key elements that appealed to audiences in the original while expanding its narrative scope, visual style and production capabilities. "*Black Silk* is an independent story with new mysteries and characters, accessible to fans of the first film and those just getting to know the story, both in Russia and abroad," she said.

Following the success of the first installment, Balanova expressed optimism that the sequel would achieve a strong box-office performance and attract a wider global audience.

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SPORTS

TABLE TENNIS

CHINA RALLIES FOR GLORY

Despite tough early going, resilience and squad depth see teams through to victory in London



Wang Chuqing (left) and Sun Yingsha proved instrumental as the Chinese men's and women's teams defended their titles at the World Team Table Tennis Championships in London on Sunday. XINHUA

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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Despite a double delight at the world team championships, China's mighty table tennis squad has refused to revel in complacency, as it braces for a challenging lead-up to LA28 with sobering takeaways from London.

With a convincing defeat of archrival Japan in both finals, China's formidable national program has left the sport in awe of its resilience and depth, both of which proved vital and are still unrivaled, for securing its seventh women's and 12th men's team titles in a row at London's OVO Arena Wembley on Sunday.

As Chinese fans celebrate widely for both squads having lifted their respective trophies — the Corbillon Cup for women and Swaythling Cup for men — for a record-extending 24th time, China's top paddlers know it was anything but a smooth sail, hailing the test along the way as being equally valuable to the silverware lifted in the end.

"The result eventually went our way today, but the process was far more challenging than the outcome," world No 1 women's star Sun Yingsha said after helping China outlast Japan 3-2 in a close final.

"We'd prepared the hardest as we could to face such a competitive opponent, and we really had to stay extremely focused (to clinch the victory)," said the 25-year-old who won both her rubbers in the final.

Having racked up 20 world titles at the World Cup, world championships and Olympics, Sun's composure, experience and seamless game proved critical, as she twice leveled the battle for Team China by beating Hina Hayata and Miwa Harimoto in the second and fourth matches, following teammates Wang Manyu's opening loss to Harimoto and Kuai Man's defeat by Honoka Hashimoto in the third rubber.

With the title on the line, Wang delivered under pressure by routing Hayata in straight sets to complete China's comeback win, while clinching its sixth straight final win over Japan at the team worlds since 2014.

The victory was built as much on resilience as on quality, as Sun reckoned, with Team China pushed harder by its East Asian neighbor than in any previous encounter between the two nations.

"There were a lot of ups and downs in today's final. The Japanese team has developed comprehensive strength and is really performing better and better. The battle between us could really have gone either way," said Sun.

"Our strength lies in our depth, and we proved that, collectively, Team China is always the best."

The progress of the ambitious Japanese women, though, shouldn't be overlooked, underlined by teen sensation Harimoto's fearless style that stunned the experienced Wang in the opener, and the unique game of chopper Hashimoto that disrupted Kuai's pace in the third matchup.

"Credit to Sha Sha who steadied the ship," Wang said of Sun's pivotal role. "She gave me a chance of redemption ... Overall, we had a tough final that we should learn from to help us get better."

On the men's side, Team China also got the job done, but not before a bumpy ride that tested its grit and rebuilt its confidence en route to meeting Japan, which was contesting its first team worlds final in 10 years.

With reigning singles Olympic champion Fan Zhendong opting to skip the London showdown, the young Chinese men's squad, led by current world No 1 Wang Chuqin, suffered rare group-stage defeats to South Korea and Sweden, raising concerns over its gold-defending mettle, even before the knockout round kicked off in London.

Thanks to Wang's consistency, and the maturing game of teammates such as Liang Jingkun, Team China regrouped and responded like a champion during the high-stakes knockout stage, saving its best for last to demolish the Japanese side 3-0 in the final, after successfully avenging its earlier group loss to Korea in the quarterfinals and ousting European power France in the semis.

Citing the team's strong mental edge under pressure, Wang said he takes extra pride from being able to hit back at the doubters on the table.

"A lot of people said they didn't know that would happen with Team China before the championships, and I said: 'Bring it on and we will show you what we've got!' This is how we responded," Wang said after the final.

"Of course, the international competition we are facing is getting stronger. We have to prepare for each and every international event with utmost caution, like treading on thin ice," said Wang, who celebrated his 26th birthday on Monday, a day after the final.

Still, the absence of Fan's finesse was felt, with both Liang and another teammate, Lin Shidong, proving not yet as dominant as Wang on the biggest international stage.

Making his team worlds debut, the 21-year-old Lin, despite his potential, had his lack of consistency fully exposed with four losses in London, while Liang's slow start, which saw him have to battle back the hard way from 2-0 down against Japan's Tomokazu Harimoto to deliver Team China's opening win in the final, has emerged as a concern for future major events.

Their respective old injuries, on Lin's shoulder and Liang's waist and knee, should be taken into perspective, yet Team China refuses to make any excuses.

"Our young athletes have gained major experience and have learned lessons about their weakness," Wang Liqin, president of the Chinese Table Tennis Association, said in his review of the championships.

"Looking ahead, we should carry forward the fighting spirit of the Chinese table tennis program, identify our weakness in training and improve them for future competitions in order to strive for more honors in the buildup to the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics," said Wang.

SPORT CLIMBING

Zhao continues his meteoric rise, smashes another record

By **LI YINGXUE**
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In barely the blink of an eye, 16-year-old Chinese climber Zhao Yicheng had already slammed the buzzer — and rewritten the world record yet again.

At the World Climbing Series Wujiang 2026 on Sunday night, Zhao stormed to victory in the men's speed event with a time of 4.54 seconds, breaking his own world record for the second time in a month and defeating former record holder Samuel Watson of the United States in a much-anticipated semifinal showdown.

For the climbing world, it was more than a race. It was a direct duel between two of the sport's brightest young stars.

Watson, born in 2006, emerged during the Paris Olympic cycle as one of speed climbing's defining talents, becoming the first athlete to push the discipline into the "4.70-second era".

Yet since the Paris Games, global attention has increasingly shifted toward Zhao, his younger Chinese counterpart, who has already claimed three world youth titles and repeatedly produced times faster than previous world records.

Just weeks before arriving in Wujiang, Jiangsu province, Zhao had lowered Watson's mark to 4.58 seconds at the Asian Beach Games. In Wujiang, he went even faster.

Once the starting signal sounded, both climbers exploded up the wall almost simultaneously. Zhao produced the fastest reaction time of the day and maintained his advantage throughout the climb, stopping the clock at 4.54 seconds.

Yet Zhao insisted afterward that the climb was far from perfect.

"I think everyone performed at a high level in this competition, but my performance was definitely not perfect," he said. "I still saw a lot of details I can improve upon, and I feel I can climb even faster in the future."

Despite being labeled a "genius" by many observers, Zhao credited both talent and hard work for his rise.

"I have to admit that I do have talent, because talent makes my hard work more effective," he said. "But I also don't think I work any less hard than others. Talent gives me a higher starting point, while hard work allows me to go further."

The teenager said elite competition motivates rather than intimidates him.

"Honestly, without him, I probably wouldn't have climbed such a fast time today," Zhao said of Watson. "I didn't feel pressure facing him — more motivation than anything."

That motivation was evident in his explosive semifinal start, where Zhao recorded the quickest reaction time of the day.



Zhao Yicheng of China and Samuel Watson of the United States in action during the semifinal of the World Climbing Series Wujiang 2026 on Sunday night. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"My opponents don't actually affect me that much personally. I focus more on myself," he said. "Before competitions, I usually listen to music to help myself relax and get into the rhythm of the event."

Adding another layer of significance, Zhao's breakthrough performance came in his hometown of Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

For years, he had attended the Wujiang event as a spectator. On Sunday night, he stood center stage as champion.

"From being a spectator to becoming an athlete, I've been watching the Wujiang competition for three or four straight years," Zhao said. "Last year, I was already looking forward to doing something on this stage.

"But, today, I actually felt more relaxed. Maybe people outside have certain expectations of me, but I think the enthusiasm of the crowd allowed me to completely be myself."

Watson, who eventually took bronze, also offered glowing praise for the Chinese teenager.

"He is undoubtedly the most talented speed climber I've ever seen," the 20-year-old American said. "I knew I had to give 100 percent against him."

Watson revealed that the two climbers had already become familiar with each other and even chatted about basketball beside the podium before the medal ceremony.

Chinese climber Long Jianguo claimed silver in the men's speed competition.

Wujiang in limelight

Beyond the headline duel, the Wujiang leg highlighted broader changes reshaping competitive climbing ahead of the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, where speed, lead and boulder will each become standalone medal events.

Specialization is accelerating across the sport, with athletes pushing single-discipline performances to new extremes. In Wujiang, the overall standard in speed climbing rose dramatically. The men's cutoff time to reach the finals improved from 5.07 seconds at last year's world championships to 4.94 seconds, while the women's mark improved from 7.18 to 6.67 seconds.

The sport is also becoming an increasingly youthful pursuit.

China's entire lead climbing squad at the event consisted of athletes born after 2000, with the oldest only 25 years old.

Eighteen-year-old Chinese climber Hu Junzhe advanced to the semifinals in the lead discipline after an impressive qualification performance.

Meanwhile, Wujiang continues to strengthen its status as one of China's climbing strongholds.

Since first hosting the event in 2013, the city has staged the international competition 11 times. This year's event again embraced the "Climbing+" model, combining competition with tourism, cultural activities, local markets and outdoor experiences as part of a broader push to integrate sports, culture and regional development.

From a once niche pursuit to an Olympic discipline constantly redefining human limits, climbing's rapid rise in China has unfolded alongside Wujiang's transformation into one of the sport's key hubs.

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CHINA DAILY

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Sino-Tajik bilateral ties enter new phase

Xi and Rahmon sign treaty on permanent good-neighborliness

By **CAO DESHENG**
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China and Tajikistan signed a treaty of permanent good-neighborliness, friendship and cooperation on Tuesday, ushering in a new phase in bilateral ties.

President Xi Jinping and visiting Tajik President Emomali Rahmon signed the treaty at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. Rahmon is in China on a four-day state visit, which started on Monday.

During their talks, Xi said that firmly supporting each other is the core essence of China-Tajikistan relations.

He said that regardless of changes in the external environment, China and Tajikistan will always remain good neighbors who help each other, good friends who trust each other with sincerity, and good partners who join hands for development.

The signing of the China-Tajikistan Treaty on Permanent Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation will fully demonstrate the high level of political mutual trust between the two countries, providing a solid guarantee for everlasting friendship from one generation to another, Xi said, adding that China is willing to work with Tajikistan to promote the building of a closer community with a shared future to better benefit the people of both nations.

Rahmon hailed the signing of the treaty, saying that it marks the start of a new historical stage in the countries' relations, and will open up new prospects for their long-term cooperation.

The treaty came amid the steady growth of bilateral ties guided by the two heads of state in recent years. In 2023, the two countries announced the building of a China-Tajikistan community with a shared future featuring everlasting friendship, solidarity and mutual benefit. In 2024, the two countries elevated their ties to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in the new era.

Xi paid three state visits to Tajikistan — in 2014, 2019 and 2024. Rahmon visited China 22 times, and his last trip to China was to attend the 25th Shanghai Cooperation Organization Summit in Tianjin and the grand gathering to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War in Beijing last September.



President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony for President of Tajikistan Emomali Rahmon in Beijing on Tuesday. Rahmon is in China on a four-day state visit, which started on Monday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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During the talks on Tuesday, Xi called on the two countries to deeply align their development strategies under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative to assist each other in achieving their development goals.

He underlined the need to consolidate the positive momentum of economic and trade cooperation between the two countries to explore cooperation potential, and simultaneously enhance the scale and quality of trade and investment.

It is essential to ensure the implementation of key projects, expand cooperation in areas such as green energy, the digital economy, smart cities and artificial intelligence, and boost technological innovation, Xi said.

Xi highlighted the need to strengthen law enforcement and security cooperation in order to resolutely combat the "three evil forces" of terrorism, separatism and extremism, and jointly maintain regional stability.

Rahmon hailed the development of bilateral ties and fruitful cooperation in such fields as trade, investment, transportation and agriculture. He reiterated Tajikistan's commitment to the one-China principle, saying that Taiwan is an inseparable part of China.

Tajikistan looks forward to strengthening practical cooperation with China in key areas such as critical minerals, AI and technological innovation, facilitating mutual visits and enhancing educational exchanges to further advance the relationship between the two countries, he said.

Rahmon said the Global Governance Initiative, proposed by President Xi, holds significant importance for the world. Tajikistan highly appreciates China's relentless efforts to promote the political settlement of international hotspot issues and its important role in easing tensions in the Middle East, he said.

After the talks, the two heads of state signed a joint statement of the two countries on deepening the comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in the new era. They also witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in areas such as political party exchanges, trade and investment, AI, green minerals and media.

Economic and trade cooperation has been a steady driver of China-Tajikistan ties. China has become Tajikistan's largest trading partner and remains its top source of investment. Bilateral trade reached $790 million in the first quarter of this year, a year-on-year increase of over 50 percent, according to China's Foreign Ministry.

Liu Yitong, an assistant research fellow at the Department for World Economy and Development of the China Institute of International Studies, said that amid growing uncertainties and instability in the international situation, strengthening high-level exchanges and deepening strategic mutual trust between China and Tajikistan are of great practical and exemplary significance.

Rahmon's China visit is expected to solidify political mutual trust, deepen practical cooperation, enhance cultural exchanges and strengthen security collaboration between the two countries, Liu said.

Xi navigates China-US relations amid global uncertainty

By **XINHUA**

The Chinese capital will soon become the setting for one of the most closely watched, high-stakes diplomatic encounters of the year, as the leaders of the world's two largest economies prepare to meet face-to-face.

This will be US President Donald Trump's first state visit to China since his reelection, and the second time President Xi Jinping has hosted him in the country — their last such meeting in the country took place nearly a decade ago.

Against the backdrop of a complex international landscape and shared global challenges, expectations are high: How can President Xi and Trump manage differences between the two sides? How can they navigate the most consequential bilateral relationship?

"You and I are at the helm of China-US relations," Xi told Trump during their talks in Busan, South Korea, in October 2025. Lasting more than 100 minutes, the meeting was another moment of direct engagement between the two leaders as they sought to steer China-US ties through uncertainty.

Using a maritime metaphor that is a recurring theme in his remarks, Xi asked Trump to help keep the "giant ship" of bilateral ties sailing steadily forward.

Over the years, head-of-state diplomacy has anchored China-US relations, serving as a stabilizing force amid shifting global currents. Since Trump's reelection, Xi has spoken with him by phone five times, maintaining close communication on ties and global hotspot issues.

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Stable Sino-US ties linked to global outlook

By **PRIME SARMIENTO**
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US President Donald Trump's upcoming state visit to Beijing and his meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping are fueling a high sense of anticipation across the Asia-Pacific and beyond, with analysts noting that stable China-US ties will benefit the regional and global outlook.

Trump is scheduled to visit China from Wednesday to Friday. Analysts expect that discussions on the US tariffs — which have been weighing on Asian economic growth — will be part of the closely-watched dialogue between the presidents.

"International eyes will be on this summit between Xi and Trump, what they will be discussing, whether any new deals will be made and (whether they will cover) certain deals that have been discussed previously and whether that would continue," said Mustafa Izzuddin, an international analyst at Solaris Strategies Singapore.

He said that what is important is that there is a channel of communication between the two major powers.

"I think we have to be realistic about what can be achieved," Mustafa said. "But I think at the same time, there is hope and some degree of optimism that because the two leaders have agreed to meet, that in itself is a positive step".



US President Donald Trump boards Air Force One on Tuesday at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland, for a state visit to China. ALEX WONG / GETTY IMAGES / AFP

Mustafa said that Asian countries would like to see trade tensions between the world's top two economies "kept as minimal as possible".

"What happens between the US and China will have huge ramifications for the rest of Asia," he said.

Amitendu Palit, a senior research fellow at the Institute of South Asian Studies at the National University of Singapore, said that most Asian economies are hoping that US-China tensions "are not going to flare up in a way that becomes damaging to the prospects of the Asian economy which leads to disruptions in Asian supply chains".

"So I think this is where the Asian economies really have a very high stake," Palit said.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday that Xi will have an in-depth exchange of views with Trump on major issues concerning China-US relations and world peace and development.

Irreplaceable role

In a news briefing, Guo pointed out that head-of-state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable role in providing strategic guidance for China-US relations.

Trump's visit this week will mark his first trip to China during his second term in office, and the first visit to China by a US president in nine years.

Xi and Trump last met in October 2025 in Busan, South Korea, on the sidelines of the APEC summit.

Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura Securities, said the meeting this week between the leaders "represents a critical moment in US-China relations".

"The meeting offers both sides an opportunity to stabilize relations and secure short-term wins," Lu said in his latest research note.

He expected trade issues to dominate the discussions, with negotiations on tariffs to be heavily influenced by the US Supreme Court ruling in February that invalidated several of the tariffs imposed under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

Palit said the US tariff issue is a key concern in Asia owing to its huge impact on international trade and supply chains.

"This is again an area of deep uncertainty," he said. Unresolved conflict between the US and China over tariffs would create "a lot of uncertainty" over the management of supply chains, Palit added.

Beijing, Washington should lead way to peace, development

WORLD WATCH
By Alessandro Golombiewski Teixeira

At a time of intensifying geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, climate vulnerability and rapid technological change, the roles of China and the United States are globally significant. As the world's largest economies and most influential actors, their relationship is a core pillar of global stability.

US President Donald Trump's three-day state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday provides a timely opportunity to recalibrate this relationship through renewed dialogue and strategic restraint. The trajectory of China-US relations will shape both bilateral outcomes and global development, particularly across the Global South.

Today's interconnected risks exceed any single state's capacity. Armed conflicts destabilize regions, while supply chain vulnerabilities and financial volatility expose structural weaknesses in the global economy.

Concurrently, rising inflation and unsustainable debt burdens constrain policy space in developing countries.

Climate change compounds these pressures, disproportionately affecting low-income regions.

Across Africa, Latin America, Asia and the Pacific, policy priorities remain centered on economic recovery, poverty alleviation, food security, infrastructure and technological access.

These concerns contrast sharply with the growing strategic competition between major powers.

Against this backdrop, China and the US bear a heightened responsibility to manage their differences within a framework of strategic stability.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Diplomacy: Seeking the right path for relations

From page 1

The two presidents first met in 2017, a year marked by an exchange of state visits that set the tone for their interactions. In April that year, Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, visited Trump's Mar-a-Lago estate in the US state of Florida, where the two presidents dined together and Xi met Trump's family, including his grandchildren.

It was during that visit that Xi delivered a line often recalled in discussions of bilateral ties: "There are a thousand reasons to make the China-US relationship a success, but not a single reason to break it."

Several months later, in November, Trump traveled to Beijing, where Xi hosted him during a series of special events. The two leaders and their spouses toured the Forbidden City along its central axis, visiting the Hall of Supreme Harmony, the Hall of Central Harmony and the Hall of Preserving Harmony — an experience imbued with the Chinese cultural ideal of "harmony" reflected in the names of the three grand halls.

Walking inside the ancient royal palace, Xi told Trump that China's history can be traced back more than 5,000 years, or even earlier, and its culture has been passed down in an unbroken continuum.

During a chat over tea on that trip, Trump showed Xi a video of his granddaughter, Arabella Kushner, singing and reciting classical poems in Mandarin. Xi said her performance deserved an A-plus. The clip quickly resonated with Chinese netizens and went viral online.

Those early exchanges were widely seen as helping to build a personal rapport between the two leaders, offering a channel to understand each other, manage differences and prevent the relationship from sliding into outright confrontation. "I have a lot of respect for President Xi," Trump has often said.

The past years have seen Xi's meetings with US leaders using this approach — from the Mar-a-Lago summit and the Yingtai evening talks in the Zhongnanhai compound to the long conversation by China's West Lake — often remembered as defining moments in bilateral ties.

The upcoming meeting is expected to continue the tradition of high-level engagement. "The real significance of this meeting may not lie in any grand deal," said Denis Simon, a senior fellow at the Quincy Institute. "Instead, it will test whether the United States and China can establish an equilibrium."

Earlier this year, on Feb 4 — "*lichun*", the traditional Chinese marker for the beginning of spring — Xi spoke with Trump by phone for the first time in 2026, returning to the metaphor that has come to define his messages on bilateral ties.

"In the year ahead," Xi said, "I look forward to working with you to steer the giant ship of China-US relations through winds and waves, keep it on a steady course, and achieve more major and positive outcomes."



President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan, and US President Donald Trump and his wife Melania Trump visit the Palace Museum in Beijing on Nov 8, 2017. LAN HONGGUANG / XINHUA

Avoiding miscalculations

In recent years, China-US relations have experienced twists and turns. Some observers fear that China and the United States may repeat the historical pattern of major-power rivalry known as the "Thucydides Trap." Yet, Xi has rejected this notion: "There is no such thing as a 'Thucydides Trap' in the world. But repeated strategic miscalculations between major countries could create one for themselves."

Avoiding such miscalculations, therefore, has become a critical task for China and the United States, which requires both sides to engage in candid dialogue on several key issues.

Foremost is the Taiwan question. President Xi has repeatedly and unequivocally conveyed China's fundamental stance to the US side. In the Feb 4 phone conversation with Trump, Xi once again stressed that the Taiwan question is the most important and sensitive issue in China-US relations, urging the US side to handle arms sales to Taiwan with utmost prudence.

Trade is another critical issue. In the face of unilateral US tariff offensives, China, under Xi's leadership, has taken resolute countermeasures.

At the same time, Beijing has kept channels of engagement open. Xi has dispatched economic and trade teams that have held six rounds of talks with the US side, seeking to narrow differences step by step while expanding common ground. Currently, trade ties between the two countries remain roughly steady. The two sides are holding a new round of trade talks in South Korea from May 12 to 13.

During their Busan meeting, Xi underscored the broader perspective needed to manage such frictions.

"Both sides should take a broader and longer-term view," Xi told Trump, "focusing on the lasting benefits of cooperation instead of falling into a vicious cycle of retaliation." Trump described Xi as a great leader and a firm negotiator.

How, then, does Xi envision the direction of bilateral ties leading into the future? In a speech delivered in San Francisco in 2023, he posed what he described as the number-one question: "Are we adversaries, or partners?"

"If one sees the other side as a primary competitor, the most consequential geopolitical challenge and a pacing threat," he warned, "it will only lead to misinformed policy making, misguided actions, and unwanted results."

Xi also stressed that China has no intention of challenging or unseating the United States. "China never bets against the United States," he said. "Likewise, the United States should not bet against China."

Drawing on the experience of China-US relations, Xi has outlined three principles — mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation — as the right path forward for the two countries.

'Small ball moves big globe'

This April, Xi sent a congratulatory letter to an event commemorating the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy, recalling the historic 1971 episode often described as "a small ball moving the big globe."

In 1971, a US table tennis team visited Beijing, a breakthrough that thawed more than two decades of estrangement, and helped pave the way for then US President Richard Nixon's landmark visit to China in 1972, and later the establishment of diplomatic ties between the two countries in 1979. Its impact extended far beyond the bilateral sphere, profoundly reshaping the global landscape.

More than half a century on, Xi referred to the story not merely as a historical memory, but as a reminder of the profound influence stable China-US relations can have on the wider world.

In a 2024 meeting with Antony Blinken, former US Secretary of State, Xi invoked a concept inspired by traditional Chinese culture — "*tong qiu gong ji*" ("working together for the common good on the same planet").

"Planet Earth is only this big, and humanity is faced with so many common challenges," Xi said. "As an old Chinese saying goes, 'Passengers in the same boat should help each other.' Today, as I see it, 'dwellers of the same planet should help each other'."

During their meeting in Busan, Trump also acknowledged the importance of cooperation between the two countries, saying that China and the United States can get many great things done for the world and have many years of success.

"There is no geopolitical relationship more important than the China-US bilateral relationship ... with by far the largest impact on global affairs," said Robert Lawrence Kuhn, chairman of the Kuhn Foundation.

For both countries, a stable China-US relationship helps remove obstacles to domestic development. More broadly, it carries profound significance for global stability and prosperity, according to Kuhn.

The timing adds further weight to the relationship. In 2026, China is embarking on its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), while the United States marks the 250th anniversary of its founding. The two countries will respectively host major global gatherings, the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen and the G20 Leaders' Summit in Miami, which will place them at the center of the international agenda.

Beyond red-line and trade issues, observers also point to several areas where cooperation remains vital for both sides, including climate change, counternarcotics and artificial intelligence.

For Xi, it is precisely these countless small acts of cooperation that carry lasting significance.

He once reminded Trump that for China and the United States, "it is always right to do a good thing, however small, and always wrong to do a bad thing, however small."

Just as the Chinese leader has noted on many occasions, China and the United States, as two major countries, can shoulder their responsibilities and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of both countries and the whole world.



The First Senior Officials' Meeting and Related Meetings are held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, from Feb 1 to 10, 2026. DENG HUA / XINHUA

> In the year ahead, I look forward to working with you (Donald Trump) to steer the giant ship of China-US relations through winds and waves, keep it on a steady course, and achieve more major and positive outcomes."
>
> **President Xi Jinping** on Feb 4





Left: A China-US table tennis friendly match is played at Shanghai University of Sport in Shanghai on April 13. WANG XIANG / XINHUA **Right:** A cargo ship loaded with foreign trade containers docks at a berth at Qingdao Port in Shandong province on Saturday. YU FANGPING / XINHUA

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SINO-US SUMMIT



Players from Lincoln High School in Tacoma, Washington state, the United States, and Capital University of Physical Education and Sports participate in a friendly flag football match in Beijing on April 9. FU TIAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Exchanges among young people exceed expectations

By **ZOU SHUO**
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More than 48,500 young people from the United States have visited China for exchange and study programs since the launch of the "50,000 in Five Years" initiative more than two years ago, according to the latest data released by the Ministry of Education.

The initiative, which was announced by President Xi Jinping in San Francisco in November 2023, aims to encourage more exchanges among young people of the two countries.

Yang Dan, head of the Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges of the Ministry of Education, said the initiative has been widely applauded by Chinese and US communities as a means to boost people-to-people ties and inject youthful vitality into bilateral relations.

"The initiative's implementation has seen progress, exceeding expectations in terms of speed, outcomes and global impact," Yang said.

As of early March, the number of young people from the US visiting China had surpassed 48,500, he said, adding that they traveled from all 50 states of the US and visited 31 provincial-level regions on the Chinese mainland, as well as the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

> "The initiative's implementation has seen progress, exceeding expectations in terms of speed, outcomes and global impact."
>
> **Yang Dan,** head of the Ministry of Education's Department of International Cooperation and Exchanges

The groups comprised students from institutions ranging from primary schools to universities in the US, and many of them set foot in China for the first time, gaining a vivid and multidimensional understanding of the country, Yang said.

The projects and activities they participated in ranged from cultural experiences and language learning to summer and winter camps, science and technology exchanges, sports competitions, academic credit programs and degree courses.

"Seeing is believing," Yang said, noting that by touring China, these young people from the US have been able to closely engage with their Chinese peers on topics such as global governance, environmental protection, cultural heritage preservation and innovative development.

He said that young people from the US returned home with lively stories about China, becoming rational and objective voices with regard to China-US ties.

Fifty thousand young people means 50,000 friendships and 50,000 channels of communication, Yang said, emphasizing that they could turn the inclusive, open, trusting and win-win spirit cultivated through peer activities into a solid foundation for the positive growth of bilateral relations.

They can become a lasting source of strength for the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations, he added.

Moving forward, Yang said, China will explore more diverse forms of exchange, build more platforms and introduce stronger social support to encourage sustained and institutionalized mutual visits.

When more and more young people from China and the US become envoys of friendship and when heart-to-heart communication forms a mighty force, the China-US relationship will be built on a stronger foundation and have a brighter future, Yang said.

One notable example of such an exchange took place at Jiaxing University in Zhejiang province in May last year, when 11 students and faculty members from Missouri State University attended a business administration exchange program.

During the weeklong event, the US delegation visited Alibaba and Hormel Foods to learn about cross-border e-commerce and localized product innovation.

As part of an in-depth exploration of Jiaxing's specialty industries, the participants studied how local woolen sweater enterprises have adopted cross-border e-commerce and artificial intelligence-driven solutions to upgrade their operations and boost exports.

Cultural activities included making traditional pastries, dumplings and *zongzi*, or sticky rice wrapped in leaves with various fillings, as well as visits to Nanhu Lake in Jiaxing and West Lake in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang.

"This trip to China, to Jiaxing, will be an unforgettable memory for the rest of my life. I will tell my classmates back in the US about the different China I have experienced," said Michael James Guilfoy, a student from Missouri State University.

Anthony Lakin, another student from the university, who documented his journey on camera, called it "the best experience" of his life, adding that he would definitely ask his family members and friends to visit China.

Daezia Cymone Smith, a Missouri State University faculty member, said that she will tell her family about "the real China", which is "a very cool experience".

China, US can inject impetus into recovery

Structural complementarity of nations helps benefit businesses on both sides, say experts

By **WANG KEJU** and **MA SI**

As the world's two largest economies, China and the United States can benefit businesses on both sides and inject fresh momentum into global economic recovery by finding more common ground and working together to manage differences, said economists and business executives.

The structural complementarity between the two nations, which spans manufacturing, technology and services, is too significant to be disrupted by trade frictions, they added.

"American companies are continuing to invest. American companies aren't going anywhere," said Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, countering the narrative that US businesses are leaving China.

"It's not just the China market anymore; it's the China platform," he said, noting that the platform encompasses everything — from consumer access and partnerships with local enterprises to research and development and supply chain resilience — which is "only becoming more important".

Stein emphasized that coming to China will help US business leaders develop a clearer view and a more realistic understanding of where China stands. Until that happens, it is easy to imagine dangers and concerns that may not be as serious as they seem, he said. "Twenty-five years ago, no one came to China to do R&D. Now what I'm seeing is that the best companies are coming and doing some of their most important R&D," he added.

According to data from the Ministry of Commerce, foreign direct investment in China's high-tech industries surged 30.7 percent year-on-year to 102.73 billion yuan ($15.12 billion) in the first quarter of 2026, pushing the sector's share in total FDI to 41.2 percent.

Eric Zheng, president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai, said that if US companies want to remain globally competitive, they should invest in China. "A US company that can thrive in China can succeed in many other markets around the world. The experience and capabilities built here can be directly applied elsewhere," he said.

Zheng added that the complementarity of the US-China economic relationship means that stable and predictable bilateral trade ties serve the fundamental interests of both nations and greatly benefit businesses on both sides.

Geoff Martha, chairman and CEO of the US-based medical technology company Medtronic, said that China is not only a market with the potential to become the world's largest market for medical technology, but also a valuable partner.

"That commitment is reflected in our long-term investments," he said. "We see strong alignment between China's focus on new quality productive forces and Medtronic's work to develop next-generation technologies that can improve care and expand access for patients."

Surveys indicate that US businesses prefer stability over confrontation. In late April, a white paper released by the American Chamber of Commerce in China noted that more than half of US companies in China still rank the country among their top three global investment destinations.

Liao Fan, director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said that despite years of trade tensions and escalating rhetoric, the underlying economic logic of China-US cooperation remains intact.

"You cannot decouple two economies that have been interwoven together over decades through investment, supply chain integration and market interdependence. The cost of separation would be measured in trillions of dollars and millions of jobs," Liao said.

Zhang Yansheng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, noted that China and the US are not only very important for each other, but their relationship is of utmost importance for the world.

According to the International Monetary Fund, the combined nominal GDP of China and the US accounted for nearly 45 percent of the global economy in 2025. A report released in March by the US-based McKinsey Global Institute also showed that the decline in US-China trade reduced global trade growth by around 10 percent last year.

He Weiwen, a senior fellow at the Beijing-based think tank Center for China and Globalization, said that for the relationship to be truly fair and mutually beneficial, the US must remove the unreasonable restrictions it has imposed on China.

Contact the writers at wangkeju@chinadaily.com.cn

Online
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Duo builds bridge of friendship across time, weaving new threads of Kuliang stories

By **JI HAISHENG**
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Nestled in the green hills near the coastal city of Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian province, is a village called Kuliang, which was once home to a vibrant international community. After the foreign residents left in the mid-20th century, people largely forgot about the thriving community that once called Kuliang home.

Decades later, the stories are being revived thanks to a trans-Pacific partnership. Using old photos, personal networks and new technology, a Chinese professor and a cultural researcher from the United States are rebuilding human connections lost to time.

The collaboration began in 2015, when Elyn MacInnis, a US citizen with strong family ties to China, traveled to Fuzhou with her husband to fulfill two wishes. The first was to scatter her father-in-law's ashes in the Minjiang River, which flows through Fuzhou, thereby honoring his wish to return to the city where he once lived and taught. The second, and more challenging task, was to find the family's old home in Kuliang.

To help with the search, they brought with them a collection of faded color photos taken in the 1940s. Among those who tried to help was Lin Yinan, a Fuzhou native and an associate professor at the Shanghai-based East China University of Science and Technology. "We got the photos and tried to identify the house, but we couldn't pinpoint its location," Lin recalled. "That's where the story began."

Sense of connection

That visit instilled a renewed sense of connection in MacInnis. Upon returning to the US, she delved deeper into the archives to uncover Kuliang's stories and began reaching out to other US families with connections to the mountain village, leading to the establishment of the Kuliang Friends group. The breakthrough came in 2016, when MacInnis found a map of Kuliang and a name list. But it was written in an incomprehensible script: English phonetic approximations of the Fuzhou dialect.

Lin stepped in to bridge the gap. "I'm a local," Lin explained. "I can understand the dialect, and I speak both English and Chinese, so I could help decode it."

Lin's and MacInnis' skills proved complementary. In the US, MacInnis took on the role of archival detective, scouring libraries, family collections and online databases for photographs, letters and diaries. Lin in China became the decoder and field researcher, using his knowledge to translate names and verify locations on the ground.

"We instantly became the team — the Kuliang research team — the two of us," said MacInnis. The duo leveraged the time difference to work around the clock, joking that they simply took turns to sleep while the other worked, since they were on opposite sides of the world. "We worked basically 24 hours a day, seven days a week," MacInnis said, "as hard as we could — in archives, on the internet, with other people."

As the flow of information grew, a new challenge emerged: how could the unnamed faces in the old photographs be identified? Lin and his team of students engineered an innovative solution. They developed the Kuliang Genealogy system, which is China's first digital archive for an overseas community. Using facial recognition technology, the system scans old photos, identifies individuals and reconstructs family trees and social networks.

One of the human connections restored by the system led to an unusual reunion. It gave 85-year-old Gail Harris, whose family once spent their summers in Kuliang, the first-ever glimpse of her mother as a 21-year-old, as captured in a Fuzhou college faculty photo. For Lin, such moments strengthened his sense of mission: to rebuild a severed social fabric. "When I see old photos of Chinese and Americans staying together, I just want to tell their descendants, 'Look, your ancestors were good friends'," he said.

With their joint efforts, Lin and MacInnis have traced at least 80 families and 120 houses with links to Kuliang, and the Kuliang Friends network has expanded to comprise more than 50 members. Notable discoveries include the families of Ruth Hemenway, a US physician who served mothers and children in Minqing, Fujian, for 12 years, and Bruce Hayes, a Fuzhou-born hero who served in a coast-watching unit in support of the Flying Tigers during World War II.

"We keep coming across new stories," said MacInnis. "It will never be rote or boring because we find new people and new stories all the time."

Tangible reality

For her, the power of Kuliang lies in its tangible reality. "Kuliang is not abstract or idealized. It's real," she said, citing the true stories and returning descendants as living proof. The community, she noted, was made up of real people — teachers, doctors, scientists and farmers — who had lived, worked and built trust alongside their Chinese neighbors over generations.



Lin Yinan (right), an associate professor at Shanghai-based East China University of Science and Technology, introduces to Elyn MacInnis the genealogical system to search for foreigners who lived in Kuliang, Fujian province, and their descendants during a meeting in the village on June 21, 2024. LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA

This is not something automatic, MacInnis reflected. "The story really is seeing what happens when you take the time to be friends and to work together."

She added that the whole Kuliang bond program has been a joy. For her, it is not only about the historical discovery, but also the chance to share it with a new generation, so they could inherit that spirit.

"It is that friendship that is one of the anchors of peace," she said. "We're all looking for that."

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WORLD

Envoys call for deeper China-California ties

Trade, innovation and green development emphasized at Los Angeles business forum

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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Chinese envoys to the United States on Monday highlighted the importance of deepening China-California cooperation in trade, innovation and green development, while calling for mutual respect, openness and practical cooperation to help stabilize China-US relations amid global uncertainties.

The 2026 China-California Business Forum, themed "Better Understanding Better Business," brought together local US business leaders and a Chinese delegation consisting of more than 150 business leaders and trade officials from dozens of Chinese provinces. Hainan participated as the forum's guest province of honor.

In a video address to the forum, Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng said California's trade with China approached $90 billion last year, leading all US states, and noted that "two out of every five containers moving between China and the United States passed through California ports".

Xie said China's economy had maintained strong momentum despite a "fluid external environment", adding that China's recently adopted 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) outlined a strategic blueprint for Chinese modernization and higher-quality growth.

Xie said more people had come to recognize that China, with stable policies, dynamic growth and greater openness, is "an anchor of stability for the global economy" and "a window of opportunity for all parties to share in China's development dividends".

Calling California "a natural partner for China", Xie proposed four suggestions for advancing bilateral cooperation, including focusing on people's well-being, embracing green growth, upholding openness and unleashing innovation.

In particular, Xie said China and California could deepen cooperation in clean energy, green materials, carbon capture, utilization and storage, as well as green finance including green bonds, climate funds and carbon markets, helping build "a cleaner, more beautiful and more sustainable world".

Xie also stressed the importance of stable China-US relations, saying that "the more turbulent the world becomes, the more important China-US relations are". He reiterated that "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation should be the direction of our joint efforts".

Echoing Xie's remarks, Chinese Consul General in Los Angeles Guo Shaochun said the forum's development over the past decade demonstrated the significance of sub-national cooperation between China and California.

Guo said China and California maintained highly complementary economies and close cooperation in trade, ports, shipping, education, film and television, among other sectors.

He also highlighted the growing role of Chinese companies in California's economy. Guo said China ranked as the ninth-largest source of foreign investment in California in 2025, supporting more than 25,000 jobs.

At the same time, California-based companies including Apple, Qualcomm and Skechers continue to deepen cooperation with Chinese supply chain partners, he said.

Guo also pointed to cooperation between the ports of Los Angeles, Long Beach and Shanghai on green shipping corridors and low-carbon development in the global shipping industry.

On educational exchanges, Guo said Southern California hosts more than 50,000 Chinese students annually, contributing over $4 billion to the local economy each year.

He also noted the success of Hollywood films in the Chinese market, citing *Zootopia 2* as an example. According to Guo, the film generated nearly 4.6 billion yuan ($637 million) at the Chinese box office, accounting for about half of its global revenue.

Guo said the business community remained "the most dynamic, pragmatic and resilient force in China-US relations" and called for expanded cooperation in modern agriculture, green transition, artificial intelligence, biomedicine and energy storage.

Local business leaders at the forum emphasized the significance of maintaining California-China cooperation.

Bay Area Council President and CEO Libby Schaaf expressed her appreciation for learning about China's trade policies and climate leadership.

"May our example of collaboration and cooperation for our shared benefits be an example and inspiration for all," she said.

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France's President Emmanuel Macron (second from right) and Kenya's President William Ruto (second from left) sing and dance with choir members upon their arrival ahead of the Africa Forward Summit in Nairobi on Monday. LUDOVIC MARIN / AFP

France seeks to strengthen relations with Africa

By **EDITH MUTETHYA**
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France is seeking to rebuild and strengthen its partnerships with African nations as it reassesses its strategy on the continent following strained relations with several West African countries, analysts said.

For the first time, France hosted the Africa Forward Summit in an English-speaking country, a move experts described as a strategic attempt to regain influence in Africa.

The two-day summit in Kenya's capital Nairobi from Monday to Tuesday drew participation from business leaders and some 30 heads of state from Africa, with France stressing "equal partnerships" with Africa, and announcing investments worth $27 billion for the continent.

The shift comes amid France's deteriorating ties with parts of West Africa, driven by rising anti-French sentiments, military coups, and growing calls to end colonial-era security arrangements in recent years.

Aly-Khan Satchu, a Kenyan investment banker, said the traditional "Francafrique" model has reached its end.

Satchu said that global trends point toward greater local ownership in partnerships, and urged African governments to negotiate stronger deals.

"It remains the responsibility of African governments to negotiate in the best interests of their citizens if we are to see the birth of genuinely equal partnerships," he said.

However, Gordon K'achola, founder of the Africa Center for Diplomatic Affairs, said France is trying to rebuild trust without directly apologizing.

"This strategy may not work for them but with woke African young leaders, they are getting into partnerships knowing what they actually want," he said, adding that France's historical legacy remains a major obstacle, particularly in Anglophone Africa, which refers to English-speaking regions in the continent.

He noted a deep trust deficit: "They shall cooperate with African countries with almost zero trust. It will be based on regaining the lost opportunity Africa has had to experience for all these years under the French manipulation."

Speaking at the summit opening, Kenya's President William Ruto said shifting global trade is reshaping the world economy.

"Fragmentation cannot be the answer, nor isolation the strategy," he said, calling for cooperation based on sovereign equality, mutual respect, and shared responsibility.

Ruto said Africa must move beyond aid and dependency toward investment, innovation, and value creation.

"Africa is not part of the global problem but part of the solution," he said, highlighting the continent's natural resources, young population, and renewable energy potential.

Antonio Guterres, secretary-general of the United Nations, said Africa is now leading key global debates on reforming a financial system designed in 1945.

He said African leadership is building new tools such as the borrower's platform so that countries can speak with one voice and negotiate from a position of strength. "It is challenging credit rating systems that prevent many countries from accessing the borrowing tools they need," Guterres said.

He noted African-led efforts to strengthen collective bargaining, reform credit rating systems, and expand the lending capacity of development banks, while easing debt pressures.

Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, the chairman of the African Union Commission, said Africa must take a leading role in global affairs.

Emmanuel Macron, the president of France, said Africa is now viewed as a full partner rather than just a source of raw materials.

"We are working toward a transformation of investment relations, focusing on value chains, energy, and sustainable development," he said, adding that future cooperation will emphasize financial reform, taxation, and debt restructuring.

Starmer vows to stay amid growing calls to resign

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
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British Prime Minister Keir Starmer has told his Cabinet he has no intention of stepping down despite coming under increasing internal pressure following last week's hugely disappointing local election results for the ruling Labour Party.

Three junior ministers have resigned from the government as of press time and they called for a change in leadership, but no candidate has yet come forward to challenge Starmer directly.

Earlier on Tuesday, the BBC reported that 78 of Labour's 403 members of parliament had called on him to go, with some senior ministers reported to be among them, but his message to the Cabinet was defiant.

"As I said yesterday, I take responsibility for these election results and I take responsibility for delivering the change we promised," he reportedly told them.

He went on to call the previous 48 hours "destabilizing for government", having an economic impact on the lives of voters, and added, "The Labour Party has a process for challenging a leader and that has not been triggered.

"The country expects us to get on with governing. That is what I am doing and what we must do as a Cabinet." Writing on X, Housing Secretary Steve Reed gave Starmer his backing, repeating the point about voters paying the price for party infighting.

"This instability has consequences for people's lives," he said.

"The people who will be hurt most will be those that elected us less than two years ago. We must unite behind the prime minister."

Starmer gave a speech to Labour MPs on Monday where he hoped to regain control of the situation, but a statement from one of the new 2024 election intakes, Paul Foster, said this had not succeeded.

Rebuilding confidence

"Unfortunately, after much reflection, the prime minister's speech yesterday did little to reassure me that he has the vision needed to reconnect with the country and rebuild public confidence under his leadership," he said.

"It pains me to say this because I am a loyal person by nature, and I do not come to this conclusion lightly. But it is with great regret that I believe the party now needs a change of direction and, ultimately, a new leader."

If Starmer were to leave his post, it would not automatically trigger a general election as the Labour Party has a large majority in parliament, but it would continue a decade-long pattern of leadership change at the top of British government, with previous Conservative Party prime ministers David Cameron, Theresa May, Boris Johnson and Liz Truss all having been replaced midterm, for differing reasons, and only Rishi Sunak leaving office after a general election defeat.

Agencies contributed to this story.

Visit: An open, rules-based and inclusive order essential

From page 1

History demonstrates that major power confrontation generates negative externalities falling disproportionately on developing economies. Trade disruptions, capital market instability and geopolitical risks erode investor confidence and constrain long-term growth. A predictable China-US relationship is, therefore, a global public good.

High-level political engagement is indispensable. Trump's visit underscores the continuing relevance of top-level diplomacy in stabilizing expectations and reducing misperceptions. Institutionalized dialogue serves as a mechanism for crisis management, trust building and policy coordination.

While structural differences will persist, they can be managed through communication and bounded competition rather than escalating confrontation. Moving beyond zero-sum frameworks toward pragmatic cooperation is essential in addressing transnational challenges.

Three principles should underpin this relationship: peace, mutual respect and development.

First, peace is the precondition for systemic stability and long-term economic growth. Disruptions in China-US relations have immediate spillover effects on global trade, investment and technological collaboration. In a fragile global economy, such disruptions impose severe costs on developing countries with limited resilience.

Second, mutual respect is necessary for sustainable engagement. This entails recognizing differences in political systems, development models and strategic interests, while avoiding policies that escalate tensions. A stable relationship requires both sides to exercise strategic restraint and prioritize long-term systemic stability over short-term tactical gains.

Third, development must remain central to global governance. China has advanced this priority through the Global Development Initiative, which refocuses international cooperation on poverty reduction, food security, climate action and innovation-driven growth. Increased China-US coordination in development financing and resource alignment would strengthen implementation, particularly in under-resourced regions.

This approach is consistent with the broader concept of a community with a shared future for humanity, which emphasizes interdependence, shared prosperity and cooperative security. It rejects zero-sum competition in favor of collective responses to transnational challenges, placing coordination and mutual benefit at the center of international engagement.

The implications of China-US relations extend deeply into the international system. For developing countries, preserving an open, rules-based and inclusive order is essential. Multilateral institutions remain critical platforms for coordination. As leading stakeholders, China and the US share a responsibility to strengthen these institutions rather than fragment them.

Climate change illustrates the strategic necessity of such cooperation. As the world's two major carbon emitters with different historical responsibilities and development stages, China and the US are indispensable to any credible global climate strategy. Coordinated action in clean energy deployment, climate finance and technological innovation can generate substantial positive spillovers. Conversely, policy divergence can significantly undermine global mitigation efforts.

Equally critical is the stability of the international financial and trading system. Fragmentation into competing blocs reduces efficiency and heightens systemic risk. Constructive engagement between China and the US can help sustain international order principles while mitigating the risks of strategic decoupling.

While strategic differences remain a structural feature, substantial scope exists for functional cooperation in areas such as public health, scientific research, poverty reduction and sustainable development. Expanding such cooperation generates tangible benefits while serving as a stabilizing force.

For developing countries, the stakes are immediate. Their core priorities are directly shaped by the external environment created by major powers. Stability in China-US relations is a practical determinant of development outcomes.

Trump's visit to China represents a timely opportunity to reaffirm shared responsibilities and advance a constructive relationship. By institutionalizing dialogue, exercising strategic restraint and prioritizing development-oriented cooperation, China and the US can move beyond destabilizing frictions. By doing so, they will contribute to a more stable, inclusive and development-focused international order.

The author is a former minister of tourism of Brazil, a distinguished professor at Tsinghua University and a professor at Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen). The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Peace deal hopes dim as deadlock continues

Nuclear tensions deepen amid stalled US-Iran negotiations, surging oil prices

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

Hopes for a peace deal with Iran faded on Tuesday after the United States said a truce was "on life support", as Tehran rejected a US proposal and hinted that a possible retaliation over further US-Israeli strikes could be uranium enrichment to 90 percent purity.

US President Donald Trump said on Monday Iran's counteroffer has put the April 8 ceasefire at severe risk.

"I would call it the weakest right now, after reading that piece of garbage they sent us. I didn't even finish reading it," he told reporters.

"The ceasefire is on massive life support," he said.

In response, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said his country's armed forces stand ready to deliver a lesson-teaching response to any act of aggression.

"There is no alternative but to accept the rights of the Iranian people as laid out in the 14-point proposal," he said in a post on X on Tuesday.

Also on Tuesday, Ebrahim Rezaei, spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said Iran could enrich uranium up to 90 percent purity — a level considered weapons-grade — if its territory faces fresh military attacks. "We will review it in Parliament," he said.

The latest twists further roiled global energy markets, already disrupted by the Middle East crisis and the overlapping blockades around the Strait of Hormuz — a critical oil and gas transit route that carries about 20 percent of the world's oil shipments.

The benchmark Brent crude oil futures extended gains on Tuesday, climbing to almost $108 a barrel.

"The energy supply shock that began in the first quarter is the largest the world has ever experienced," Amin Nasser, CEO and president of Saudi Arabia's oil giant Aramco, told investors, warning it would take months for markets to rebalance even if the strait opens immediately.

"If its opening is delayed by a few more weeks, then normalization will last into 2027," he said.

The US Department of Energy said on Monday it is releasing 53.3 million barrels of crude from the Strategic Petroleum Reserve to energy firms under a global arrangement aimed at easing supply tightness, Reuters reported.

Respective demands

Washington had proposed an immediate halt to fighting before negotiating more divisive issues, including Iran's nuclear program. Tehran, however, demanded a full end to hostilities across all fronts — including in Lebanon, where Israel was continuing military strikes.

Iran also insisted on its sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz, compensation for war damages and an end to the US naval blockade, among other preconditions.

Negotiations between Iran and the US are stuck in a deadlock amid an extremely dangerous situation, Giorgio Cafiero, a Washington-based political analyst, told Al Jazeera.

"The understatement of the century is that the ceasefire is very fragile," he said, adding any "slight miscalculation" could trigger a protracted conflict that could eventually spiral into a messy quagmire.

Iran, the US and Israel reached a ceasefire last month following 40 days of hostilities sparked by joint US-Israeli strikes on Feb 28.

Following the truce, Iranian and US delegations held one round of peace talks in Pakistan on April 11 and 12, which yielded no breakthrough. In recent weeks, the two sides have exchanged multiple proposals aimed at ending the conflict, mediated by Pakistan.

In Lebanon, local leaders have urged the US ambassador in Beirut to press Israel to halt its aerial bombardment. Israeli strikes on a town in southern Lebanon killed six people and wounded seven others, the National News Agency reported on Tuesday, as fighting continued despite a ceasefire agreement.

Lebanon's Health Ministry told Agence France-Presse on Tuesday Israeli strikes have killed 380 people since the ceasefire began on April 17.

A ministry official said that "380 people, including 22 children and 39 women, have been killed in strikes on Lebanon since the ceasefire came into effect", out of a total of around 2,900 people killed since the war erupted on March 2.

Meanwhile, US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee said on Tuesday that Israel sent its homegrown Iron Dome anti-missile batteries, along with personnel to operate them, to the United Arab Emirates. The UAE did not immediately comment on his remarks.

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Love amid ruins



Palestinian brides and grooms gather for a mass wedding organized by Turkiye's IHH Humanitarian Relief Foundation in Gaza City on Monday, offering a rare moment of celebration amid the devastation of conflict. MAJDI FATHI VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

RUSSIA

Moscow welcomes EU discussions on dialogue

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Monday that discussions in Europe on the need for dialogue with Russia were a positive development, though the situation is still in initial stages. Russian President Vladimir Putin, while responding to questions on Saturday over a potential negotiation mediator between Russia and Europe, said he would prefer former German chancellor Gerhard Schroeder for the role. Putin said Europeans should choose their own leader, one they trust and who has not made hostile remarks against Russia. "It is noteworthy that there is growing talk in Europe about the need for dialogue with Russia," Peskov told state media RIA Novosti. "We welcome this; it is a positive development, but we are still only at the beginning. We will see how things develop from here."

SPAIN

'Work not over' after hantavirus evacuation

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Tuesday that "our work is not over" to contain the hantavirus after evacuations from a cruise ship hit by a deadly outbreak of the illness. The fate of the MV *Hondius* has sparked international alarm after three passengers died in an outbreak of the rare virus, for which no vaccines or specific treatments exist. Yet, health officials have stressed that the global public health risk is low and rejected comparisons to the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. "There is no sign that we are seeing the start of a larger outbreak," Tedros told a joint news conference in Madrid with Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez. "But of course the situation could change, and given the long incubation period of the virus, it's possible we might see more cases in the coming weeks," Tedros said of the Andes variant, which is transmissible between humans.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone forging global ties

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

Located beneath snow-capped mountains in Sichuan province, Chengdu is evolving into an international gateway for modern China. At the forefront of this transformation is the Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone, or the CDHT, a pivotal force driving the park city's emergence as a major hub for international exchanges.

The 2026 World Mayors Dialogue is being held in Chengdu until Friday, gathering representatives from 32 cities across 26 countries and five international organizations. Some participants will visit iconic sites such as Tianfu Long Island and Tiexiangsi Water Street in the CDHT to experience the progress of Chinese modernization.

On Thursday, the 2026 Chengdu International Friendship Cities Cooperation and Development Conference will kick off in the zone. Under the theme of "Openness for Win-Win Cooperation, Partnership for Shared Progress", the delegates will conduct in-depth discussions on the future development of cities.

These two high-profile international events further highlight the CDHT's growing significance as a hub for global engagement.

Founded in 1988, the CDHT spans an area of 237.2 square kilometers and was the first national innovation demonstration zone in western China. The zone's integrated circuit industry boasts the largest scale in central and western China. It produces over 60 percent of the world's iPads and 50 percent of MacBooks.

In 2025, the zone achieved a regional GDP of 366.15 billion yuan ($53.87 billion), marking a 6.1 percent year-on-year growth. Its foreign trade reached 550.8 billion yuan, accounting for 53.4 percent of Sichuan's total. It is home to a quarter of Sichuan's listed companies.



The Business and Innovation Centre for China-Europe Cooperation, or the CCEC, in the Chengdu Hi-Tech Industrial Development Zone in Chengdu, capital city of Sichuan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

International cooperation

In 2025, the CDHT actively engaged with the international community to attract investment and talent. The zone organized or participated in 28 international delegations involving 164 representatives. These focused on key sectors such as electronic information, biomedicine, high-end equipment manufacturing and the digital economy, engaging with regions including Europe and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

The CDHT prioritized upgrading its international cooperative parks in 2025. The zone sent six specialized delegations abroad, including three visits to Singapore to facilitate agreements between its Singapore-Sichuan Hi-Tech Innovation Park, or the SSCIP, and five Singaporean organizations, such as Singapore Polytechnic.

A milestone was reached in October with the inauguration of the SSCIP Singapore Innovation Cooperation Center in Singapore, establishing a dual-center cooperation model between the city-state and Sichuan. The center signed cooperation agreements with more than 30 Singaporean organizations, including DBS Bank and InnoForge Ventures, to foster closer bilateral ties.

Collaboration with South Korea also deepened last year. The CDHT hosted the Golden Panda Innovation and Entrepreneurship Global Competition in the country and established an offshore incubator system by signing agreements with 19 South Korean innovation centers. This year will see the launch of a Seoul product pavilion in the CDHT and the establishment of an innovation exchange center in Seoul, fostering two-way industrial and market collaborations.

The zone has also ramped up activities in Japan, organizing more than 30 China-Japan trade and culture events in 2025. These efforts led to partnerships including one between China's National Innovation Center for UHD Video Technology and Japan's Canon.

The Business and Innovation Centre for China-Europe Cooperation in the CDHT introduced more than 10 new initiatives in 2025, including partnerships with organizations such as the Sichuan Philharmonic Orchestra and Complutense University of Madrid.

Supporting enterprises

In 2025, the CDHT addressed businesses' needs to "go global" and attract international resources through its innovative Foreign Affairs Supporting Enterprises Program. The program provided comprehensive policy outreach, delivering 11 workshops on APEC Business Travel Cards, consular protection, invitations for foreign nationals and more.

Business travel services were streamlined through a "green channel" with dedicated personnel and full-process tracking. This facilitated the issuance of more than 60 APEC Business Travel Cards and 290 foreign expert invitations, ensuring smooth talent mobility.

In addition, enterprise support was extended directly to companies. The CDHT has established a robust response mechanism by collaborating with the local foreign affairs office, immigration and police. In 2025, it provided tailored solutions for over 300 export-oriented businesses through on-site visits.

The Singapore-Sichuan Hi-Tech Innovation Park hosts more than 16,000 high-tech enterprises. These include 100 foreign-invested companies such as NCS and Medtronic.

A representative from the CDHT's international cooperation and investment promotion bureau said: "In the process of supporting enterprise development, we have identified several common challenges, such as low efficiency in connecting local resources and the lack of an internationalized community atmosphere." To address these issues, the CDHT launched an international service center in January to enhance services.

The center integrates government, industry and lifestyle functions into a 3,500-square-meter space. It enables more accessible administrative services by consolidating municipal, district and neighborhood-level service items, covering immigration, tax registration and property documentation. Nearly 350 processes can be completed through one service window, which provides bilingual services.

A key feature of the center is its cross-border industrial service corridor, which houses six platforms for trade services, cross-border finance, international talent and intellectual property. It offers life-cycle support for local companies expanding abroad and foreign enterprises entering Chengdu.

The center also prioritizes cultural exchanges and lifestyle services by establishing spaces for exhibition and communication. Southeast Asian-style markets, cafes and a dedicated section featuring Southeast Asian books have been set up to foster a sense of belonging. A Singapore-Sichuan academy, an innovative art space and a singles club will also be launched.

For expatriates, the CDHT is continuously improving their quality of life through its international service center. Integration programs, such as the Home in CDHT series, hosted over 20 events such as Dragon Boat Festival celebrations and fashion salons in 2025. Hundreds of foreigners participated.

Gateway to China

The CDHT has developed dedicated programs to elevate its role in international exchanges. These include the industry-focused CDHT Dialogue, the culture-oriented CDHT Salon and the CDHT Tour for foreign delegations. By hosting over 170 high-profile events in 2025, including investment promotions in Singapore, London and Frankfurt, the CDHT's international influence and appeal as a hub for business and culture have grown further.

In 2025, the zone played host to important dignitaries, including heads of state, and delegations of government officials and business executives from Central and Eastern Europe. This year, the zone organized industrial exchange activities, such as the China (Chengdu)-Switzerland biomedical industry exchange in January. Cultural events included a theater performance of Shakespeare and a Joan Miro art exhibition in April, celebrating the diverse collaborations between China and Europe.

In a historic first, the CDHT established a sister-city relationship with Municipio I of Rome, Italy, marking its initial step into formalized international city partnerships. This development further solidifies the zone's position in global cooperation networks.

As the CDHT continues to push the boundaries of international communication, it stands as a shining example of China's progress on the world stage. The zone's focus on cross-border partnerships, enterprise empowerment and cultural exchange ensures it will remain a key player in fostering international cooperation and driving global engagement.

ADVERTORIAL

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COMMENT

Editorials

'Gray rhino' of Japan's remilitarization is wildly charging over regional order

There is something revealing about the debate now convulsing Japan's ruling establishment over whether China should formally be called a "threat" in the drafting of the country's new security documents that are scheduled to be deliberated next month.

Tokyo's political class already behaves as though China is a "threat". The unresolved question is whether Japan is ready to say aloud what its policies already presume.

Officially, the Sanae Takaichi government still speaks the language of a "strategic relationship of mutual benefit" with Beijing. Japanese diplomats continue to invoke the old formula of pursuing a "constructive and stable relationship" with China. Takaichi herself insists she is trying to keep the channels of dialogue "open".

Yet governments are judged by budgets, deployments, doctrines and alliances. And on that score, Japan's trajectory does not accord with its words.

Worse, Tokyo even attempts to hold Beijing accountable for tensions in bilateral relations that are, in fact, of its own making.

Against that backdrop, the current dispute inside the Liberal Democratic Party over whether China should be labeled a "threat" resembles less a substantive policy disagreement than an exercise in political cosmetics. In 2022, Japan's National Security Strategy already described China as "the greatest strategic challenge" Japan has ever faced. In its Diplomatic Bluebook released in April, the Japanese government effectively downgraded China-Japan relations.

But the more important reality is that Tokyo's conduct has long since outrun its rhetoric.

That is why the supposedly "moderate" voices inside the Japanese establishment deserve closer scrutiny. Those warning against provocative wording targeting China might not be voicing rationality. Their concern may be with avoiding a backlash that could complicate Japan's advancing of its neo-militarism.

In other words, they object not to the destination, but to the visibility of the journey. This matters because Japan has traveled this road before.

The parallels with the ideological evolution of Japanese militarism in history are difficult to ignore. Japan's descent into catastrophe did not begin with Pearl Harbor. It started much earlier — with the gradual fusion of nationalism, historical mythmaking, elite insecurity and militarized politics.

Today's rhetoric is simply old wine in a new bottle. After all, the Takaichi government has already expanded offensive military capabilities, promoted missile cooperation abroad, relaxed arms-export rules and openly discussed preparedness for a prolonged "emergency", including setting up a centralized, prime-minister-led command hub for intelligence gathering and analysis. Japanese officials are now pushing for restoring wartime-style military ranks inside the Self-Defense Forces.

Viewed collectively, these moves reveal something larger: the erosion of Japan's postwar system that emerged from the ashes of Japanese imperialism. That is precisely why the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials — which fell on May 3 this year — matters.

The tribunal's significance was never confined to punishing individual war criminals such as Hideki Tojo. Its deeper purpose was to delegitimize the ideological machinery that had enabled militarism itself: emperor absolutism, historical revisionism, expansionist nationalism and the mythology of victimhood.

The pattern of the Takaichi government's fomenting of neo-militarism is historically familiar: cultivate fear, centralize authority, glorify sacrifice, exaggerate external threats and redefine expansion as self-defense.

In history, Japan's invasion of its neighbors obstructed the region's development; today the right-wing forces in Japan again threaten the very order on which the Asia-Pacific has prospered after the war. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun warned on Tuesday, the "gray rhino" of Japan's remilitarization is charging straight toward the region.

The right-wing forces in Japan shamelessly portray the nation not as a historical aggressor requiring vigilance, but as a perpetually endangered "democracy" forced into reluctant militarization by "hostile neighbors". That narrative inversion — aggressor recast as victim — is central to their obfuscation of intent. The danger for Japan is therefore not primarily external but from within: the erosion of historical memory, the normalization of ideological nationalism and the steady abandonment of postwar restraint in favor of the romanticism of assertive "self-defense".

History rarely repeats itself precisely. But nations that convince themselves they have transcended history and therefore no longer need to reflect on it are often the ones most vulnerable to reenacting it.

Code of conduct requires sincerity to finalize

The 48th Summit of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations concluded in Cebu, the Philippines, last week with the release of a statement underscoring the need for a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea grounded in international law.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, at a subsequent news conference, expressed optimism that this long-sought agreement could be finalized within the year.

While the COC is welcome, achieving it requires unwavering focus and, crucially, an end to actions that undermine the very trust the document seeks to build.

Over the past year, cooperation in the South China Sea has maintained stable momentum with peace, cooperation and friendship being the general consensus of regional countries. Provocations and attempts to undermine that consensus go against the regional will.

China insists that peace, cooperation and friendship constitute the new narrative for the South China Sea. It has engaged in in-depth discussions with Indonesia regarding joint maritime development, held bilateral dialogues on maritime issues with Malaysia, and carried out cooperation on the sustainable development of fisheries with Vietnam.

Apart from such concrete actions, robust institutional safeguards are still needed. Building upon the continued and effective implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea, consultations on the COC have now entered a critical stage, with all parties looking forward to concluding the negotiations.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Monday, formulating the COC is an important measure for implementing the DOC, and also an important agreement between China and ASEAN countries. It will help the parties better manage differences, advance cooperation and keep the South China Sea peaceful and stable.

China is engaging in close consultations with ASEAN countries on the text of the COC and is determined to work alongside all parties — by overcoming external interference and bridging differences while seeking common ground — to reach a consensus as soon as possible, thereby establishing a practical and effective framework for all parties to manage differences, enhance mutual trust and promote cooperation.

To reach an agreement on the COC at an early date, the parties concerned need to stick to the shared goals of peace and development, focus on common ground and resist disruptions from parties outside the region.

China also hopes that the Philippines — during its tenure as this year's rotating chair of ASEAN — will recognize the responsibilities it bears, resist the temptation of pursuing narrow self-interests, demonstrate the sense of responsibility expected of it, and play a positive and constructive role in promoting regional peace and stability.

As China's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Fu Cong has stated on several occasions at the UN Security Council, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, together with relevant international treaties and customary international law, form the basis of the modern international maritime order. States should interpret and apply the convention in complete good faith and refrain from selectivity and double standards.

China has always been a defender and builder of the rule of law in the international maritime sphere, defending the integrity and authority of the convention with concrete moves.

A code of conduct that truly serves the region cannot be built on consensus when the Philippines persists with its provocative territorial incursions. The upcoming months offer a narrow window of opportunity. Manila should make the correct choice between walking down a path of escalating tension with the collusion of outside forces or translating its optimism into real actions aimed at completing the COC this year.

The COC will be a common roof that can shelter all only if it is built by everyone. The region has waited too long. The time for sincere cooperation is now.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Peace, development, win-win cooperation trends of the times

At a moment when much of the international system appears trapped between geopolitical fragmentation and economic uncertainty, US President Donald Trump's three-day state visit to China starting on Wednesday offers something fundamental: a chance for the world to consider what kind of diplomacy effectively answers the call of the times.

China's answer is diplomacy that upholds the principles of peace, development and win-win cooperation.

Beijing's foreign-policy vocabulary, such as mutual respect, equity, shared benefits, common development and peaceful coexistence, reflects its perspective that peace, development and win-win cooperation are the unstoppable trends of the times.

The world is suffering from multiple deficits simultaneously: a deficit of development, as inequality widens between and within nations; a deficit of peace, as wars and proxy conflicts proliferate; a deficit of governance, as international institutions struggle to keep pace with technological and geopolitical change; and perhaps most dangerously, a deficit of trust.

Looking back at history, each era has produced its own dominant diplomatic philosophy.

The Westphalian system established sovereign equality as the organizing principle of international relations. The multilateralism and economic interdependence of the post-1945 order arose from the ashes of World War II.

The Cold War era, by contrast, was largely governed by ideological rivalry and bloc confrontation.

Today's world faces a complex set of challenges: climate change, technological disruption, uneven development and distrust between major powers.

That reality helps explain why China's emphasis on communication and the managing of differences resonates with so many countries. Peace, development and win-win cooperation benefit all countries. These principles answer the genuine need for an international framework that privileges coexistence over confrontation and shared growth over zero-sum rivalry.

Modern international relations were not built on the fantasy of absolute victory. The Westphalian system rested on a simpler insight: sovereign states must coexist despite profound differences. Stability depended not on uniformity, but on mutual recognition.

The post-1945 international order deepened that logic. The United Nations system, imperfect though it remains, was founded on the principles of sovereign equality, territorial integrity, multilateral cooperation and peaceful dispute resolution. Its central lesson was painfully earned: attempts to secure absolute security for some produce insecurity for others.

That is why China's principled emphasis on mutual understanding, fair global governance, shared security and inclusive development as set out in the global initiatives it has put forward have been welcomed by so many countries across the world.

The diplomatic framework of Beijing aligns with a broad international desire for stability over confrontation and development over ideological crusades.

Meanwhile, the development of China provides other economies, including the United States, with opportunities. The commitment to innovation and opening-up enshrined in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) indicates that China will continue to share its development dividends with the world.

Despite the divisive attempts of some forces, the world's two largest economies remain deeply intertwined and the two countries are still interconnected and globally consequential in science and technology. The global challenges of climate change, artificial intelligence governance, financial stability, supply chain stability and the energy transition cannot be meaningfully addressed without cooperation and coordination between China and the US.

Both countries understand this, as does the rest of the world. In these turbulent times, the world is looking for reassurance that cooperation remains not only possible but more importantly necessary between the two countries, as the stable and healthy development of Sino-US relations serves the common interests and expectations of the international community.

The choice facing Washington is cooperation grounded in communication or competition driven by miscalculation. The world looks to it to answer the call of the times with a reciprocal commitment to peace, development and win-win cooperation.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Potential of sports events industry to be fully tapped

Editor's note: *The sports events industry is booming in China. Li Hai, dean of the School of Economics and Management at Shanghai University of Sport, spoke to Economic Daily about the growth of the industry, and what needs to be done to address the challenges it faces. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Data from the Chinese Professional Football League show that its three-tiered leagues attracted a total attendance of 8.96 million in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 18 percent. Attendance at the Chinese Super League matches was more than 6 million, a 32.54 percent year-on-year increase.

The Formula 1 Chinese Grand Prix 2026, which was held in Shanghai, attracted more than 230,000 spectators, with ticket revenue increasing by over 30 percent year-on-year. Grassroots sports events, such as the Jiangsu Football City League, or "Suchao", have also gained widespread popularity, driving marked growth in consumption in local tourism, catering and accommodation sectors.

The booming consumption of sports events in China is a result of the synergy of multiple factors. The government is striving to build the sports industry into a pillar of the economy. According to a 2025 guideline on unleashing the potential of sports consumption and further promoting high-quality development of the sports industry, China aims to nurture a number of globally influential sports companies and events and increase the value of the industry to over 7 trillion yuan ($1.03 trillion) by 2030.

The attitude of people toward sports events has also changed. Watching and participating in sports have become popular leisure activities. The number of international and domestic sports events hosted by China has also increased. In 2025, Shanghai hosted 182 sports events, 69 of which were international games. The use of digital technology has made these events more accessible to the public.

Unleashing the potential of the development of sports events in China still faces challenges. There is a need for better integration of sports with culture, tourism and commerce. Event approval procedures are complicated, and not many domestic sports events are truly influential and sustainable.

To achieve the 2030 goals, strengthen the sports industry and advance the high-quality development of sports events industry, several measures are needed. A multi-department collaborative mechanism led by the sports authorities should be set up to offer better services, strengthen the supervision of sports events and promote the upgrade of relevant consumption. The government needs to continue supporting the sustained growth of top-tier international events, fostering domestic events and building a system that covers multiple types and levels of sports.

Greater efforts are also needed to cultivate event management talent, improve the standards and rules for event operation, and enhance the ability of referees. Also, sports events should be combined with other sectors to boost their business. Local authorities should be encouraged to leverage their cultural resources and create special sports events, operate the events in a "whole-process" manner, and make them cultural symbols that drive the local economy.

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VIEWS

Marcus Vinicius De Freitas

Sino-US meeting with global implications

United States President Donald Trump's visit to China and his expected meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping will inevitably generate headlines centered on tariffs, trade balances, semiconductors, technological contention, and the question of strategic competition between Washington and Beijing.

Yet interpreting this encounter solely through the prism of bilateral tensions would be to misunderstand its deeper historical significance.

What is truly at stake is not merely the future of Sino-US relations, but the gradual emergence of a different understanding of the international order itself.

This is not a meeting between two big countries situated in the Northern Hemisphere, but in many respects a North-South encounter.

Although geographically located in the north, China is widely seen as a leading voice of what might be called the "New South."

Its historical trajectory, developmental experience, and civilizational memory place it closer to many of the aspirations, anxieties, and ambitions of developing nations than to the traditional Western powers that shaped the post-World War II order.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

China remembers poverty, fragmentation, foreign occupation and underdevelopment not as distant historical abstractions but as important components of its modern national identity. That memory continues to influence how Beijing approaches the world today.

For many nations across Africa, Latin America, Southeast Asia, and parts of the Middle East, China's rise demonstrates that economic modernization outside the traditional Western political model is possible.

The expansion of BRICS, the growing attraction of alternative financial institutions such as the New Development Bank, and the demand for Chinese infrastructure investment across the developing world all reflect a broader search for greater strategic autonomy in international affairs.

Beijing's international discourse resonates across much of the developing world because it is anchored primarily in the language of development, connectivity, sovereignty, and long-term economic transformation rather than ideological conversion.

In many capitals of the Global South, the central geopolitical question is no longer which power offers the most attractive political doctrine, but which partnerships are best positioned to deliver infrastructure, industrial growth, technology transfer, educational opportunities, and economic stability.

Development itself has increasingly become the new language of sovereignty.

That is why the significance of the Trump-Xi meeting extends far beyond bilateral negotiations.

The world today confronts enormous collective challenges: the future of free trade, the preservation of global peace, the governance of artificial intelligence, climate adaptation, energy security, supply-chain resilience, and the ethical dilemmas generated by the rapid expansion of scientific and technological frontiers.

None of these questions can be resolved through unilateralism or through geopolitical domination that characterized international politics earlier.

The great strategic question of the 21st century is no longer who possesses the strongest army, but whose vision of the future is more attractive, more inclusive, and more capable of producing prosperity. China understands this transformation very well.

Beijing has consistently promoted concepts such as the "community with a shared future for humanity", an idea frequently dismissed in parts of the West as rhetorical abstraction.

Yet behind the slogan lies an attempt to articulate an alternative philosophical foundation for global governance — one less centered on ideological universalism and more focused on coexistence, economic integration, connectivity, and civilizational pluralism.

Naturally, critics question whether Chinese practice always aligns with Chinese discourse. Across large parts of the developing world, there is growing fatigue with an international order that is excessively concentrated in a limited number of Western capitals.

Many emerging nations increasingly seek participation rather than subordination; partnership rather than tutelage.

The appeal of multipolarity stems not necessarily from anti-Western sentiment, but from the perception that the existing system has failed to adequately accommodate the aspirations of the broader developing world.

This does not signal the decline or irrelevance of the US. American innovation, financial influence, military reach, scientific leadership, and cultural power remain extraordinary assets.

Nor should the Trump-Xi encounter be romanticized as a coherent ideological dialogue between North and South.

The US president hardly represents the traditional liberal internationalist establishment that dominated Western diplomacy after the Cold War.

Political rise of the US president, in many respects, reflects growing dissatisfaction within the West itself regarding the costs and contradictions of globalization.

The growing inequality within Western societies is driven more by the societies' uneven wealth distribution than by the effects of globalization.

That is precisely what makes this meeting historically revealing. Both countries, in different ways, embody competing responses to a world in transition.

For the Global South, the symbolism of the meeting matters as much as any agreement eventually signed behind closed doors.

It reflects the growing recognition that emerging nations can no longer be treated as peripheral actors in the global conversation.

The world is entering a new phase in which legitimacy will depend less on the capacity to instill fear and more on the ability to inspire confidence, deliver development, and accommodate others' aspirations.

That may ultimately prove to be the deeper significance of the encounter between presidents Trump and Xi — and perhaps one of the defining lessons of the emerging international order of the 21st century.

The author is a visiting professor at the China Foreign Affairs University, and a senior fellow at the Policy Center for the New South.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Ker Gibbs

What Xi-Trump meeting could achieve

When United States President Donald Trump arrives in Beijing on May 13 for the summit with Chinese President Xi Jinping, it will mark his second visit to China as president, following his first trip in 2017. The symbolism is significant.

I have spent most of my adult life in China, and served as president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai during the Barack Obama, Trump, and Joe Biden administrations.

I have watched the US-China relationship from close range — through periods of genuine cooperation and periods of serious strain.

I have seen what works and what doesn't. And I have tried to capture those lessons in my recent book about China.

The most important lesson is also the simplest: when the US and China cooperate, both countries benefit, and the global economy prospers. When they don't, everyone loses.

The summit comes at a difficult moment that is becoming even more complicated. A trade war that began years ago has damaged both sides more than either is ready to admit.

Tariffs have disrupted supply chains, raised costs for consumers and businesses, and generated uncertainty that keeps investors on the sidelines. China has adapted — its exports have diversified, its domestic market has absorbed some of the pressure — but the costs are real. US farmers, retailers, and technology companies have felt them too.

The conflict in Iran has added a new layer of complexity. The war has reshaped the diplomatic landscape in ways that cannot be ignored.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which around 20 percent of the world's oil and gas supplies passed, has been effectively closed.

China and the US have different approaches to the crisis. That is an uncomfortable position for a relationship that needs stability.

Beijing has made its intentions clear: Foreign Minister Wang Yi met with Iranian counterpart Abbas Araghchi in Beijing last week and called for a comprehensive ceasefire.

Beijing does not want chaos in the Middle East. It does not want a closed Strait of Hormuz. It does not want the disruption to global trade that this conflict produces. On these points, Chinese and US interests are more aligned than the headlines suggest.

This is important, because the two countries have worked constructively together in the past, including on Iran.

In 2015, the US, China, Russia and European partners negotiated an Iran nuclear agreement known as the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action. After the deal was signed, the then US president Barack Obama's Energy Secretary Ernest Moniz made a stop in Shanghai, where he met with a group from the American Chamber of Commerce.

Moniz was one of the key negotiators, along with the then US Deputy Secretary of State Wendy Sherman and then-Secretary of State John Kerry, and told us that China had played an important and constructive role throughout more than two years of difficult negotiations.

This example demonstrates that the US and China can work together to resolve difficult problems of mutual concern even in an environment defined by competition and mistrust.

On the conflict in the Middle East, as Iran's largest trading partner, Beijing's voice carries weight in Tehran.

When China's foreign minister makes it clear that a resumption of hostilities is unacceptable, it conveys a distinct and constructive perspective.

Beijing has demonstrated a willingness to use this influence positively. The summit represents an opportunity to build on this role.

What are the realistic expectations from the talks?

A tactical trade agreement is the most likely outcome: agricultural purchases, energy commitments, adjustments to tariffs in specific categories, perhaps progress on rare earth supply chains. These are useful and genuinely important.

Businesses on both sides need predictability. Markets need stability. The Busan agreement of October 2025 provided a framework; the Beijing summit can build on it.

Progress on structural questions is important. Neither side has yet articulated a plan for how the two economies are supposed to coexist over the long term — the role of US companies in the Chinese market, the governance of technology competition, the rules by which two very different economic systems can coexist without constant friction.

We need a mutual understanding of what the relationship is for, and where it is supposed to go.

During the earlier days of reform and opening up, the path forward seemed clear: integration, mutual prosperity, and growing interdependence. The context of the relationship has evolved fundamentally.

The absence of a shared map is, in my view, the biggest obstacle to a stable relationship — more than any specific trade dispute or technology restriction.

The vacuum is filled with suspicion, and suspicion produces exactly the kind of zero-sum thinking that makes every problem harder to solve.

I have spent four decades watching this relationship evolve — from the optimism in the past to the competition of today.

The relationship is more resilient than its worst moments suggest, and more fragile than its best moments imply.

The two countries are bound together by trade, by history, and by the shared reality that neither can afford the consequences of genuine rupture.

The summit can help do something valuable: demonstrate that both sides prefer management to confrontation, stability to chaos, and dialogue over angry isolation.

In a relationship so consequential, that is not a small achievement. It is the foundation on which everything else must be built.

The author is the former president of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai and an executive-in-residence at the Center for Asia Pacific Studies in the University of San Francisco.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Yu Minming and Yan Xuedong

Chinese expertise supports high-quality BRI cooperation

By bringing world-class experts to Southwest Jiaotong University, Danish scholar Frede Blaabjerg, a 2025 recipient of the China Friendship Award and chief expert of the university's "111" innovation base for railway electrification and automation, has helped build a premier international academic team.

For an institution with a 130-year legacy in rail transportation, internationalization has become a two-way track: it involves welcoming global talent while projecting its own expertise onto the global stage.

In advancing the Belt and Road Initiative, universities need to transcend their roles as mere classrooms or technical exporters. They have to become dynamic nexuses that weave together education, innovation, talent and global standards.

To this end, Southwest Jiaotong University has engineered a multi-dimensional global strategy, a five-fold framework that integrates education, science, talent, standards and services into a singular engine for international development.

The success of high-quality BRI cooperation rests upon coordinated development, and at the heart of that coordination are people.

As the primary engines of talent cultivation, universities must respond to the needs of partner countries by establishing prestigious educational brands and cross-border training platforms.

In doing so, they enable the fluid flow of resources, fostering the high-level, interdisciplinary talent essential for today's mega-projects.

For universities specialized in rail, this necessitates capitalizing on their unique heritage and technical prowess. Such institutions should center their efforts on consolidating premier educational resources to pilot an open, "one-to-many" model of international cooperation.

In tandem, they need to address the demand for railway professionals in BRI partner countries by developing joint training systems anchored in dual institutions, dual supervisors and dual certification. This framework ought to span the entire academic spectrum, from undergraduate to doctoral studies, while also encompassing non-degree training and professional development.

Education is at its core a commitment to people-to-people connectivity, which serves as the social foundation of high-quality BRI cooperation. In this mission, universities provide far more than professional expertise. They align perspectives and bridge cultural divides, building the human trust that ensures lasting international cooperation.

For these reasons, international talent cultivation belongs within the wider landscape of China's diplomacy and national talent strategy.

This calls for offering rigorous international degree programs. As a vanguard of this mission, Southwest Jiaotong University has spearheaded national initiatives to train elite transportation engineering talent for BRI partner countries.

As the sole institution in Sichuan province authorized by the Ministry of Commerce to nurture BRI talent, the university has trained over 7,000 international students from 58 countries and regions through its English-medium programs. Many graduates have since emerged as leaders in their home countries' transportation sectors, serving as vital links of friendship with China.

Beyond the cultivation of talent, high-quality BRI cooperation requires more than capital and infrastructure. It demands the harmonization of rules and standards. Just as the university prepares the professionals to lead these projects, it also provides the technical frameworks that make cross-border partnership possible.

Through their technical depth and research capacity, universities are uniquely positioned to support the entire value chain from standard-setting to validation, certification, and technical services.

In this capacity, universities can actively support China's pursuit for standards connectivity under the BRI and help establish regional platforms for railway standards coordination. Such efforts allow standards to move past mere regulation, acting instead to facilitate technological compatibility and industrial integration.

The viability of BRI cooperation hinges not only on infrastructure but also on the development of local skills to sustain it. Universities excel at translating China's modernization experience and technical expertise into local capacity. This shift represents the essential transition from providing short-term assistance to driving long-term, self-sustaining growth.

Rail-focused universities need to support capacity building in developing countries by instituting multi-level training systems for government officials, technical specialists and frontline workers.

Such programs reinforce the international railway training network while diversifying cooperation across emerging sectors and collaborative models, ensuring that the BRI partnerships deliver tangible and lasting benefits to local communities.

Scientific and technological innovation is a primary driver of high-quality BRI cooperation. As hubs of research and innovation, universities should utilize their specialized infrastructure and expertise to provide technical advisory services and practical solutions for major projects. In doing so, they transform Chinese scientific achievements into shared progress for the global railway sector.

Achieving this requires deeper integration into global innovation networks. Rail-focused universities are expected to play a more active part in international bodies such as the International Union of Railways (UIC) and the Organization for Co-operation between Railways (OSJD), contributing to the formulation of international railway training standards and building joint laboratories with leading overseas institutions. Through sustained cooperation and technical support, they can resolve complex engineering challenges in BRI projects, positioning Chinese railway technology to further advance global development.

High-quality BRI cooperation is a systemic undertaking. The value of universities surpasses the delivery of resources and technology, as it stems from their capacity to build platforms, bring together partners, and maintain the long-term sustainability of collaborative efforts.

Far from being peripheral actors, these institutions stand as architects in building a global community with a shared future.

Moving forward, universities, especially those with distinctive rail expertise, should remain dedicated to national strategic goals while expanding the scope of their international reach.

By doing so, they can bolster high-quality BRI cooperation and help build a more interconnected and prosperous world.

Yu Minming is Party secretary and Yan Xuedong is president of Southwest Jiaotong University.
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GLOBAL VIEWS

LIU WEN AND GUAN ZHONGQI

Real-world solutions

China's cooperation with Belt and Road partners in affordable and adaptable AI paves way for more inclusive and integrated digital governance

As the global artificial intelligence landscape evolves at breakneck speed amid intense races, China is emerging as a key driver of inclusive, affordable digital cooperation. Under the Belt and Road Initiative, it is forging a new model of complementary and mutually beneficial collaboration that links technological strengths with real-world development needs.



Liu Wen



Guan Zhongqi

China's AI industry has expanded rapidly over the past two years, building two core advantages that underpin its growing role in global digital cooperation.

The first is its complete industry chain, supported by massive computing power and vibrant AI application activities that can effectively meet surging global demand.

Data from OpenRouter — a platform widely used by developers to access AI models — for the week from April 6 to 12 show that the weekly token consumption of China's large-scale AI models reached 10.3 trillion, compared with 2.95 trillion of the United States and ranking first worldwide. Notably, Chinese models — Qwen 3.6 Plus, DeepSeek V3.2 and Step 3.5 Flash — are among the world's top AI models. Token consumption serves as a key measure of real-world model deployment, user adoption and industrialization scale.

The second, and more critical, advantage is the unmatched cost efficiency in computing power. Leading Chinese large models deliver performance on a par with top global peers at a fraction of the cost. For example, the inference cost — the core expense of running generative models — of Chinese models such as MiniMax M2.5 and DeepSeek can be less than 20 percent of that of leading international counterparts.

This superior cost-performance ratio forms the cornerstone of China's global AI competitiveness, drastically lowering the threshold for developing countries to access cutting-edge AI technologies. Backed by integrated computing and power supply systems, this breakthrough eases the financial and technical burden of digital transformation, allowing developing economies to embrace digital progress at sustainable and affordable costs.

These advantages align well with a growing global need for AI technologies. On the demand side, the global appetite for AI applications is rising rapidly. Gartner projects that global AI spending could surge to $2.52 trillion in 2026, creating enormous market opportunities for China's growing and scalable AI industry.

China's AI industry has been going global in recent years, with a clear shift in its international focus. Its early global presence focused on infrastructure and hardware, including power facility construction and exports of intelligent robotic products. According to Chinese customs data, in 2025, the country's exports of industrial robots surged 48.7 percent year-on-year, making China a net exporter of industrial robots for the first time.

A defining structural shift took place in 2025, as China moved from hardware exports to delivering full-stack AI-powered services and solutions worldwide. Chinese cloud and AI enterprises have accelerated their global presence, with expanding overseas computing infrastructure and surging international business.

Major Chinese cloud providers have achieved high triple-digit growth in overseas AI-related revenue for consecutive quarters, with rapid expansion in international markets including Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. By the first quarter of 2026, numerous Chinese AI enterprises had established a commercial presence in more than 170 countries and regions, providing affordable computing services, intelligent applications and industry solutions for global users.



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

This trend confirms that China is exporting not just physical equipment, but AI solutions that embody large models, intelligent hardware and industry-specific applications, thereby laying a solid foundation for deeper, more integrated global AI cooperation.

For China's AI globalization, economies involved in the BRI represent the most dynamic and promising frontier, especially in Southeast Asia, the Middle East and Latin America. AI spending in these markets, including local investment in hardware, industry-specific smart solutions and cloud services, is projected to grow at an annual rate above 25 percent in the coming years. This robust demand aligns with China's technological strengths, industrial maturity and practical experience in large-scale AI applications, creating ideal conditions for deepened cooperation.

Unlike traditional one-way technology transfer, China's AI cooperation with partners engaged in the BRI is problem-oriented and tailored to local needs.

To help partners avoid the heavy cost of building independent data centers, China provides flexible token-based computing services customized to national conditions. It deploys targeted AI solutions for key industries and livelihood sectors, and coordinates the planning of computing, network and power infrastructure to support sustainable digital development.

In practice, China's cost-efficient AI has delivered tangible economic benefits and markedly improved operational efficiency across BRI markets. At key China-Europe freight train hubs such as Xi'an International Port Station and Manzhouli Port, AI-powered intelligent scheduling, automated container handling and cross-border digital clearance systems have cut transit times by more than 30 percent, according to China State Railway Group. On Silk Road e-commerce platforms, the use of AI tools has helped small and medium-sized enterprises in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Central Asia and the Middle East increase sales by 30 to 80 percent and significantly improve their profitability, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Beyond short-term economic gains, China's AI partnerships are helping BRI countries build long-term technological capacity and independent digital industries.

Chinese AI solutions can sharply reduce large model training costs for developing countries, enabling them to skip massive upfront infrastructure investment and catch up rapidly in the digital era, according to industry white papers and public data from leading Chinese AI enterprises.

China's AI cooperation also advances inclusive development and public welfare, helping narrow the global digital divide. China has carried out extensive digital technology training and capacity-building programs for partner countries. These programs cover AI agriculture, smart healthcare and cross-border e-commerce, supporting the growth of local digital industries.

Looking ahead, AI cooperation among the BRI partners will advance toward higher quality, sustainability and scalability. Token-based computing services are set to become a core growth engine. JP Morgan predicts in a report published in February that China's AI token consumption will increase by a staggering 369 times by 2030, unlocking huge long-term cooperative potential.

China's AI cooperation with its BRI partners has pioneered a win-win model for global digital governance that is affordable, adaptable and inclusive. By enabling developing nations to fully share in the dividends of AI progress, China also gains vital overseas market feedback that drives continuous technological iteration and industrial innovation.

Together, China and its BRI partners can build an open, inclusive and equitable global digital ecosystem, advance the integrated development of the global digital economy and promote shared prosperity for all countries in the digital age.

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MAO KEJI

Punching above its weight

India's AI Impact Summit demonstrates its knack for turning weakness into diplomatic edge

When Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government hosted the India Artificial Intelligence Impact Summit in New Delhi in February, the event was billed as a global gathering for the greater good. Under the theme "Prosperity and happiness for all", it drew world leaders and tech tycoons alike. By the end, 91 countries and international organizations had signed the New Delhi Declaration on AI Impact. For a country whose AI industry remains heavily dependent on imported GPUs, whose foundational models lag behind those of the United States and China, and which suffers acutely from a brain drain and automation's disruptions, the feat was impressive. India had somehow seized the agenda on one of the defining technologies of the age.



The same pattern is visible elsewhere. In 2015, India, together with France, launched the International Solar Alliance. Today the organization, headquartered in India, counts more than 100 states as members and is the first intergovernmental body with its secretariat on Indian soil. Yet India's own solar industry, though growing fast in installed capacity, remains technologically dependent — above all on Chinese components and supply chains. Once again, limited hard power has not stopped New Delhi from claiming a prominent seat at the table.

The contrast is striking. In both artificial intelligence and solar energy, India's material capabilities fall well short of its diplomatic reach. What explains this ability to set the global agenda despite modest underlying strength? The answer lies in a deliberate strategy of narrative-shaping, geopolitical positioning and skillful packaging — what might be called India's "diplomatic wrapping" technique.

India's shortcomings in AI are no secret. The country imports virtually all its high-end computing power, its home-grown large language models trail international pioneers, and many of its best engineers work abroad. Yet during the New Delhi summit, the government turned these vulnerabilities into assets through a carefully orchestrated campaign.

First, it leaned heavily on its credentials as a heavyweight of the "Global South". By emphasizing AI applications tailored to developing countries and promoting the idea of "AI dividends for all", India positioned itself as a counterweight to Western-dominated rule-making. The widespread endorsement of the final declaration was partly the result of this framing: many poorer nations saw New Delhi as a more sympathetic interlocutor than Washington or Brussels.

Second, Indian officials shrewdly addressed the "technological anxiety" felt across much of the developing world. Talk of "sovereign AI" — national models attuned to local languages and data-privacy concerns — resonated strongly with countries wary of over-reliance on a handful of dominant platforms. Where Western discourse often dwells on existential risks or cutting-edge competition, India offered a friendlier, more inclusive vision.

Third, the summit served as an investment prospectus. By repeatedly touting India's vast market, youthful population and long-term potential, the government lured commitments from Google, OpenAI, Microsoft and others, as well as domestic conglomerates such as Adani, Reliance and Tata. Plans for massive data-center investments and the allocation of thousands of GPUs to local researchers were presented as proof of seriousness. In effect, India was trading political convening power and future market access for the capital and technology it currently lacks.

Finally, the event was wrapped in symbolism. India cast itself as a trailblazer for the Global South: the first developing country to host a major AI summit on this scale. The message was clear — technological leapfrogging is possible even from a position of relative weakness.

The playbook was tested earlier with the International Solar Alliance. Although India's solar capacity has surged past 100 GW, the industry still relies heavily on imported panels and equipment, much of it from China. The alliance, launched on the sidelines of the 2015 Paris climate conference, aims to mobilize $1 trillion in investment for solar deployment across the "sunshine belt" of developing nations. India provides the headquarters and political leadership, but the financial burden is shared through voluntary contributions and private-sector involvement — a "light-asset" model that minimizes New Delhi's own exposure.

Here too, India skillfully deployed the Global South narrative. It framed solar power as a tool for energy security, poverty reduction and climate resilience, while highlighting the financing and technology barriers faced by poorer countries. Initiatives such as "One Sun, One World, One Grid" helped extend India's reach. Even though China leads the manufacturing of solar hardware, India succeeded in positioning the International Solar Alliance as a Southern-led platform for cooperation rather than a mere technical contest.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

India's approach is neither accidental nor confined to these two domains. Four elements stand out. The first is the identity leverage. With its huge population, political credentials and developing-country status, India is unusually well placed to speak for the Global South at a time when trust in Western-led institutions has frayed. By championing "inclusion", "sovereignty" and "equitable access", New Delhi converts numerical weight and moral framing into bargaining power.

The second is narrative dexterity. India has a talent for reframing weakness as virtue. In AI, it presents "sovereign" models as a democratic alternative to great-power dominance. In solar energy, it portrays itself as a fellow traveler rather than a technological laggard. At the same time, it sells a compelling vision of future returns to attract today's investment.

The third is geopolitical opportunism. India exploits the strategic movements of major powers and Western unease, to widen its room for maneuver. It courts Western capital and technology while burnishing its non-aligned credentials.

The fourth is timing. Both AI governance and the global energy transition are still in flux. New Delhi has moved quickly to occupy the institutional vacuum, building low-cost platforms that deliver high symbolic returns.

India's "packaging strategy" demonstrates that in an era of fluid global governance, soft power, narrative control and convening ability can amplify limited material resources. By creating forums, shaping the conversation and mobilizing coalitions, a country can achieve influence disproportionate to its technological or industrial heft.

Yet there are clear limits. Packaging cannot indefinitely substitute for genuine capability. India's brain drain continues, its technological dependence remains, and the gap with the US and China in frontier AI is wide. The real test for India will be whether it can convert the diplomatic spotlight into durable domestic progress — whether the data centers and laboratories materialize, whether talent begins to flow home, and whether "sovereign AI" becomes more than a slogan.

For other emerging powers, particularly China, the Indian example offers both inspiration and caution. Hard strengths in manufacturing, supply chains and cost control remain formidable assets. But they must be married to persuasive storytelling and institutional entrepreneurship if they are to be fully translated into agenda-setting power. In the contest for global influence, presentation matters — but so does the product inside the wrapping.

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BUSINESS



Vehicles await export from a port in Yantai, Shandong province, on Monday. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Car exports maintain strong momentum in April

By **LI JIAYING**
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As the country's auto industry further deepens its global footprint, China's automobile exports maintained strong momentum in April, driven by steady shipments of new energy vehicles and accelerated overseas expansion by major domestic carmakers.

China exported around 901,000 vehicles in April, up 74.4 percent year-on-year, including 430,000 NEVs, whose exports more than doubled from a year earlier, according to data released by the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers on Monday.

Chen Shihua, deputy secretary-general of the association, said vehicle exports have continued to grow rapidly this year, providing stable support for the broader auto industry. Chen added that the NEV market has maintained steady momentum, with NEVs accounting for 53.2 percent of total new vehicle sales in April.

The export growth comes as Chinese NEV makers continue to play a contributing role in the global market. Data from the China Passenger Car Association show that Chinese brands accounted for 61 percent of the global new energy passenger vehicle market in the first quarter.

"Although lower than the 68 percent peak recorded in 2025, the figure still reflects the country's leading position worldwide," said Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the CPCA.

The association said the top 10 overseas markets for Chinese NEV exports in the first quarter were Brazil, Belgium, the United Kingdom, the United Arab Emirates, Italy, Australia, Germany, Thailand, Spain and South Korea. South America, Europe, the Middle East and Southeast Asia emerged as the main sources of incremental growth.

The rapid rise of Chinese NEVs, combined with elevated global fuel prices, is accelerating the global shift toward greener consumption solutions. According to CPCA data, the global penetration rate of NEVs continued to rise, reaching 20.2 percent in the first quarter.

The growing demand is also reflected in overseas consumer markets. According to a report by The Straits Times, inquiries for electric vehicles priced below 30,000 euros ($35,241) on Germany's major automotive marketplace Mobile.de jumped 87 percent since early March.

Meanwhile, in the UK, demand for used electric vehicles also surged. Data from Autotrader, the country's largest automotive marketplace, show that inquiries for EVs aged between five and seven years tripled in April compared with a year earlier, significantly outpacing interest in newer and more expensive models.

Against this backdrop, leading Chinese automakers are accelerating their overseas expansion, with the focus transferring from simply exporting products to building localized industrial ecosystems.

BYD is advancing production projects in Hungary and Malaysia, while Chery Automobile recently launched its first overseas regional operation center in Barcelona, Spain. XPeng also said it plans to expand overseas manufacturing capacity this year, targeting markets including Europe, Southeast Asia and Latin America.

At the same time, carmakers are stepping up overseas research and development plans. Xiaomi Auto has identified Europe as its first major overseas market, while Leapmotor and Geely have recently expanded engineering and innovation operations in Germany and other parts of Europe to support long-term global growth.

Firms fire up production for FIFA World Cup

By **ZHONG NAN**
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With less than a month remaining before the FIFA World Cup 2026 kicks off in Mexico City, a wave of Chinese-made products, from footballs and flags to fan jerseys and drinkware, is already flowing into the tournament's host countries and beyond.

The tournament between June 11 and July 19 will be the first World Cup to feature 48 teams, with matches across 16 cities in the United States, Canada and Mexico.

In April, workers at the production workshop of Qingdao Wonderful Flag Industry Co, a Qingdao, Shandong province-based flag maker, were busy sewing and assembling national flags of countries participating in the World Cup.

"On April 1, right after the final World Cup qualifying match concluded and the list of the 48 teams was confirmed, orders flooded in almost immediately," said Xiao Chang'ai, chairman of the company.

According to Xiao, the company is now running at full capacity to fulfill orders for national flags, covering both traditional soccer powerhouses such as Brazil, Argentina and Germany, as well as newly qualified teams making their World Cup debut.

"By the end of March, most flags for traditional powerhouse teams had already been produced and shipped," she said. "But the real challenge for us will begin once the tournament starts in June."

As the competition unfolds, overseas buyers closely track match results and place orders almost in real time, often demanding delivery within just one or two days, Xiao added.

To keep pace with the surge in last-minute demand, the company has all production lines running round the clock, with daily output now exceeding 100,000 flags of various sizes, according to Qingdao Customs.

Ningbo Eco-will Technology Co, a manufacturer of luggage tags, ceramic cups and insulated tumblers in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, saw its exports to the US, Canada and Mexico jump 47 percent year-on-year to 40 million yuan ($5.89 million) in the first four months of 2026, as local sellers actively stocked up on merchandise ahead of the World Cup sales season.

Qiu Chunmiao, the company's foreign trade manager, said the World Cup has significantly boosted the firm's exports of sports-themed products this year, especially insulated tumblers carrying officially licensed soccer team logos.

Ningbo Customs said exports of sporting goods and equipment through Ningbo's ports reached 5.74 billion yuan between January and April, up 11.34 percent on a yearly basis.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said China's flexible manufacturing ecosystem offers exporters a clear advantage in responding to short-cycle demand generated by major sporting events.

Wen Congjian, chairman of Yiwu Danna Silk Import and Export Co, a Yiwu, Zhejiang-based apparel maker that designs patented soccer fan jerseys, said Chinese companies are no longer competing solely on volume, but are placing greater emphasis on value-added products.

"With patent protection, we can better protect our designs and lift product prices by around 20 percent," Wen said, adding that the company has secured overseas patents for more than 40 fan jersey designs related to the World Cup.

Yiwu's exports of sporting goods and equipment reached 2.83 billion yuan in the first quarter, up 12 percent year-on-year, data from Yiwu Customs showed.

Recovery of consumer mkt seen accelerating

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Indicators that the country's consumer market is beginning to recover are emerging, and one unlikely measure is the price of fried chicken. At a financial seminar on May 8, Wu Mianqing, CEO of BigOne Lab, said the so-called "KFC Index", which tracks average transaction prices at the fast-food chain across China, is showing signs of recovery nationwide.

Over the past two years, KFC's per-transaction spending has steadily declined, reflecting broader consumer caution: shoppers were purchasing more but paying less. That trend began to stabilize in the fourth quarter of 2025, and Wu sees potential for positive growth in 2026.

"If pricing trends at a foundational food and beverage leader shift, it is often an early signal of consumption recovery," he told the Shanghai Observer.

Macroeconomic data provide further support. Total retail sales of consumer goods in China rose in the first quarter by 2.4 percent year-on-year, accelerating by 0.7 percentage point when compared with that of the fourth quarter of 2025. Economists have debated a "downgrading" of Chinese consumption in recent years, yet the rebound in retail data has prompted a reassessment of that narrative.

Qin Shuo, a financial commentator, told the Shanghai Observer that the apparent softness is more structural than cyclical. While headline CPI growth has remained subdued, he said that consumption is not shrinking — its volume, diversity and complexity continue to expand. Shoppers are spending across a broad range of goods, from high-end imported items to local lifestyle brands.

"Looking at the market in terms of physical goods, there is no downgrade," Qin said. Micro-level indicators also point to recovery in high-end consumption. Wu said that international luxury brands have experienced strong growth in China since the second half of 2025. Warming capital markets and diversified sources of consumer confidence are fueling renewed spending.

Luxury brands are increasingly treating China as a global testing ground. In the third quarter of its fiscal year 2026, ending March 28, Tapestry Group, the parent of Coach, reported 30 percent growth across the Asia-Pacific, with China surging 55 percent year-on-year. The company's net sales rose to $1.92 billion, up 21 percent, while net income jumped 69 percent to $344 million.

China is now Tapestry's largest market outside the United States.

Last quarter, Coach added 2.4 million new customers worldwide, with over 35 percent in the Generation Z segment. The brand has opened more than 350 stores across 90 Chinese cities, spanning tier-1 to tier-4 markets, with plans to expand into another 200 cities.

In addition, Liu Gongrun, deputy director at the CEIBS Lujiazui International Institute of Finance, told the Shanghai Observer that traditional metrics overlook the rapid growth of service consumption. In cities like Shanghai, where services make up roughly 80 percent of GDP, residents are spending on immersive experiences, cross-border livestreaming and other high-engagement offerings. Younger consumers, Liu added, are increasingly driven by cultural resonance and experience rather than by purely purchasing products.

Qin said that the combination of local innovation and demographic shifts has created a new rhythm for Chinese consumption: diversified, rational and innovative.

Nation vows to further trim local govt debt

10 trln yuan bond swap program helps cut hidden arrears to 7.4 trln yuan by '25

By **WANG KEJU**
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China has pledged to accelerate local government debt resolution, declaring that the current five-year 10 trillion yuan ($1.38 trillion) bond swap program is on track and will be completed on schedule.

The latest announcement follows an executive meeting of the State Council, the country's Cabinet, on Saturday, which reviewed progress on the sweeping debt-relief package launched in 2024.

The program, designed to run through 2028, allows local governments to issue bonds to replace outstanding hidden debt — a legacy of off-balance-sheet borrowing that had ballooned to 14.3 trillion yuan by end-2023.

By end-2024, data from the Ministry of Finance showed that hidden debt had fallen to about 10.5 trillion yuan, and according to estimates by Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, it further dropped to roughly 7.4 trillion yuan by late 2025.

As of early May this year, more than 1.3 trillion yuan of local government refinancing bonds had been issued to swap for remaining hidden debt, said local financial authorities.

"The debt-reduction effort has moved to routine supervision. Hidden debt has been sharply reduced, with several provinces completing their annual targets ahead of schedule and some achieving a 'zero hidden debt' goal," Luo said.

The average interest cost on swapped debt has fallen by more than 2.5 percentage points, and the share of high-interest and non-standard debt has declined, freeing up fiscal space for local governments, said the ministry.

The State Council meeting acknowledged that while initial results are encouraging, challenges remain.

Two priority areas for the next phase were identified: clearing overdue payments to enterprises — a persistent drag on business confidence — and managing the operating debt of local government financing vehicles (LGFVs).

"Local governments are still under financial strain, and some are unable to fully resolve arrears owed to businesses," said Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Orient Golden Credit Rating International.

Wang called for continued use of special bonds and other fiscal tools to settle these obligations,

> "Hidden debt has been sharply reduced, with several provinces completing their annual targets ahead of schedule and some achieving a 'zero hidden debt' goal."
>
> **Luo Zhiheng,** chief economist at Yuekai Securities

which he said are essential to "smooth the economic circulation and thus help stabilize the macroeconomy".

Policymakers are also turning greater attention to the operating debt of local government financing vehicles — a new front in the country's campaign to defuse financial risks.

Unlike hidden debt incurred implicitly by local governments, the operating debt of LGFVs arises from market-oriented investment and project activities, and is classified as standard corporate debt. The primary tool for resolving such debt is financial restructuring through banking and capital market institutions, not direct fiscal swaps, Luo said.

"Financing platforms have relatively weak cash flow and profitability. Under certain conditions, their operating debt could require implicit government guarantees. It is necessary to proactively resolve this through financial tools that lengthen maturities and optimize structures."

China, in this year's Government Work Report, has called for greater financial and fiscal support for debt restructuring, along with measures to facilitate the reform and transformation of LGFVs. Under the current resolution plan, many localities are pushing to complete the exit of all financing platforms by June 2027 — a key step to curb new hidden liabilities.

But Luo cautioned that the task is far from finished.

"Exiting the platform in name is not enough. The real challenge is the transition from financing platforms to industrial investment firms. That requires injecting quality assets, integrating local resources and building market-oriented incentives so that these entities can stand on their own."

Road to success



An aerial view shows the newly opened eight-lane elevated section of the G3 Beijing-Taipei Expressway crossing over railway lines in Anhui province, on Monday. The 107-kilometer Hefei-Xuzhou South Section expansion project, partially built by China Railway 24th Bureau Group Corp, officially opened to traffic on Saturday, upgrading the once-congested four-lane highway. As a key national transportation corridor connecting North China and the Yangtze River Delta, the project doubles the expressway's traffic capacity to over 80,000 vehicles per day, easing long-standing congestion and providing critical infrastructure support for the revitalization of northern Anhui and the integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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BUSINESS

Embodied intelligence enters real-world tests

Rapid advances in humanoid robotics moving sector away from technical showcases to commercialization

By LI JIAYING
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China's embodied intelligence sector is moving from technical showcases toward tougher tests of real-world commercialization, as rapid advances in humanoid robotics performance fuel both investor enthusiasm and rising expectations for practical industrial applications.

The trend was on full display at a humanoid robot half marathon in the tech hub Beijing E-Town, where autonomous robot "Lightning" completed the race in April in a net time of 50 minutes and 26 seconds.

The time was faster than the human men's half-marathon world record and cut nearly two-thirds off the 2:40:42 result posted by Tiangong Ultra, last year's robot champion.

The 21.0975-kilometer course featured flat roads, steep slopes, consecutive bends, speed bumps and other complex urban road conditions, including 22 regular curves and several near-90-degree turns, placing high demands on the robots' balance, path planning and joint response speed.

"A marathon on an urban course is an extreme stress test for core robot capabilities including motion control, autonomous navigation, endurance, heat dissipation, environmental adaptability and system reliability," said Liang Hongjun, an official of the intelligent manufacturing and equipment industry division at the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Economy and Information Technology.

Liang said the marathon provides a standardized task that allows teams to improve technologies around a common goal, complete a full technical route through competition and accelerate the application of results.

At the inaugural event a year ago, 20 teams took part and only six finished, with a completion rate of less than 30 percent. This year, the number of teams surged to more than 100, nearly five times the previous level, while the completion rate exceeded 45 percent.

"The leap in performance is essentially a comprehensive validation of hardware reliability, algorithmic stability and systems engineering capability," said Yan Weixin, chief scientist at Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute, adding that this is not a single-point breakthrough of any one technology, but rather the co-evolution of all relevant technical dimensions.

A clear trend seen at this year's half-marathon was the shift from remote-controlled running to autonomous navigation, with robots increasingly able to read the road, avoid obstacles and plan routes without human control.

Among more than 300 participating robots this year, autonomous-navigation entries accounted for nearly 40 percent. By contrast, last year, apart from the champion Tiangong Ultra, which used follow-based semi-autonomous navigation, all other teams relied on remote control.

To encourage more autonomous teams to finish, the race recorded real-time results for autonomous entries, while remote-controlled teams had their times multiplied by a factor of 1.2.

Zhao Mingguo, a researcher at the Department of Automation of Tsinghua University, said this year many teams had successfully transferred autonomous driving technologies from vehicles to robots, using lidar, pure-vision navigation and antennas to improve environmental perception.

"Which technological route will ultimately adapt best to different demands still requires further testing through more real-world tasks," Zhao said. "Over the next one to two years, indoor and outdoor robot navigation technologies are likely to advance even faster."

Behind the robots' improved performance lies rapid progress in core technologies. The winning Lightning robot developed by Chinese smartphone brand Honor delivered a maximum motor torque of 600 newton-meters, compared with about 420 newton-meters for last year's competitors.

In addition, its battery system supported more than 10 kilometers of running on a single charge, requiring only one battery replacement during the entire race.

Thermal management technologies have also advanced significantly. While many robots in last year's half marathon relied on simple air-cooling systems, Lightning adopted a liquid-cooling system capable of sustaining motor speeds above 20,000 revolutions per minute while circulating more than four liters of coolant per minute, similar to how blood circulation regulates human body temperature.

"Judging from the race performance, China's humanoid robots have moved beyond the entry-level stage of 'being able to run' and entered a more practical stage of 'running steadily and farther'," said Hao Lulu, a senior analyst at CCID Consulting.

Hao said some humanoid robots can now handle slopes and sharp turns independently, while leading autonomous-navigation models have real-time obstacle avoidance capabilities and dynamic balance algorithms that support stable posture adjustment at high speed.

Beyond the racetrack, momentum is also building in capital markets. According to the Embodied Intelligence Development Report 2025 released by the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, China's embodied intelligence and robotics sector recorded 744 investment deals in 2025, with total financing reaching 73.54 billion yuan ($10.82 billion).

Since the start of 2026, total financing in embodied intelligence has climbed to more than 34.5 billion yuan, according to financial information platform Sina Finance, with as many as 23 companies entering the "10-billion-yuan club".

Notably, the national AI industry investment fund made its first move in the embodied intelligence track by participating in a 2.5 billion yuan financing round for major humanoid manufacturer Galbot — a move widely viewed by the industry as a sign that embodied intelligence is increasingly a key component of the country's national AI strategy.

"The robust growth of China's robotics industry is the result of multiple factors working together, including top-level national strategic planning, industrial policy support, and capital market responsiveness," said Yu Huan, a fund manager at Great Wall Fund.

Meanwhile, a growing number of robotics companies are preparing for capital market listings. Unitree Robotics had its STAR Market IPO application accepted by the Shanghai Stock Exchange in March, while companies including Leju Robotics, Deep Robotics and Galaxea are also accelerating restructuring plans ahead of potential listings.

However, even as investment enthusiasm rises, commercialization remains a major challenge for the industry.

According to consultancy firm IDC, global humanoid robot shipments exceeded 18,000 units in 2025, led largely by Chinese manufacturers. Yet more than 85 percent of shipments were concentrated in entertainment performances, education, scientific research and exhibition-oriented applications focused mainly on technology demonstrations and interaction.

Jiang Han, a senior analyst at market consultancy Pangoal, echoed that the current challenge remains that although leading companies have announced large-scale deliveries, many shipments still go to universities and research institutions for algorithm research, rather than entering industrial or commercial settings as production tools.

"The industry has yet to form scaled purchasing based on productivity demand," Jiang said.

"In 2025, many so-called commercial orders in the industry were essentially display purchases for public relations and data-collection partnerships, rather than true productivity replacement," said Liu Yang, co-founder of humanoid robot manufacturer Infiforce, in an earlier interview.

"The harsh reality of 2026 is that industrial clients are no longer satisfied with watching your robot do a somersault," Liu said. "They want to know whether a humanoid robot can operate continuously in their factory for three months or six months, whether it can cut costs and improve efficiency, and whether it can generate repeat purchases ... Frankly speaking, no company in the industry has fully passed this proof-of-concept stage. This is a matter of survival."

Liu Dong, founder of XYZ Embodied AI Co, predicted that the industry will see growing divergence in application scenarios this year.

"Applications in industrial and specialized settings are poised for a small-scale boom. In these scenarios, customers are highly willing to pay, and the solutions offer high reusability and fault tolerance," Liu Dong said.

"We may see the emergence of 'hidden champions' in some vertical sectors in this field," he added. "However, for commercial and household scenarios, there is still a final stretch to complete before large-scale adoption truly arrives."





Above: Humanoid robots participate in a half marathon in Beijing E-Town, a hub for high-tech industries, on April 19. The race placed high demands on the robots' balance, path planning and joint response speed. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY
Left: A man trains humanoid robots at a 4S store for heterogeneous humanoid robots in Zhengzhou, Henan province, on May 6. LI JIANAN / XINHUA

Robot rentals set path for mass-market adoption

By LI JIAYING

As humanoid robots increasingly move into real-world settings such as tourism, transportation, retail and security, robot rental services are emerging as a fast-growing business model that many in the industry see as one of the earliest scalable paths toward commercialization.

"Rental services are currently the most suitable entry point," said Li Yiyan, CEO of Botshare, a domestic robot rental platform backed by robotics manufacturer AgiBot. Li said that while humanoid robots still face limitations in generalized capabilities and large-scale commercial adoption remains in its early stages, the long-term opportunities could extend far beyond the hardware itself.

"In the future, when robots enter homes, factories and security services on a larger scale, an enormous aftermarket ecosystem will emerge," Li said. "Secondhand robot trading, maintenance, repair and door-to-door services could all eventually be completed through robot rental platforms."

The rapid rise of the sector is already reflected in business registration data. According to Chinese corporate database platform Qichacha, China registered 38,200 robot rental-related enterprises in 2025 alone, up 55.7 percent year-on-year and marking the highest annual total in the past 10 years. As of April 2, another 9,114 related companies had already been registered nationwide this year.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said humanoid robot leasing has only emerged as a new business model over the past year, but is already creating a new form of the sharing economy.

"Although the user market remains relatively small for now, robot leasing helps expand application scenarios while also generating valuable operational data," Pan said. "That data can in turn help optimize humanoid robot algorithms and product design."

As the market heats up, more platform companies are entering the race.

Late last year, Botshare surpassed 200,000 registered users within three weeks of launch and recorded more than 200 orders per day on average. Chinese e-commerce giant JD has also expanded into self-operated robot leasing services, covering embodied robots, robot dogs and exoskeleton robots.

Yet despite growing attention surrounding the sector, profitability pressures are also becoming increasingly evident.

Daily rental prices for humanoid robots have fallen sharply from around 30,000 yuan ($4,415) in the early stages of the market in early 2025 to roughly 3,000 yuan today, with some entry-level models renting for less than 1,000 yuan per day.

For example, Unitree's G1 humanoid robot is typically rented out at a daily rate ranging from 2,500 yuan to 3,500 yuan, while its dancing-capable U2 model costs around 4,000 yuan per day. The company's robotic dogs are generally priced at 400 to 500 yuan per day for rental services.

At the same time, many companies still rely on an operational model that pairs each robot with a dedicated technician, pushing up labor, logistics and maintenance costs.

"Competition in the industry is no longer simply about who can secure more short-term orders," Li of Botshare said. "The real challenge is who can first establish nationwide service coverage, delivery standards and risk-control systems, becoming the preferred gateway for both clients and manufacturers entering real-world scenarios."

Against this backdrop, the company is already accelerating overseas expansion in search of higher-margin markets.

In April, Botshare initiated its global network covering key regions including Europe, North America, Asia-Pacific and the Middle East. The first phase of the expansion spans 13 countries, including Germany, France, the United States, Malaysia, Thailand and the United Arab Emirates.

Li said the average daily rental price for a humanoid robot in European countries ranges from 2,000 to 3,000 euros ($2,350-3,525), while prices in North America can reach as high as $6,000 per day.

"Regions with higher labor costs naturally have stronger demand for robots to replace human labor," Li said. "Labor costs in Europe and North America are far higher than in China, which means demand for robotics applications could also be greater there."

According to industry analysts, the rise of robot leasing platforms signals accelerating commercialization across the sector.

Li Junlan, senior analyst for robotics and the internet of things at global market consultancy IDC, said the rental model can significantly lower trial and procurement barriers for customers.

"It allows small and medium-sized industry players, as well as companies still in the observation stage, to access and test robotic products more easily, which helps the market expand more quickly," Li said.

Looking ahead, she expects China's robot leasing market to continue expanding in 2026, supported by favorable policy conditions and growing enterprise demand for cost reduction and labor substitution.

"Companies facing pressure to improve efficiency and cope with labor shortages are expected to be most willing to explore human-machine collaboration," she said.

Still, hurdles remain before the sector can achieve sustainable large-scale growth.

Pan said that the industry continues to face challenges such as insufficient standardization in delivery and maintenance services, limited adaptation to specific use scenarios, exaggerated marketing claims and lengthy repair cycles.

"The key to scaling up the industry lies in whether it can build a stable and trustworthy service system," he said.



A boy learns to use a remote control to operate a robot dog developed by Unitree Robotics at a shopping mall in Shanghai on May 5. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

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CHINA

More educators embrace AI as a teaching aid

Report shows digital divide between rural and urban teachers is narrowing

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
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A report on primary and secondary school teachers' digital literacy shows that artificial intelligence is rapidly becoming a routine teaching aid in China, while the urban-rural gap in digital skills continues to narrow.

The report, released on Tuesday at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference in Zhejiang province's Hangzhou, is based on a large-sample assessment of 530,000 teachers across 19 provincial-level regions. It found that 14.77 percent of teachers use AI tools every day, while only 3.41 percent have never used them.

According to the report, 85.17 percent of teachers believe AI helps expand teaching resources, and 81 percent say it saves lesson preparation time. AI tools embedded in smart teaching platforms are the most popular, used by 82.68 percent of teachers, followed by general-purpose large language models, used by 76.2 percent.

Most teachers, however, are still in the early stages of exploration. About one-third use AI only for simple assistance, while another third use AI in targeted ways during specific teaching segments. Fewer than 20 percent integrate AI throughout the entire teaching process, and only about 10 percent use AI to innovate teaching models.

The report also highlights a narrowing digital divide between urban and rural educators. On 13 indicators, the gap between the two groups is less than 5 percentage points. In eastern regions, more than 90 percent of teachers hold a positive attitude toward AI, while in central and western regions, the figure exceeds 70 percent.

With regard to training needs, most teachers want practical guidance on resource development, basic operations and application scenarios. Nearly half have called for regulations and ethical guidelines for AI in education.

"When AI handles routine tasks, teachers can focus on nurturing people," said Wang Wei, head of the education bureau of Futian district in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

The district has created hands-on AI toolkits for all 19 subjects and uploaded them to the national smart education platform for teachers in other regions to share. More than 80 workshops have generated over 1,170 AI application cases covering 20 provincial regions, he said.

Futian is also developing a teacher AI literacy framework with 43 observation points and has issued guidelines outlining encouraged, restricted and prohibited AI uses.

"Preparing future teachers for future schools is not simply teaching them how to use tools," Wang said. "It is helping them complete a profound role transformation — from transmitters of knowledge to designers of learning, from followers of technology to trendsetters in human-machine collaboration, and from single-subject teachers to cross-disciplinary innovators."

"What truly determines a nation's competitiveness in the next two decades?" asked Zhao Yixin, a senior executive at Chinese tech giant Huawei.

His answer: the "AI talent dividend", whose foundation lies in classrooms and on teachers' podiums.

Zhao warned of a growing "AI generation gap" — students are using AI while many teachers still explain AI concepts with slides. Huawei has proposed a "teachers first" strategy and built an AI teaching practice platform to help teachers become AI designers, collaboration nodes and decision-makers.

The company has also partnered with Zhejiang Normal University to embed AI literacy into preservice teacher training, compressing days of lesson preparation into hours.

"Teachers will not be replaced," Zhao said. "But teachers who do not use AI may be replaced. The responsibility to educate will always remain in teachers' hands."

Selfless service



The nursing school of Shandong Medical and Pharmaceutical University in Yantai, Shandong province, holds a capping ceremony on Monday to promote the noble spirit of saving lives and selfless devotion. This event preceded the 115th International Nurses Day on Tuesday.
TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Portraits preserve memories of Long March martyrs

NANCHANG — For more than nine decades, Zhong Xindi knew her father mostly through fading memory. He left home when she was 3 to join the Red Army, and later died during the Long March, the historic military maneuver in modern Chinese history. There were no photographs to remember him by, no familiar face for the family to hold onto, only a name, and the knowledge that he never returned.

Then, a little more than a month ago, students from Anhui Normal University brought the 94-year-old a portrait of her father, Zhong Yanzhu, when he was young.

"Dad, I finally saw your face again," Zhong said, stroking the painted cheek with a trembling hand as tears ran down her face.

In Ruijin, East China's Jiangxi province, absences like Zhong's are woven into the memory of the Long March. Over 90 years ago, the county had a population of about 240,000. Some 113,000 people joined the Red Army, and more than 30,000 local soldiers set out on the Long March. More than 10,800 of them died along the way. Many left no photograph behind for loved ones.

Now, a project to paint portraits of Red Army martyrs is giving some families a face to attach to stories passed down for generations. The first batch included 151 portraits, created by college students, not from imagination, but from careful reconstruction.

Qiu Tian, one of the Anhui Normal University students involved in the project, said the team first contacted the relatives of martyrs and studied photographs of their children to determine basic facial contours. They then revised the portraits repeatedly, drawing on family descriptions of the martyrs' eyes, expressions and habitual looks, until relatives felt the likeness was right.

"I thought he would surely smile when he 'met' his family again, so I gave him a slight grin," Qiu said.

Each portrait, he said, was a dialogue across generations, and a form of human care that technology alone could not provide.

The portrait project is part of a broader effort in Jiangxi to bring names, faces and family ties back to Red Army martyrs whose traces were long obscured by war. For decades, finding a martyr's relatives often meant searching genealogies, combing through archives, and interviewing elderly villagers — work that could take years and still yield no results.

That, however, is beginning to change. Big data comparison, DNA identification, cross-provincial archive sharing, and social media have created new paths for verifying long-fragmented records.

Located less than 80 kilometers from Ruijin, in Yudu county, best known as the starting point of the Long March, over 80,000 Red Army soldiers crossed the Yudu River and embarked on a roughly 12,500-km trek later described by American journalist Harrison Salisbury as "a great human epic".

The martyrs' memorial hall in Yudu has registered more than 16,000 identified martyrs. Hundreds of other names, scattered along the Long March route, are still being checked.

In the past, information on a single Jiangxi martyr might have been dispersed across archives in several provinces, making verification slow and uncertain. With a shared database along the Long March route, the process can now be shortened. In 2024, Yudu verified the identities of 47 martyrs who died in the Battle of Xiangjiang River through the mechanism.

Social media has also helped turn once-improbable searches into possible reunions.

After seeing a short video of volunteers searching for the relatives of martyr Yang Yanting, Zhong Baoqing, curator of the Ruijin revolutionary martyrs memorial hall, began reviewing historical documents. He eventually confirmed Yang's hometown and relatives. In September 2025, Yang's nephew came to Ruijin and touched his uncle's name on the martyrs' wall.

"My father had always hoped his elder brother would come home," he said.

According to incomplete statistics, among the over 100,000 martyrs in the province's Ganzhou city, more than 40,000 have been marked as whereabouts unknown. In March, the city launched a campaign to verify more martyrs' information by establishing a unified database after integrating resources from multiple departments.

As this year marks the 90th anniversary of the Long March victory, Jiangxi has pledged to step up efforts to verify martyrs' information and help more of them regain their names, family ties and portraits, according to the provincial veterans affairs department.

At the end of the martyrs' wall in Yudu's memorial hall, a large blank space remains. An inscription explains that tens of thousands of martyrs are still without verified names, and that the emptiness stands for their sacred memory.

Each new nameplate added to the wall and each portrait delivered to a family fills a small part of that blank.

XINHUA

Tajik president honored by Peking University

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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> "We hope more Tajik students will be encouraged by the president's visit to study in China."
>
> **Rustamov Badriddin,** sophomore majoring in sociology at Peking University

Tajikistan's President Emomali Rahmon was awarded an honorary professorship by Peking University on Tuesday in a ceremony highlighting growing academic and people-to-people exchanges between China and Tajikistan.

During the ceremony, He Guangcai, chair of the Peking University Council, conferred a commemorative plaque, while Gong Qihuang, the university's president, presented Rahmon with the honorary certificate.

The honor recognizes Rahmon's role as a national leader and seasoned statesman in advancing bilateral friendship, promoting regional peace and development, and supporting reforms in global and regional governance, according to the university.

Since 2005, Peking University has admitted a total of 47 students from Tajikistan, with six currently studying under Chinese government scholarships, Rahmon said in his speech.

During his visit to China, scheduled to conclude on Thursday, the two sides are expected to sign an agreement to establish a new Confucius Institute at Dangara State University, adding to existing platforms for cooperation, Rahmon said.

Rustamov Badriddin, a sophomore majoring in sociology at Peking University who studied Chinese at the Confucius Institute at Tajik National University, said the number of Tajik students at top Chinese universities remains limited.

"We hope more Tajik students will be encouraged by the president's visit to study in China and enroll in more universities in the future," he said, adding that universities in his home country have been promoting Chinese-language learning and motivating students to pursue further studies in China.

According to Rahmon, 13 universities now offer Chinese-language majors, while a Luban Workshop — a hands-on training center for technical education — has been established at Tajik Technical University.

Liu Qi, a doctoral candidate at the university whose research focuses on Central Asia, said the expansion of student exchange programs and the planned Confucius Institute would provide substantial momentum for youth exchanges.

"President Rahmon's visit sends a strong signal of friendship and helps Chinese students better understand neighboring countries' history, culture and development," she said.

In his speech, Rahmon also expressed hope that more Chinese universities would establish campuses in Tajikistan and deepen cooperation in fields such as engineering, natural sciences and agriculture.

"Agriculture is a highly promising area for collaboration," Liu said, adding that her dissertation will feature agricultural development in Central Asia.

For instance, China has introduced advanced agricultural technologies, including drip irrigation systems and newly developed cotton seeds, at a cotton plantation established in Tajikistan by a company based in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

China's achievements in agricultural development are increasingly being shared with Central Asian countries, helping boost local agriculture and strengthen regional cooperation, she added.



Tajik President Emomali Rahmon (center) addresses the audience during a visit to Peking University in Beijing on Tuesday.
WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Paraguay urged to recognize one-China principle

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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Beijing has blasted Paraguayan President Santiago Pena's recently concluded visit to China's Taiwan region, warning that "rejecting the one-China principle will only isolate oneself from the international community".

Pena visited the island from Thursday to Sunday, met with Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te on Friday in Taipei, and signed several so-called cooperation documents.

The Paraguayan leader claimed that the South American country supported Taiwan's "participation in international multilateral systems", that "the international community should recognize Taiwan", and that Taiwan does not need to worry about changes in bilateral ties.

In response, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Tuesday that "China firmly opposes and condemns such moves made by the Paraguayan side" and that "the wheels of history wait for no one".

"There is but one China in the world. Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, and the one-China principle is a basic norm governing international relations and a prevailing consensus in the international community," Guo said.

"Over the years, we have heard time and again the strong call of people from various sectors in Paraguay to develop relations with China," he added.

Guo cited a poll in Paraguay showing that nearly 90 percent of respondents supported establishing diplomatic ties with China.

"This fully demonstrates that establishing diplomatic relations with China serves the fundamental and long-term interests of the Paraguayan people, and that colluding with the Taiwan authorities wins no support," he said.

The spokesman said relevant Paraguayan political figures had not only turned a blind eye to this, but had also blatantly visited Taiwan to endorse Lai Ching-te and his followers in defiance of global criticism, willingly serving as chess pieces for "Taiwan independence" separatist forces.

"It is apparent to all whether this is truly for the benefit of the Paraguayan people or driven by ulterior motives," Guo said.

At a daily briefing last week in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian urged Paraguay's authorities to stand on the right side of history at an early date and sever the so-called "diplomatic ties" with the Taiwan authorities.

On Tuesday, Guo said, "We urge the Paraguayan government to change course at an early date, see where the arc of history bends, follow the will of its people, and make the right political decision to recognize the one-China principle."

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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's note: *The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.*

Influencers dispel DPP disinformation

Taiwan netizens shown actual conditions on Chinese mainland

By **LI SHANGYI**
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A growing number of Taiwan social media influencers are crossing the Strait to document the Chinese mainland's rapid development, sparking a "reality-check" trend that has caught the Democratic Progressive Party off guard despite its tightened restrictions on exchanges.

In February, Fan Chi-fei, a former correspondent for several Taiwan media outlets, shared her experience of traveling to Chengdu, Sichuan province, on her YouTube channel, describing the trip as "very interesting" and praising the local cuisine and giant pandas.

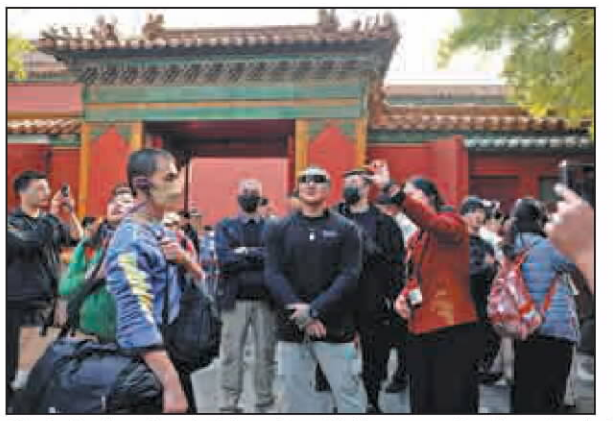
Speaking about the motivation behind the trip, Fan said in the video that "after reporting on the mainland for so long, it would make little sense not to visit and see it for myself".

Her trip has caught attention on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, as she was previously labeled as a "pro-green" figure who supported the DPP's political stance and made negative reports about the mainland.

Fan joins a number of Taiwan social media influencers who have visited the mainland for the first time in recent years. Other prominent online influencers, including Chen Chih-han, known as "Guan Zhang", and Chung Ming-hsuan, both of whom have more than 1.3 million YouTube followers, and have also made their first trips to the mainland over the past two years.

Through livestreams and vlogs, these content creators have presented the mainland's actual conditions, leading some viewers to reassess narratives on the island and realize that the reality differs from the image portrayed by the DPP authorities.







Clockwise from top: A Taiwan-based influencer writes characters in the style of oracle bone scripts — the earliest mature writing system in China — at the National Museum of Chinese Writing in Anyang, Henan province, in August. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Taiwan-based influencers visit Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan, in August. KAN LI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE Chen Chih-han (center), a Taiwan-based influencer known as "Guan Zhang", visits the Palace Museum in Beijing in October. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Out of the 'cocoon'

Chen, born in 1979 and formerly a supporter of the DPP, first visited the mainland in June last year to see it for himself. He livestreamed his six-day trip to Shanghai and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province.

Before departure on the first day, he admitted that he had felt uneasy, saying that many people on the island had tried to discourage and intimidate him.

Upon arrival, Chen said: "I had been influenced by the narratives on the island my whole life, believing whatever others told me. It wasn't until I came here in person today that I realized I had been completely misled."

Some narratives promoted on the island by certain media outlets have attempted to portray the mainland as "backward", including claims such as the "high-speed rail seats have no backrests" and the "toilets have no doors".

Chen challenged these claims through firsthand experiences shared during his livestreams, describing them as "lies spread by the DPP". During his trip, he used high-speed rail and mobile payment services in multiple cities while showcasing authentic street scenes and the daily lives of ordinary people.

To his surprise, he was warmly welcomed by people on the mainland, with some even politely asking to take photos with him.

"The trip completely overturned my negative impression of the mainland," Chen said, adding that he was astonished by the mainland's rapid development. Online, some who watched the livestream commented that they had misunderstood the mainland as well, and Chen's trip gave them a chance to know the realities.

Four months later, Chen made his second visit to the mainland, covering stops including Beijing, Shenyang in Liaoning province and Xiamen in Fujian province. This time, he offered a more direct acknowledgment of the mainland's progress, along with outspoken criticism of disinformation spread by the DPP.

"I originally thought I would never come to the mainland in my lifetime," the 47-year-old said, while encouraging young people in Taiwan to come and see the mainland for themselves.

Since taking office in 2016, the DPP authorities have steadily tightened restrictions on cross-Strait people-to-people exchanges. In 2024, the Lai Ching-te authorities raised the travel alert for the mainland to an "orange" level, advising people to avoid nonessential travel while highlighting what they described as the risks of visiting the mainland.

Fan, who visited the mainland for the first time in December last year, said many people tried to discourage her from making the trip. "They were worried that I might be detained and unable to return," she said.

The stark contrast between the DPP's portrayal of the mainland and what these influencers experienced firsthand led to a noticeable shift in their attitudes toward the mainland.

The DPP authorities have scaremongered and intimidated influencers who have visited the mainland, saying such trips are part of a "united front trap" or "cognitive warfare", while intensifying scrutiny of the funding sources and backgrounds of related groups.

Those who shared positive impressions after traveling to the mainland have faced personal attacks from DPP supporters and have been accused of engaging in "cognitive warfare".

Public reactions to these trips have therefore been polarized, with some expressing support while others criticizing them as being "brainwashed" by the mainland.

"I will continue to visit the mainland and bring the actual conditions back to Taiwan in an effort to help more people gain a more direct understanding," Chen said after his second visit.

Affinity and curiosity

"If you haven't visited a place, then you have no right to criticize it," said Chung, the 26-year-old travel YouTuber. Since first visiting the mainland in 2024, he has traveled to destinations including Beijing, Shanghai, Chongqing, and the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region.

During his latest trip to Xinjiang in February, Chung drove alone for more than 1,600 kilometers across the region, visiting Sayram Lake and sharing a meal with a local family. In the video, he described Xinjiang's scenery as very beautiful and said the people there were "warm and kind". The video has attracted more than 1.4 million views on YouTube.

Chung also praised the mainland's convenience and well-developed infrastructure in his travel videos, a contrast that drew attention given his previously perceived pro-DPP stance. A video interview he conducted with Tsai Ing-wen, the former Taiwan leader from the DPP, remains featured on the front page of his channel.

Another Taiwan YouTuber, known online as "Boboyu", used his trip to Hangzhou to explain why more people in Taiwan are becoming interested in traveling to the mainland, citing affordable taxis and accommodation, as well as the convenience of a shared language across the two sides.

He said that while the shared language makes the trip much easier, the use of simplified characters, different payment methods and distinct accents still provide the sense of novelty that Taiwan travelers look for.

Notably, compared with travel videos filmed in other destinations, content about the mainland tends to attract far greater attention. Chen's livestreams during his mainland tour set multiple YouTube records in the Taiwan region, including the platform's highest livestream viewership, with total views reaching as high as 20 million.

Cai Zhuofeng, general manager of the Haixi multichannel network base in Xiamen and a veteran livestreaming industry practitioner, said people in Taiwan are eager to learn what the mainland is really like, while audiences on the mainland are interested in seeing how Taiwan visitors experience life there. "This has made content created by Taiwan visitors receive significantly more attention," Cai said.

More mainland-related content has been emerging across Taiwan's social media landscape, following a growing trend of influencers such as Chung and Chen visiting the mainland. Fan has expressed the hope of traveling to Yunnan province in the future.

As accessible online content has offered a more direct view of life on the mainland, the DPP authorities have not only tightened restrictions on cross-Strait personnel exchanges, but also moved to curb the social media app RedNote, or Xiaohongshu, which features genuine content related to the mainland.

In December last year, Taiwan's "interior affairs department" announced a one-year ban on the app. The mainland-based lifestyle-sharing platform has more than 3 million users in Taiwan, around 70 percent of whom were born after 1990.

Jhuang Yi-chang, founder of an online gaming startup in Taiwan, who took part in a digital media training camp held in Wuhan, Hubei province, in March, said: "Because so many positive stories and experiences continue to circulate on Xiaohongshu, people in Taiwan who come across them begin to realize that the mainland may not be as it is portrayed by the DPP authorities. As a result, more of them become interested in visiting the mainland to see it for themselves."

Gradually, Jhuang said, people in Taiwan, regardless of their political stance, are becoming more inclined to see the mainland's realities for themselves.

Despite restrictions and warnings issued by the DPP authorities, 306,900 Taiwan residents made their first trips to the mainland last year, up 34.6 percent year-on-year.

According to the National Immigration Administration, in the first quarter, applications for mainland travel permits by Taiwan residents increased 11.8 percent year-on-year, while the number of Taiwan residents entering the mainland rose 27.6 percent.

The mainland has introduced measures aimed at facilitating cross-Strait exchanges. From July 1, 2025, to Dec 31, 2027, Taiwan residents applying for mainland travel permits for the first time will be exempt from application fees. Since 2024, first-time permit holders from Taiwan have also been eligible for free or discounted admission to scenic areas and tourist attractions on the mainland within one year of entry.

Among the 10 policy measures introduced by the mainland in April are steps to promote the full resumption of cross-Strait passenger flights to further facilitate personnel exchanges. The mainland has also called on Taiwan to restore direct cross-Strait passenger flights.

At a news conference in March, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, welcomed Taiwan compatriots, including influencers and media practitioners, to come to the mainland, saying that the mainland will continue to create favorable conditions for their travel and exchanges.

Shi Xuefan contributed to this story.

Wenzhou welcomes island's aspiring entrepreneurs

By **LI SHANGYI**

The entrepreneurial spirit found in the city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang province has left a profound impression on Pan Po-chuan, a 35-year-old from Taiwan who has dedicated his career to helping Taiwan startups scale and thrive within the Chinese mainland ecosystem.

Born in Taipei, Pan has served as director of the Wenzhou-Taiwan Integrated Development Youth Entrepreneurship Base in Wenzhou since 2021. While studying on the mainland in 2015, he was struck by the city's rapid development and its strong support for young entrepreneurs from Taiwan.

"Entrepreneurs from Wenzhou and Taiwan are both highly driven and entrepreneurial," Pan said. "Why not join forces to become even stronger together?"

Covering more than 1,000 square meters, the entrepreneurship base is home to around 50 companies founded by young Taiwan entrepreneurs. It is equipped with startup workstations, livestreaming studios and e-commerce training facilities.

As part of Wenzhou's support policies for Taiwan entrepreneurs, the base provides two months of free hotel-style accommodation, helps newcomers secure affordable long-term housing in youth apartments, and offers free business registration and office space without utility or property management fees.

To help young entrepreneurs from Taiwan launch their businesses smoothly, the base also assists them in finding free or low-cost retail spaces to connect directly with consumers, Pan said.

"You have to take the first step to understand the mainland market, which has introduced many preferential policies for Taiwan compatriots," Pan said, encouraging more young people from Taiwan to pursue opportunities on the mainland.

Beyond entrepreneurship services, Pan has also established an influencer incubation center focused on livestreaming and digital content creation. The center has signed 40 influencers, including nine young people from Taiwan.

According to 10 policy measures introduced by the mainland in April to promote cross-Strait exchanges, Taiwan industry professionals can participate in the production of mainland micro-dramas and web dramas through various channels.

In recent months, Pan has invited directors and actors from Taiwan to Wenzhou to build a cross-Strait performing arts talent platform. He said the initiative aims to combine the resources of Zhejiang's web series industry and artificial intelligence technologies with creative talent from both sides of the Strait.

Speaking about his broader mission, Pan said many aspects of life on the mainland are not fully understood in Taiwan because of restrictions on information flows and media communication. As a result, Taiwan youth who have established themselves on the mainland play an important role in fostering mutual understanding across the Strait, he added.

"We need to translate our message into expressions that people in Taiwan can understand and relate to," he said. "That way, they can experience the mainland's friendliness firsthand and develop a genuine understanding through personal experience."



Pan Po-chuan participates in a seminar on information technology in Beijing via video feed in June 2022. YI HAIFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Looking ahead, Pan expressed one particular hope: "I hope direct flights between Wenzhou and Taiwan can resume as soon as possible. Wenzhou was once the mainland city with the shortest flight distance to Taiwan, and restoring direct flights would greatly facilitate cross-Strait exchanges."

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Social Media Digest

Viral vendetta

During this year's Labor Day holiday, while crowds flocked to major tourist attractions, a very different kind of sensation was taking shape online. The micro-short drama series *Enemy* went viral on May 4, garnering over 760 million views on Douyin.

At first glance, *Enemy* seems like a survival-game thriller, with two protagonists cast as fated enemies. Yet beneath that surface lies a tragic love story from another lifetime.

In their past lives, the two characters were childhood companions and lovers. Set against the backdrop of the Nanjing Massacre, the historical storyline follows these two traditional Chinese opera performers as they are forced by Japanese invaders to perform in a propaganda play. Feigning obedience, they secretly resist, ultimately choosing to poison themselves and their captors, dying together onstage.

Remarkably, the viral hit was created by just two young content creators, Zhang Wenchu and Yang Xiyun. With a limited budget, they handled nearly every aspect of production themselves — even handmaking costumes to recreate Republican-era China.

The popularity of *Enemy* reflects young audiences' growing appetite for sincere storytelling. In an era increasingly saturated with AI-generated content, viewers are still drawn to stories shaped by emotional depth and genuine creative devotion.



Chinese cultural elements, like traditional opera, continue to captivate young audiences. VCG

Weirdly useful

When travelers visit China, the list of must-buy souvenirs is no longer limited to museum collectibles, silk scarves, or embroidered fans. In recent years, a wave of quirky, humorous everyday Chinese products has found unexpected popularity overseas, turning ordinary household items into practical yet playful lifestyle goods.

Lotus-shaped birthday candles, once a familiar sight at children's birthday parties in China in the 2000s, are now appearing at parties abroad. Glow-in-the-dark toilet mats and colorful showerheads have also gone viral online, praised for transforming ordinary bathrooms into cozy and whimsical spaces.

Another unlikely hit is the "dried-rat doll", a deliberately rough-looking plush toy with a skinny, scrappy shape. Often customized to resemble celebrities, these quirky dolls have become a form of social currency for young overseas fans, who bring them to concerts and even Formula One events.

Beyond novelty and humor, more practical Chinese-made products are also gaining ground. According to FastMoss data, a mini clip-on fan sold more than 11,600 units on TikTok Shop US in the past month, generating over $182,000 in sales.

Behind this steady stream of viral products is the speed, flexibility, and responsiveness of China's manufacturing ecosystem. Yiwu International Trade Market, home to tens of thousands of booths, offers a vivid example of how quickly Chinese suppliers can capture niche consumer demand and turn it into mass-market goods.

As Huang Liuying, an associate professor at the School of Management, Zhejiang University, wrote in Zhejiang Daily, "Behind these seemingly small trinkets is Yiwu's supply chain, which precisely captures emotional demand and demonstrates a deep integration of emotional value with the real economy."

GUO JIATONG



Quirky Chinese products are winning fans around the world. VCG



Young builders deepen Belt and Road ties

Through daily interactions and shared experiences, Chinese youth overseas are turning development projects into bridges of friendship and trust.

Yang Meihang visits the Edge of the World near Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on June 7, 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By GUI QIAN
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At a humble street food stall in Luanda, Angola, Yang Xin sat sipping local drinks with her driver, an Angolan colleague. Despite his modest income, he treated her to a meal and asked sincerely about her well-being.

This simple gesture of kindness became a quiet testament to friendship during Yang's time as an expatriate. It also reflects the broader spirit of many young Chinese working abroad under the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), building bridges of connection overseas.

Yang, a young woman from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, is a veteran contributor to the initiative. Since arriving in Angola in 2014, she has been involved in clean energy planning, water resources management, infrastructure development, and housing construction. Although her main role is as a translator, her responsibilities extend far beyond language interpretation.

"I handle almost all cross-cultural communication and inter-agency coordination. I've traveled to nearly every province in Angola," she said, highlighting the wide range of skills required for work overseas.

Over the years, Yang has witnessed the evolution of Chinese enterprises in the country. After Angola's infrastructure was devastated by civil war, Chinese firms were among the first to step in to help rebuild. Private companies specialized in civil engineering and housing, while larger, state-owned enterprises handled major projects in water, power, and renewable energy.

More recently, the presence of Chinese businesses in Angola has diversified. Beyond large corporations, individual Chinese-run retail stores have spread across Luanda, and new ventures like milk tea shops and food delivery services have emerged. The local Chinese culinary scene, once dominated by Sichuan restaurants, now features a variety of regional cuisines, including Cantonese dim sum, Fujian snacks, southern-style rice noodles, and northern dumplings.

"As a native of Guangzhou, enjoying authentic home cooking abroad gives me a deep sense of belonging," Yang said.

Unlike Yang Xin, who chose to settle in one place, Yang Meihang, a young man from Shangrao, Jiangxi province, moves across different countries and cultures, gaining a rich understanding of global diversity and thriving in a rapidly changing world.

Yang Meihang has a background in electronic information engineering and translation. In 2024, he was stationed in the Philippines working in energy business development. He later traveled to Oman, Kuwait, and Saudi Arabia, leading market expansion efforts across the Middle East.



People watching a televised soccer match at a restaurant in Angola.
YANG XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY



"The BRI is more than construction projects and contracts — the genuine connections between people we build along the way are just as important."

Yang Xin, a former translator and expatriate in Angola



"In their eyes, Chinese people 'only do business and do not fight'. There are no ideological conflicts. Our interactions are always peaceful and sincere."

Yang Meihang, a market expansion specialist in the Middle East

He observes that market conditions differ widely by region. "The Philippine market is relatively mature while the Middle East offers tremendous potential for infrastructure investment and attracts significant foreign capital, which brings both opportunities and challenges," he said.

Amid the grand narrative of the BRI, Yang Meihang finds that the warmth of everyday interactions leaves the deepest impression. He experiences this warmth not only in personal encounters but also through the local people's appreciation of Chinese culture and products.

"Local shops in Middle Eastern countries are full of products made in China, and many people are eager to learn Chinese. In Saudi Arabia, parents often encourage their children to greet Chinese visitors in Chinese — I've experienced this several times," he recalled.

"In their eyes, Chinese people 'only do business and do not fight'. There are no ideological conflicts. Our interactions are always peaceful and sincere," he added.

The same goes for Yang Xin. "The BRI is more than construction projects and contracts — the genuine connections between people we build along the way are just as important," she said.

She remembers a school principal in Angola, passionate about Chinese history, who once gifted her a book he had written on Chinese cultural studies. On another occasion, when no company drivers were available for an urgent trip, a local client offered her a ride on his motorcycle.

"Being stationed abroad isn't a one-way export; it's about mutual understanding. We brought steel and concrete, and in return, we gained friendship," she said.

Growing abroad

Overseas experiences have not only made these two young people active participants in the BRI but have also led to significant personal growth.

For Yang Meihang, the five-hour time difference between Saudi Arabia and China amplified his sense of isolation each evening. Spending long hours alone, he taught himself Arabic and established a running routine.

Living in a completely different environment also strengthened his sense of responsibility and helped him better understand himself. At first, the differences in appearance, culture, and cuisine made him feel like a stranger. Over time, as he connected with locals and fellow Chinese expatriates, he gradually found his footing and embraced his new life.

"As a member of the new generation of overseas builders, you must have the determination to navigate unfamiliar environments," he reflected. "An open mind and curiosity are essential for understanding local customs — only then can you truly thrive abroad."

Yang Xin brings a female perspective to her overseas experiences. She acknowledges that women often face additional societal pressures around marriage, childbirth, and personal safety, but she believes that working abroad can empower women, giving them courage and broadening their horizons.

"Overseas salaries are competitive, and many of my female colleagues have even bought their own apartments, achieving financial independence for the first time," she said. "This freedom allows us to make choices confidently and live life on our own terms."

Now back in China, Yang Xin has transitioned from full-time employment to freelancing. She occasionally takes on overseas translation projects, manages a social media account where she shares reflections on her time in Angola, and offers consulting to young people interested in overseas postings.

Through these efforts, she continues to apply the lessons and confidence she gained while working abroad.

On her social media account, she wrote: "Experiences like these show young people that the world is vast, challenges can become opportunities, and life offers far more possibilities than we often imagine."

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Hands-on hobbies calm young minds

How fidget toys, traditional gourds, and diorama stickers are reshaping stress relief among China's youth.



By **XIONG XINYI** and **GUI QIAN**

While reviewing documents with her right hand, 26-year-old Zhouzhou (pseudonym) from Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, absently twists a small, colorful toy in her left hand.

"It's like spinning a pen in class when we were kids," she said. "The movement doesn't require much attention, but it helps you relax."

The object is a Tangle fidget toy, made of connected curved pieces that can be twisted into different shapes.

Zhouzhou discovered the toy in late summer 2025, before it became popular online. She bought several items to film an ASMR video and posted it on her social media account, Meishi Zhouzhou. The video quickly gained traction, with more than half of the viewers asking what the toy was.

As Zhouzhou observed, the Tangle appeals to people visually and through its sound. "Most versions make a crisp sound, like ice cubes dropping into an Americano," she said.

Touch adds another layer to the experience, with materials ranging from firm to soft. Some users rely on the toy to replace habits such as picking at their skin or nails. Others simply enjoy the ritual of it.

Zhouzhou enjoys collecting and neatly arranging the colorful pieces. "I find that neatness really satisfying," she said.

What began as a personal interest gradually became something she wanted to share with others. She now sells the toy through livestreams, too.

One student customer bought 22 pieces — not all at once, but one by one after each livestream demonstration.

"For many students, comfort doesn't come from expensive bags or gadgets," Zhouzhou said. "Unlike adults who save up for a big purchase, students see these stress-relief toys as little indulgences."

According to China Youth Daily, more than 1 million units had been sold in China by the 2026 Spring Festival after the toy was launched in March 2025.

Tradition brings comfort

While trendy stress-relief toys dominate e-commerce today, the desire for comfort through touch is far from new. Throughout many generations, people have turned to small objects to create moments of quiet reflection.

The history of Chinese bottle gourds can be traced back to ancient times, when they were cherished for their symbolic meanings of harmony and prosperity. Over the centuries, gourds evolved from ritual vessels to handheld companions.

Now, these old objects have sparked a new fervor among young people. Li Yajuan is one of them.

After work, Li picks several gourds from her collection, places them on a tray, and rubs them while watching TV. She carries one during her commute and takes one to doctor's appointments. She also kept one close during a recent hospital stay when she felt frightened and alone.

Working in e-commerce and design, she first bought gourds for a design project. The hobby soon replaced drawing and tearing paper as her preferred stress relief. Since autumn 2024, she has spent more than 100,000 yuan ($14,703) building her collection.



> "Compared with the fast pace and intensity of mobile games, we enjoy the slower process of building our own ideal little worlds."
>
> **Liang Jie,** a diorama sticker lover



> "Playing with gourds is about calming your mind and accepting the process, along with whatever changes happen naturally, whether they occur in a day or over the course of a year."
>
> **Li Yajuan,** a gourd collector

"Playing with gourds is about calming your mind and accepting the process, along with whatever changes happen naturally, whether they occur in a day or over the course of a year," she said. Some gourds can be polished quickly, while others require weeks of sun exposure.

When she feels angry, she rubs harder, and the gourds become shinier. To Li, those changes are positive feedback — turning something negative into something better.

But for collectors, the real excitement comes from the chase, with 500 people sometimes competing for just 10 items.

Once, Li lost her internet signal in an elevator while trying to buy a rare gourd and assumed she had missed out. Moments later, right after stepping out of the elevator, she found she'd successfully secured the limited piece.

"I just crouched in the hallway in disbelief," she recalled. Over time, the hobby taught her to accept that some things are out of one's own control. "If something is meant to be yours, it will come," she said.

Her hobby has since grown into a small business selling polishing cloths and pouches. In fact, the gourd industry has already become a sizable market. In Dongchangfu district of Liaocheng, Shandong province, gourd cultivation generates annual gross revenues of 2.6 billion yuan, accounting for 75 percent of the national market, according to Liaocheng city authorities.

Tiny worlds heal

Not all stress-relief hobbies rely on touch alone. For some young people, comfort comes from carefully constructing miniature worlds that offer a temporary escape from daily pressures.

Without needing scissors or glue, users can place diorama stickers of characters, buildings, furniture, flowers, and other motifs onto a pre-designed background board to create tiny bedrooms, grand castles, and city streets.

Liang Jie, from Zhejiang province, shares videos of herself putting together miniature scenes on her social media account, Lucia Sticker Channel.

Liang turned to diorama stickers during a transitional period after leaving her job at a large corporation. Before bed, she works on stickers while listening to podcasts, treating the process as a form of meditation — a way to reflect on the day and stop thinking about the future.

The crisp peeling sound and the gradual layering of scenes make each diorama immersive. "It's like a flat version of Lego — more affordable — and also like a puzzle, but more structured and three-dimensional," she said. "Diorama stickers are a way to erase bad moods."

Liang and many of her followers have basically stopped playing online games since discovering diorama stickers. "Compared with the fast pace and intensity of mobile games, we enjoy the slower process of building our own ideal little worlds," she explained.

By early May, the hashtag "diorama stickers" had attracted 730 million views on Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, and nearly 1.43 billion plays on Douyin, the Chinese version of TikTok.

As the hobby grows in popularity, Liang has noticed sticker brands exploring a wide range of new styles and concepts.

Some brands are focusing on Chinese aesthetics, drawing inspiration from intangible cultural heritage and traditional opera. Others are creating soothing, story-driven scenes that capture the warmth of everyday life — such as a spring courtyard or a winter island — the kinds of spaces many young enthusiasts long for. Some are also experimenting with gaming-style experiences, allowing users to step into pixel-art worlds.

"Unlike the happiness that comes from simply buying something, diorama stickers offer the satisfaction of creating joy with your own hands," Liang said.

Whether twisting a plastic loop, polishing a gourd, or layering stickers onto miniature scenes, these activities share a common feature: repetitive hand movements that participants say help them find a controllable, calming rhythm amid uncertainty.

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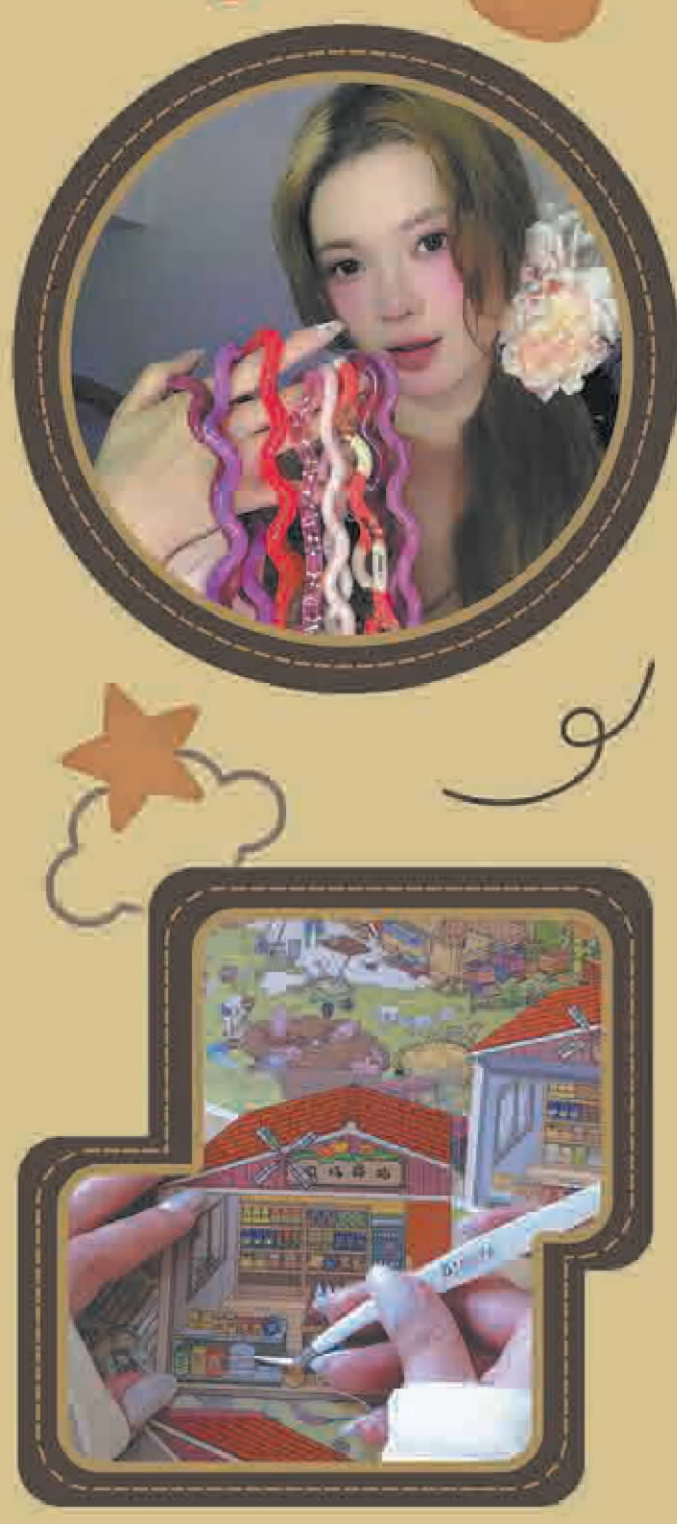

Top: Li Yajuan's gourd collection. **Middle:** Zhouzhou (pseudonym) creates an ASMR video with Tangle toys. **Bottom:** Liang Jie plays with diorama stickers as a pastime. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Cosplay unites generations

Amid wigs, costumes and fantasy characters, a mother's support for her daughter becomes a bridge between parents and children.

Jiang Fuchun, owner of a cosplay photo studio in Shanghai, brings anime and video game characters to life with her intricate creations. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By MENG WENJIE
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Four years ago, Jiang Fuchun rarely wore makeup. Today, in her Shanghai photo studio, she stands beside a vintage piano in a pink wig and Rococo-style dress, her eyes framed by glittering makeup and layers of lace cascading from her skirt.

The look is inspired by *Identity V*, a popular game by China's NetEase Games — one of many anime and video game characters Jiang has learned to recreate since stepping into the world of cosplay.

Jiang, 49, is the owner of Mofa Riji, or Magical Diary, a cosplay-themed photo studio. Over the past four years, the studio has attracted an online following of nearly 1.1 million.

Her transformation began with a simple request from her daughter.

"At the end of 2021, my daughter had just started middle school and was going through some emotional struggles," Jiang recalled.

The teenager showed little interest in many things but was drawn to fashion inspired by ACG (anime, comics, and games) culture. Then, one day, her daughter brought up an idea that would change the family's course: opening a photo studio devoted to cosplay.

"I just wanted to support her," Jiang said. "At that time, her happiness was the most important thing for our family."

After discussing it with her husband, Jiang decided to give it a try. With a background in IT and later experience in insurance sales, she admitted she knew little about cosplay at the time. But her daughter, then 14, helped choose locations, design interiors, source props, and plan nearly every photo shoot.

"She understood this world much better than I did," Jiang said. "I was just trying to keep up with her ideas."

What began as a family project gradually opened a new stage for Jiang herself. Mofa Riji has since expanded from a single space in Shanghai to a second location in Chengdu, Sichuan province. It has welcomed nearly 30,000 visitors, about 80 percent of them under 30, with middle school students forming the largest group.

Where generations meet

Over time, Jiang began to see the studio as more than a place for costumes and photographs. It had become a space where parents and children found new ways to connect.

One encounter stayed with her. A mother brought her 10-year-old daughter to the studio for a birthday photo shoot. The girl wanted to dress as a cute zombie character, but her mother strongly objected, saying it was unlucky to dress like a zombie on her birthday. Instead, she insisted on a bright red outfit, which she felt was more festive. The disagreement lasted throughout the session, and the shoot did not go smoothly.



"Seeing that change — from rejection to active support — moved me deeply. It showed me that parents can learn to understand, too."

Jiang Fuchun, owner of Mofa Riji, a cosplay-themed photo studio

To Jiang's surprise, the girl returned a year later. This time, her mother had already prepared her favorite outfits and wigs and accompanied her to another session.

"Seeing that change — from rejection to active support — moved me deeply. It showed me that parents can learn to understand, too," Jiang said.

Stories like this unfold frequently at Jiang's studio. She has come to see her role as more than running a business. She often takes time to speak with parents, helping them see cosplay from their children's point of view.

Some parents, for example, are initially unsettled by the pale makeup. Jiang explains that once the makeup, wig, and costume come together, the overall look becomes much more beautiful and natural.

"Cosplay allows young people to fully inhabit a character and gain joy and confidence through that process," she often tells parents.

But Jiang also draws on her own perspective as a mother. On one occasion, when a mother objected to her 11-year-old daughter wearing colored contact lenses, Jiang supported the decision, knowing that the girl was still too young to wear them safely.

"At the same time, I made sure the mother understood that the hobby itself wasn't wrong," Jiang said. "Even if families only spend a few hours here, I hope parents leave feeling a little closer to their children."

What has surprised Jiang most is how many parents are now willing to step into their children's world.

Some mothers even join cosplay sessions with their daughters, letting the children choose their characters for them.

"They may not know much about the culture, but they are willing to try," Jiang said.

Today, Jiang's daughter is an adult with other interests and only occasionally helps out at the studio. Jiang, however, continues to run the business — no longer as a mother nervously entering an unfamiliar world for her child, but as someone who has found her own sense of purpose and fulfillment in that creative space.

Online, fans affectionately call her "Auntie Jiang". Many young followers share similar stories with her: "My parents didn't understand my cosplay hobby at first, but after watching your videos, they finally got it."

"When I read comments like that, I feel the studio carries something many young people are looking for — the chance to be understood by their parents," Jiang said.

From Venezuela to China: *wushu* dreams realized

By YAN DONGJIE in Tianjin
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At the athletes' entrance area of the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships in Tianjin, Hernando Dudamel, coach of the Venezuelan *wushu* team, gave last-minute instructions to his 14-year-old daughter, Valeria Dudamel, before she entered the competition area.

His eyes showed both the focus of a coach and the quiet pride of a father.

It was the second time Hernando had accompanied Valeria to the World Junior Wushu Championships as her coach, but the first time the father and daughter had visited China. For Valeria, competing in the birthplace of *wushu* was not only an important step in her athletic career, but also a chance to feel closer to the culture behind the sport she loves.

Held in Tianjin from March 25 to 30, the championships were a key qualification event for the 2026 Youth Olympic Games in Dakar, where *wushu* will make its debut as an official sport.

At the event, Valeria competed in *changquan*, *qiangshu*, and *daoshu* — *wushu* events featuring bare-hand routines, spear techniques, and broadsword routines — and secured her place at the Games, becoming one of only two *wushu* athletes from South America to qualify, according to the Venezuelan team.

"*Wushu* is an elegant sport full of culture and tradition," Hernando said. "It is deeply rooted in Chinese heritage and brings together people from around the world who share the same passion."

Hernando's own connection with Chinese martial arts began in the 1990s, when kung fu films became popular across Latin America. As a young man, he was drawn to the movements, spirit, and culture behind the films. He began practicing at a friend's gym and never stopped.

At that time, training conditions in Venezuela were limited.

"We lacked proper training equipment and had to use simple gear like fitness mats," he recalled.

Still, he kept going. Over the past 25 years, *wushu* has grown from a personal passion into a way of life.



Valeria Dudamel (left) practices with a US athlete at the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships in Tianjin, held from March 25 to 30, 2026. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Valeria grew up in this environment. Influenced by her father, she started practicing *wushu* at the age of 8 and later joined Venezuela's national youth *wushu* team.

During training, Hernando treats her like every other athlete. He sets strict standards, corrects her movements carefully, and expects the same discipline from her as he would from the rest of the team.

"He is my coach during training and my father at home," Valeria said. "*Wushu* has given us a very special family bond."

In Hernando's view, *wushu* is not just about movements or medals. It is also about personal growth.

"Discipline and respect are the qualities I hope she can develop most," he said. "*Wushu* helps shape character, which is far more important than competition itself."

From mastering her first routine at 8 to winning three gold medals at the South American Wushu Championships and now qualifying for the Dakar Youth Olympic Games, Valeria has grown through years of training and competition.

"Watching her become independent, responsible, and determined is my most precious reward," Hernando said.

Their journey is also part of a wider story of inheritance in Latin America's *wushu* community. Many athletes who once competed alongside Hernando have now become coaches, referees, and mentors.

"Decades ago, we competed side by side. Now our athletes compete and learn from one another," Hernando said. "We bonded over Chinese *wushu*, and this connection is truly special."

Despite the language barrier after arriving in Tianjin, Hernando and Valeria said they quickly felt welcomed by the people around them.

"Although we don't speak Chinese, the warmth and kindness of the people we met — from volunteers at the venue to local residents — made us feel at home," Hernando said.

Their tight schedule did not allow them to visit more Chinese cities, but both father and daughter said they hoped to return and learn more about China's culture, history, and food.

"I have practiced *wushu* for 25 years, but this was my first visit to its birthplace," Hernando said. "More than the competition itself, what I will remember most is watching Valeria grow through this journey."

Zhong Aiyamei contributed to this story.

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL



Detroit Pistons' Cade Cunningham (left) attempts to stop Cleveland Cavaliers' Donovan Mitchell during Game 4 of a second-round NBA playoffs series on Monday in Cleveland. The game saw Mitchell tie the NBA playoff mark of 39 points in the second half. AP

Mitchell ties playoff mark, as Cavs rally to level it up

Standout second half sees Cleveland star post 39 in Game 4 win over Pistons

CLEVELAND — The Cleveland Cavaliers are back on an even footing in their second-round series after a huge second half from Donovan Mitchell in Game 4.

Mitchell tied an NBA playoff mark with 39 points in the final two quarters, as he rallied the Cavaliers to a 112-103 victory over the Detroit Pistons on Monday night.

"What a shift, right? Really struggled in the first half, and then a big-time second-half performance by Don," Cavaliers coach Kenny Atkinson said.

"It's pretty impressive. I'm not sure I've seen in the playoffs a turnaround like that, where a guy is struggling and just absolutely turns the switch and is the complete opposite of the first half."

The home team has won all four games in the series, which shifts to Detroit for Game 5 on Wednesday night.

Mitchell matched the mark of Eric "Sleepy" Floyd on a free throw with 27.6 seconds remaining. He had a chance to break the record, set in 1987 when the Golden State Warriors faced the Los Angeles Lakers, but missed his second foul shot.

"Everybody let me know that I missed a free throw to break the record, though," said Mitchell, who finished with 43 points. "I will say that, but we're two and two headed to Detroit.

"That was what we came home to do, and that is all that matters."

James Harden had his 40th playoff double-double with 24 points and 11 assists. Evan Mobley had 17 points as Cleveland remained unbeaten at home in six playoff games.

"I airballed the first layup and was missing shots short," Mitchell said. "Sometimes it's natural, right? I wasn't really trying to get in there and force it, and, then, just doubling down on the defensive end, trying to take whoever I'm guarding, take them out of the equation. I'm not tripping, we were down four at the half.

"I always tell y'all it's not just about the scoring, it's about your overall impact on the game. And for me, it was just like, 'OK, now I have an opportunity to try to get downhill' and then started going in."

Caris LeVert had a season-high 24 points for Detroit. Cade Cunningham scored 19, the first time he has been held under 20 in 11 playoff games this season, and Tobias Harris added 16.

Pistons coach JB Bickerstaff, who takes pride in the physical style his team plays, was not pleased with the free throw disparity. Mitchell had more trips to the foul line (15) than the whole Detroit roster (12).

"There is no way one guy on their team should have more free throws than our team. We're not a settling for jump shots team," he said. "We didn't do enough to help ourselves, but ever since we came to Cleveland, the whistle has changed."

Even though Mitchell struggled in the first half and the Cavaliers shot 15 of 38, with most of their shots being 3-pointers, the Cavaliers felt pretty fortunate to only be down by four at halftime.

Atkinson's message at halftime was to play with more pace and attack downhill, which opened things up.

Mitchell scored 15 during Cleveland's 24-0 run that went from the last 12 seconds of the first half to the first six minutes of the third quarter. Cleveland trailed 56-52 at halftime before taking control.

The Cavs were 10 of 12 from the field and made three 3-pointers. They also converted five turnovers by the Pistons into nine points.

"When (Mitchell) sees a gap, he's going to go. We've got to eliminate his touches and catches on the run," Cunningham said.

"That run, we just never caught our footing again. That was the first time they really got loose in the series."

The 24-0 run was the longest in an NBA playoff game since Minnesota also scored 24 straight in Game 6 of its Western Conference semifinal series against Denver in 2024. It was also the longest spurt by Cleveland in a postseason game since play-by-play stats started being kept in 1997-98. The previous high was 19 in an Eastern semifinal series game against Boston.

"We understood that if we could just get some stops, get out in transition and get some easier looks, we'll be in good shape. We were doing a solid job, we just weren't scoring," Mitchell said.

"I think understanding that we were in a good spot, we did a good job of weathering a storm."

Mitchell and Harden accounted for 49 points apiece with their points scored and points off assists. Mobley was a force on both ends of the court, with eight rebounds, five assists, three steals and five blocked shots.

"Don's going to get all the flowers, but we should give a lot of flowers to Mobley for tonight's performance," Atkinson said.

"Donovan Mitchell was killing us, and that's pretty much it," Pistons center Paul Reed said.

It was Mitchell's eighth playoff game with at least 40 points, his fourth with the Cavaliers. He has at least 30 points in three straight games.

Cleveland is still looking for its first road playoff win this season, and will need at least one if it hopes to make the Eastern Conference finals for the first time since 2018.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Thunder holds off tenacious Lakers for another series sweep

LOS ANGELES — Shai Gilgeous-Alexander scored 35 points, Chet Holmgren made a tiebreaking dunk with 32.8 seconds to play, and the Oklahoma City Thunder swept the Los Angeles Lakers out of the second round of the NBA playoffs with a 115-110 victory in Game 4 on Monday night.

Ajay Mitchell scored 10 of his 28 points in the frantic final period, as the Thunder, in its toughest victory of the season, overcame the Lakers' tenacious effort and improved to 8-0 in the playoffs.

"We've done our job so far, that's all it really means," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "We've gone out there, we've executed, we've played at a high level and we've been able to win eight tough games against really good opponents. That's all it means. Nothing is guaranteed."

LeBron James, the top scorer in NBA history, had 24 points and 14 rebounds in the final game of his unprecedented 23rd season, but he missed a driving bank shot with 20 seconds left that would have put the Lakers ahead.

The 41-year-old James has repeatedly said he hasn't decided whether to play next season, so there was no ceremony or momentousness around this game. Instead, the Lakers desperately tried to extend their year, only to lose to Oklahoma City for the eighth time this season.

"I don't know what the future holds for me, obviously, as it stands right now, tonight," James said. "I've got a lot of time. I'll go back and recalibrate with my family and talk with them, and when the time comes, obviously you guys will know what I decide to do."

Austin Reaves scored 27 points before missing a tying 3-point attempt with eight seconds left for the Lakers, who advanced one round farther than almost anybody expected after losing NBA scoring champion Luka Doncic and Reaves to significant injuries a month ago.

Los Angeles still lost six of its final seven playoff games and fell well short of the conference finals for the third straight season.

"I didn't want our season to end," Lakers coach JJ Redick said. "I wanted to keep this thing going. I enjoyed every bit of this year."

Oklahoma City faced its first fourth-quarter deficits of the entire playoffs in Game 4, as the Lakers repeatedly refused to fold. The Thunder still got it done, and has earned at least the rest of the week off before it opens the conference finals against the winner of San Antonio's second-round series with Minnesota. The Spurs and the Timberwolves were all tied up heading into Game 5 on Tuesday.

"They won more of the minutes tonight than we did, and that hadn't been the case (earlier in the series)," Oklahoma City coach Mark Daigneault said. "They outplayed us for stretches. They're a really good team with prideful players. We did not expect them to give us an unearned win, and we went out and earned it."

Oklahoma City went 8-0 against the Lakers this season, winning all four regular-season matchups as well — but this one was the toughest. The Lakers took the lead and kept it close down the stretch with big buckets from Reaves and Rui Hachimura, who scored nine of his 25 points in the fourth quarter.

Holmgren's dunk with 2:03 left put the Thunder up 109-103, but Hachimura coolly converted a four-point play. Marcus Smart then drove the lane and hit a layup while being fouled in the final minute, converting a three-point play for a 110-109 Lakers lead.

But Holmgren got the ball inside and triple-pumped for a dunk with 32.8 seconds left, and James missed on his drive. After Gilgeous-Alexander hit two free throws, Reaves missed again, and the Thunder hung on to secure its sixth berth in the Western Conference finals in the last 16 seasons.

The Thunder won the first two games of the series at home by 18 points apiece, and they routed the Lakers 131-108 in Game 3.

Doncic missed the final 15 games of the Lakers' season after incurring a grade-two hamstring strain on April 2 in Oklahoma City, and he watched the season finale on the bench in a black sweatsuit. The Slovenian superstar apparently didn't get close to returning from the injury, which often requires two months of recovery.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Los Angeles Lakers forward LeBron James goes up for a dunk during Game 4 of a second-round NBA playoffs series on Monday in Los Angeles. AP

SOCCER

Leeds draw keeps Spurs mired in relegation fight

LONDON — Mathys Tel went from hero to villain as Tottenham drew 1-1 at home to Leeds on Monday — a result that leaves the north London club's Premier League future hanging in the balance.

The Frenchman broke the deadlock early in the second half to ease the tension at Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, but then gave away a penalty with a reckless clearance attempt.

In the dying minutes, Spurs were grateful to Antonin Kinsky, who produced an astonishing save to deny the visitor a win.

Tottenham is now two points clear of 18th-placed West Ham with just two games left this season.

The Hammers lost 1-0 to Arsenal on Sunday — a result that guaranteed the safety of Leeds and Nottingham Forest, but left Spurs and West Ham scrapping it out for the final relegation spot.

Wolves and Burnley are already down.

Spurs boss Roberto De Zerbi, who only arrived in late March, pledged his players would "fight until the end".

"(When) we lost to Sunderland, it was impossible to see ourselves two points above the relegation zone with two games to go," he said.

"Now, we have to be positive and work. We have the quality to win other points and stay up. I think we deserve to stay up. We will fight until the end.

"When you are fighting relegation, you have to fight harder with the legs than with the head. We have to push until the end. Even if we had won today, it wouldn't have been finished yet."



Dominic Calvert-Lewin celebrates scoring Leeds United's equalizer in a 1-1 Premier League draw against Tottenham Hotspur in London on Monday. REUTERS

Dire home record

Tottenham came into Monday's match with just two home wins in the league under its belt all season.

Kinsky got down smartly to his right to keep out Joe Rodon's header in the 21st minute, and, at the other end, Joao Palhinha fired over from close range.

Tottenham broke the deadlock five minutes into the second half when Tel controlled the ball beautifully after it fell to him following a Pedro Porro corner.

The Frenchman picked his spot, curling the ball past a diving Karl Darlow.

But, with about 20 minutes of normal time to go, Tel attempted an overhead kick to clear the ball from his own penalty area, making contact with the head of the onrushing Leeds captain Ethan Ampadu.

Referee Jarred Gillett ruled that it was a penalty after a VAR check and Dominic Calvert-Lewin smashed the ball home.

Midfielder James Maddison was given a rousing welcome by the home crowd when he was introduced as a late substitute — his first match of the season after recovering from an anterior cruciate ligament injury.

Then, the referee signaled 13 minutes of added time — a decision that lifted the home crowd further.

But Leeds came agonizingly close to a winner, with Kinsky producing a remarkable save onto the crossbar in the 98th minute from a point-blank range strike to deny Sean Longstaff.

In a frantic finale, Spurs had a last-gasp penalty claim turned down after Lukas Nmecha got the faintest of touches to the ball before Maddison went to ground.

The point lifts Spurs to 38 — two clear of West Ham, which has an inferior goal difference.

De Zerbi — the third manager of an injury-blighted and shambolic season for Spurs — was appointed with a brief to save the club from a first relegation since 1977.

His team is now unbeaten in four games, but the specter of the drop still hangs over the club, which won the Europa League just 12 months ago.

Spurs still have two potentially tough games to come against Chelsea and Everton, while West Ham faces Newcastle and Leeds.

AFP

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Winning brew

American turns passion for Chinese tea into profit

LIFE, PAGE 14



Guideline helps protect growth of gig economy

POLICY REVIEW, PAGE 12



Star dilemma

Neymar's chances of spot in Brazilian team hang in balance

SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, MAY 14, 2026

WORLD WATCH
By Tom Watkins

Visit comes at pivotal juncture

United States President Donald Trump started his three-day state visit to China on Wednesday.

Here we are again, yet another pivotal moment as the world revolves around US-China relations.

Once again, we have arrived at a point where action or inaction will shape the direction of trade, technology, global security, the economy and geopolitical stability of the US, China and the rest of the world.

Peace and prosperity should be our goal.

The last thing either side and the world need now is greater instability. The world cannot afford a new Cold War, or worse, and wise choices must be made to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for all of humanity.

We collectively need to seek "win-win" solutions rather than treat this vital relationship as a zero-sum game where one party's success requires the other's failure.

Perhaps at no other time in the modern US-China engagement has it been as imperative that we avoid unnecessary confrontation and conflict by keeping dialogue open and engaging in constructive, government and nongovernmental exchanges at the highest levels, as well as rebuilding and strengthening people-to-people, educational and cultural exchanges that have waned in recent years, particularly student exchanges, which are a foundation for long-term understanding between our two peoples.

Dialogue between US and Chinese leaders must have a "trickle-down" effect that improves the overall relationship, reduces distrust and produces positive, tangible results for average citizens on both sides of the Pacific.

Change is inevitable. Progress should not be optional when it comes to US-China geopolitical relations.

Going forward, all major world issues will intersect at the corner of Beijing and Washington, DC. Are we going to swing for the win or strike out?

Both nations have work to do at home to better serve our respective peoples.

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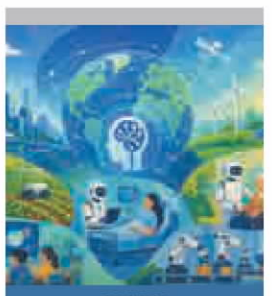

INSIDE
From AI visibility to developmental leadership
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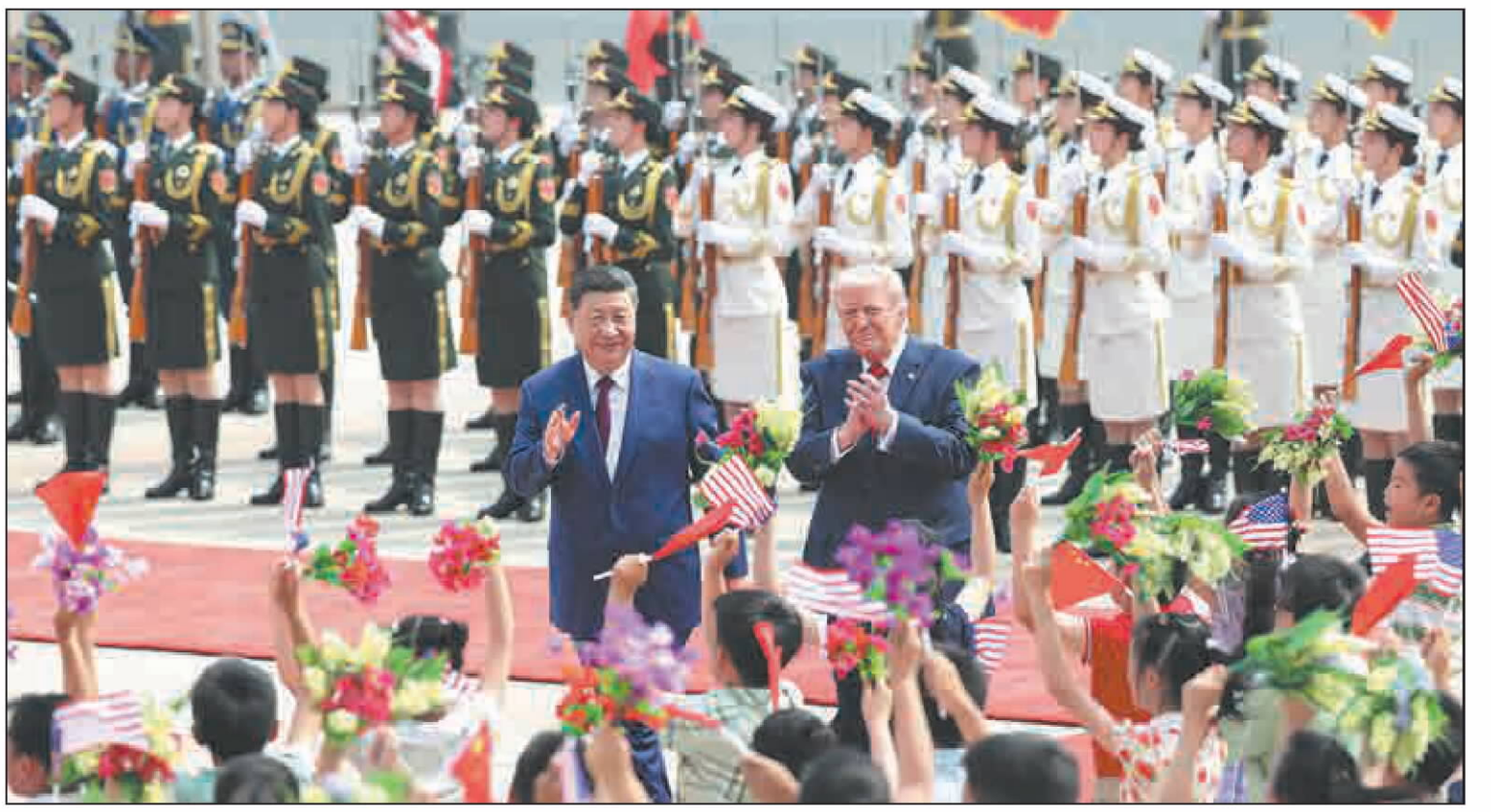

President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony on Thursday morning outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for United States President Donald Trump, who is on a state visit to China. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi: China, US should be partners

Success in one is opportunity for the other, stable bilateral relationship good for world

By CAO DESHENG
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China and the United States should find the right way for major countries to get along well with each other in the new era, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with visiting US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Xi stressed that the two countries have more common interests than differences, success in one is an opportunity for the other, and a stable bilateral relationship is good for the world.

He expressed the hope that 2026 will be a "historic, landmark year" that opens up a new chapter in China-US relations.

"China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. We should be partners, not rivals. We should help each other succeed and prosper together," he said.

Noting that transformation not seen in a century is accelerating across the globe and the international situation is fluid and turbulent, Xi said that the world has come to another crossroad.

"Can China and the United States overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations? Can we meet global challenges together and provide greater stability for the world? Can we build a bright future together for our bilateral relations in the interests of the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity? These are the questions vital to history, to the world, and to the people. They are the questions of our times that the leaders of major countries need to answer together," Xi said.

Xi stressed that the Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations. If it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, he said.

"Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are as irreconcilable as fire and water, he said, adding that safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is the biggest common denominator between China and the US.

On China-US economic and trade relations, Xi said that they are mutually beneficial and win-win in nature, and trade wars have no winner.

He said that where disagreements and frictions exist, consultation conducted on an equal footing is the only right choice.

Xi noted that the talks between economic and trade teams of the two countries, held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday, produced generally balanced and positive outcomes, adding this is good news for the people of the two countries and the world. The two sides should jointly sustain the good momentum that they have worked hard to create, he said.

In his speech, Trump hailed his "fantastic" relationship with Xi, saying Xi is "a great leader".

He said that the relationship between the US and China is going to be better than ever before.

Before the talks, Xi held a welcoming ceremony for Trump outside the Great Hall of the People.

Beijing rolls out red carpet for Trump

By MO JINGXI
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Beijing rolled out the red carpet to welcome US President Donald Trump for a much-anticipated summit with President Xi Jinping, as the world looks to the two largest economies for greater stability.

Inside

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Xi held a welcoming ceremony for Trump on Thursday morning outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, before they held talks.

Trump arrived in the Chinese capital on Wednesday evening, beginning his three-day state visit to China. Vice-President Han Zheng greeted him at the airport.

The trip marks the first state visit to China by a sitting president of the United States in nearly nine years and follows Xi and Trump's meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, last October, which helped to set the tone for efforts to stabilize and improve China-US relations.

The Xi-Trump summit is seen as another important moment in head-of-state diplomacy, which has played a strategic guiding role in China-US relations.

Over the years, Xi has repeatedly stressed that the China-US relationship is among the most important bilateral relationships in the world, and that the two countries must find the right way to get along.

His message has been consistent: While China-US cooperation can enable the two countries to achieve major undertakings serving their own interests and those of the world, confrontation would spell disaster for both countries and the wider world.

Analysts said the high-level engagement between Xi and Trump will be closely watched as to whether the two sides can keep the "giant ship" of China-US relations on a steady course, manage differences through dialogue, and expand practical cooperation, thereby injecting greater certainty into a turbulent world.

For a relationship as significant and complex as that between China and the US, direction matters as much as momentum.

During the meeting with Trump in Busan, Xi said, "You and I are at the helm of China-US relations. In the face of winds, waves and challenges, we should stay the right course, navigate through the complex landscape, and ensure the steady sailing forward of the giant ship of China-US relations."

In their phone conversation last year, Xi said that recalibrating the direction of the giant ship of China-US relations requires the two sides to take the helm and set the right course, adding that it is particularly important to steer clear of various disturbances and disruptions.

Zhiqun Zhu, a professor of political science and international relations and director of the China Institute at US-based Bucknell University, said the "giant ship" metaphor highlights both the complexity of the relationship and the importance of guiding it in the right direction.

"It's a top-down approach, with leaders on both sides playing a pivotal role," Zhu said. "Only when the general direction is set can the relationship move forward."

Zhu said that maintaining the momentum of high-level engagement is crucial for the stability and predictability of China-US relations. Leaders on both sides, he said, should be commended for overcoming difficulties, lowering tensions and moving the relationship forward.

But setting the course also requires a clear understanding of the nature of the relationship.

At a welcome dinner in San Francisco in November 2023, Xi said that he had long been thinking about "how to steer the giant ship of China-US relations clear of hidden rocks and shoals, navigate it through storms and waves without getting disoriented, losing speed or even having a collision".

"In this respect, the number one question for us is: Are we adversaries, or partners? This is the fundamental and overarching issue. The logic is quite simple. If one sees the other side as a primary competitor, the most consequential geopolitical challenge and a pacing threat, it will only lead to misinformed policymaking, misguided actions and unwanted results," Xi told participants from across American society.



People wave Chinese and United States flags to welcome US President Donald Trump, as he arrives in Beijing on Wednesday. Trump is on a three-day state visit to China. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Sun Chenghao, a fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said the "giant ship" metaphor speaks to the extraordinary weight of the relationship.

"China-US relations are too large and too consequential to be allowed to drift off course, or even capsize due to temporary storms," Sun said.

China and the US are the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and both play major roles in regional and global affairs.

Despite the twists and turns in bilateral ties, China-US economic relations remain deeply intertwined. Chinese customs data showed that bilateral trade in goods reached 4.01 trillion yuan ($590 billion) in 2025, accounting for 8.8 percent of China's total foreign trade.

"China's view that the relationship concerns not only the well-being of the two peoples but also the future of humanity is not merely diplomatic rhetoric," Sun said. "Rather, it is a judgment based on real interests and the stability of the international system."

That judgment has run through Xi's remarks on China-US relations over the years.

When meeting with Trump during his first term as US president in 2017 at the latter's Florida resort, Xi said there are a thousand reasons to make China-US relations a success, and not a single reason to break them.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Nations' friendship still bouncing along

From Ping-Pong Diplomacy to sports and youth exchanges, China and US continue building bridges

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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Young people from China and the United States take a group photo during an event to commemorate the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy in Beijing on April 10. ZHAO WENYU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



Members of the Whiffenpoofs a cappella choir from Yale University learn to play the *pipa* (a traditional lute) of the Dong ethnic group in Liping county, Guizhou province, on March 23. YANG WENBIN / XINHUA



Students from Muscatine High School in Iowa practice Chinese calligraphy at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Hebei province on March 18. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Deliah Autry, 30, is a member of the United States Women's National Flag Football Team, a three-time world champion, and a doctor of physical therapy specializing in pediatrics.

Last August, she made her first trip to China, attending the 12th World Games hosted by Chengdu in Sichuan province. The souvenirs that impressed her most included a Labubu doll and the games' medals, she said.

"The medal itself is so intricate and detailed, and has a little necklace. It is something that I would love to show my kids one day," she said.

The cultural events also impressed her. At the athletes' village, Chinese college students helped them try immersive cultural activities.

"We got to do arts and crafts, learn how to write our names in Mandarin. We got to try on traditional Chinese clothing, so it was just an awesome way for us to learn from them ... a great experience and a way for us all to connect," Autry said.

She made her second trip to China last month. In Beijing, she took part in the commemoration to mark the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy and the launch ceremony of the China-US Youth Sports Exchange Events, which received a congratulatory message from President Xi Jinping.

Autry said she now has a better and deeper connection to and understanding of Chinese culture.

"I am impressed by the people, how genuine and kind-hearted everybody is, and I think it is something that I have personally attached to you (China) because you see the true humanity and love, especially for sports," she said.

In Beijing, she watched a high school flag football team from Tacoma, Washington state, playing against a Chinese student team.

Autry said flag football is a great avenue to continue making connections between the cultures, despite language barriers and differences in cultures and politics.

"There were a lot of handshakes, high-fives, and smiles, and I think that just brings the positivity forward ... It was just an awesome display of how sports bring everybody together," she added.

"There is a mutual understanding and respect for these athletes, and we all know that we are playing with the same passion and love for the game," she said.

Autry said sporting events and exchanges are a great way to show young people how cultural differences and language barriers are just small things and "what the true purpose is in life, which is to find a deeper connection with other humans across the world".

Last year, Autry met a lot of the players from the Chinese women's national team at flag football tournaments.

"I follow a lot of them on social media, and we are able to connect. And there have been times throughout the year where we have seen each other outside in other tournaments and it is just really awesome to build that connection," she said.

Reaching out

Justin O'Jack, chief representative of the University of Virginia's Pacific Asia Office, encourages young Americans to engage in more trips outside the US.

"These kinds of trips, where students can travel abroad and spend time in a country like China, really have a transformative impact on a young person's life," he said in an interview with China Daily, "... if their only impression of China is through the media that they consume, of course it's going to be different than experiencing it as a person here in China," he added.

O'Jack studied abroad when he was a college student, first in India and then in China.

"That experience as a student studying abroad in China definitely has influenced me in many ways, one of which is in the career that I chose — first running study abroad programs in Shanghai for American students and now representing an American university."

He said Chinese students represent the majority of international students applying to his university's undergraduate program for the current class graduating in 2030.

"Chinese students by far make up the majority of applications we received — I would say, (there are) over 10,000 applications from around the world. Over 40 percent of those were from students here in China," he said.

"The interest in studying abroad in the US continues to be very strong, especially among the undergraduate student population," he added.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a hiatus in the number of American students from his university studying in China, and now "we are seeing that start to grow and rebound", O'Jack said.

"We are not at the pre-pandemic levels yet, but we are still working and heading in the right direction," he said.

Sharing ideas

In 2023, President Xi proposed an initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study programs over a five-year span.

O'Jack noted that the program has largely focused on high school and younger groups of students, and "that is important because the youth are our future".

Anders Ibsen, 40, who was sworn in as mayor of Tacoma in January, hosted a Chinese ping-pong delegation at Lincoln High School in the city, a school that Xi visited in 2015.

Ibsen said it is very important to "give young people an understanding about what it means to have greater partnerships, especially with our growing global economy".

"That's the basis of shared prosperity as well as peace ... in someone's life. If they can understand that it's a big world and that there are a lot of other different ideas out there, then we're all better off," he added.

Last month, Ibsen traveled to China with Tacoma high school students, his second visit to the country. "I first visited here in 2018. I visited Fuzhou (in Fujian province), which is one of Tacoma's four sister cities."

"To give you some reference, the city of Tacoma is a major port city on the west coast ... About half of our total trade comes from China. As a result, we very strongly value the partnership," he said.

Chinese trade will continue to be very important to the port of Tacoma, as well as the investments it has seen in the local economy, Ibsen said.

During the trip, Ibsen said the group was also able to learn more about innovative programs the government is working on. "There's always something to learn. We should always continue being students," he said.

When asked about what impressed him most in China, he said it was "the people".

"In the case of the city of Tacoma, my primary concern is keeping my residents safe and prosperous ... and by having these cultural exchanges, we can focus on the results, we can dispense with noise, we can dispense with politics," he said.

"We can just focus on what makes things better for people, what makes for a happier, more peaceful world. And that is the strength of cooperation. That's why we're here," he added.

Lasting impact

The first US table tennis delegation arrived in China in April 1971, for the icebreaking visit that helped boost the launch of bilateral diplomatic ties.

At that moment, Jan Berris had been in her position at the US consulate in Hong Kong for just two years "as a very junior consular official working on cultural affairs". However, she said she knew that "the event would have repercussions on the US and China as well as the rest of the world".

"But I had no idea that it would have such a huge impact on my own life," said Berris, who is now vice-president of the National Committee on US-China Relations, a nonprofit organization and advisory body founded in 1966 to encourage understanding and cooperation between the two nations.

When she returned to the US the month after the historic visit, two of her former professors at the University of Michigan asked if she would consider working at the committee based in New York.

The committee was then preparing to co-host with the US Table Tennis Association the visit of the Chinese ping-pong team to the US.

"My professors were on the board of the national committee and they felt that my diplomatic experience, brief as it was, would be helpful," Berris said.

She said she was not quite sure that she really wanted to live in a big city as "it was formidable".

"Actually, my undecided state was resolved by another major announcement that was made just a few months later, when President Richard Nixon went on national television and announced that Dr Henry Kissinger had made a secret visit to China," she explained.

One of the results of that visit was the Chinese ping-pong team's visit to the US in April of 1972.

"That helped me make my decision," Berris said. The next day, she asked the US State Department if she could work on the planning for the Chinese team's visit.

What began with a small ping-pong ball — slowly at first, and then in leaps and bounds — grew into a "broad and eventually very deep" network of relations between the two countries in every profession, and every field imaginable that brought all levels in the two societies together, she said.

"Now, a lot of people ask me how I can work in the same job for 55 years. But for me it has been easy, because I love my job," she said.

The first exchanges and the visits of the two ping-pong teams, with the hundreds and thousands of exchanges that followed, "serve to help people from both countries humanize the other" side, she said.



US youngsters experience traditional Chinese opera culture at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Beijing on July 14, as part of the Bond with Kuliang: 2025 China-US Youth Choir Festival. WANG ZIRU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



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SINO-US SUMMIT



Visitors taste wine from California at the food and agriculture pavilion of the United States on Nov 8 during the 8th China International Import Expo in Shanghai. The pavilion covered 350 square meters and featured 19 exhibitors, both record highs for the event. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

CEOs upbeat on China market

Presence of business leaders shows nation remains highly important for US companies

By **WANG KEJU, JIANG XUEQING, MA SI** and **ZHONG NAN**

Business leaders from the United States have voiced their confidence in the Chinese market and pledged to expand investments in what they consider as one of the world's most significant engines of future growth, given the market's vast scale, ability to innovate rapidly and resilient supply chains.

A high-profile business delegation comprising top US executives from sectors including technology, finance, aviation and agriculture arrived in Beijing on Wednesday as part of US President Donald Trump's entourage. The delegation's presence signals that commercial ties binding the two economies remain too deep to sever, economists and business executives said.

Among the top business leaders and CEOs visiting with Trump are Jensen Huang of Nvidia, Tim Cook of Apple, Elon Musk of Tesla and SpaceX, Cristiano Amon of Qualcomm, Larry Fink of BlackRock and Kelly Ortberg of Boeing, according to a Truth Social post by Trump. Also on the list are executives from GE Aerospace, Goldman Sachs, Citi, Mastercard, Visa, Blackstone, Cargill and more.

Speaking to China Daily, Mastercard CEO Michael Miebach said: "China is one of the world's most dynamic economies, and Mastercard is committed to the market for the long term.

"Since we began processing domestic transactions in May 2024, we've made strong progress — expanding acceptance, deepening local partnerships and bringing simple, secure 'tap and go' experiences to everyday life."

Looking ahead, he added, "We will continue to invest in China and bring more products and services that support both businesses and consumers."

According to experts, the lineup of CEOs from some of the US' most influential companies sends a clear signal that despite years of tariff impositions, export controls and heated talks of decoupling, China remains a highly significant market for US businesses.

"The economic gravity between the two countries remains immense," said Chen Wenling, a senior researcher at the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies. "Even as trade tensions and geopolitical risks cast a shadow, the fundamental forces of China-US complementarity have not disappeared."

Chen noted that the US leads in financial markets and retains significant high-tech advantages, while China's edge in market scale, supply chain depth and rapid innovation is equally real.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said: "If you just say they're the two largest economies, you're missing the most important part. They're also the two most dynamic and most innovative economies."

"It is when you add the innovation and dynamism pieces that you truly recognize the need for the two countries to find ways to work together more effectively," Stein said.

Data released in November by the Chinese embassy in the US showed that more than 80,000 US companies have invested in China, while 7,000 Chinese firms operate in the US.

On Wednesday, a spokesperson for the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade said that the council welcomes representatives from the US business community to visit China, adding that there is plenty of scope for, and tremendous potential in, practical cooperation between Beijing and Washington.

"We look forward to the business communities of both countries further deepening exchanges and cooperation, and making new contributions to the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations," said the spokesperson.

In addition to the companies in the delegation, US businesses across industries continue to demonstrate their confidence in the Chinese market through tangible action.

Henry Ding, president of 3M China, said: "In recent years, 3M has continued to expand its domestic manufacturing footprint, strengthen local R&D innovation capabilities, and accelerate the localization of its full value chain in China, spanning R&D, testing and manufacturing."

He added that today, more than 50 percent of the products 3M sells in China are manufactured locally.

Ding said that 3M China will continue to increase its local R&D investment this year and plans to achieve more than 30 percent growth in new product launches compared with 2025, significantly outpacing other global markets.

Ian Shih, president of Rockwell Automation China, said that China's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and continued high-level opening-up provide strong support for companies seeking long-term growth and diversified application opportunities.

At the 8th China International Import Expo held in Shanghai last November, US companies claimed the largest exhibition area, with their pavilions collectively covering more than 50,000 square meters, marking the seventh consecutive year that US companies have led all foreign participants.

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Collaboration in energy sector expected to expand

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Expanding energy ties between China and the United States will contribute to broader bilateral economic cooperation amid shifting global market dynamics, industry experts said.

Liu Jia, chief expert at the Economics & Technology Research Institute, a think tank of China National Petroleum Corp, or CNPC, said that the world's two largest economies share a complementary dynamic, with the US' energy export growth aligning with China's substantial market demand.

The push for closer cooperation comes as the US rapidly expands its liquefied natural gas infrastructure, with export capacity projected to reach 150 million metric tons per year by 2028, according to the research institute.

Liu said that this expansion creates a structural necessity for partnerships, as new US liquefaction projects require the security of long-term buyers to obtain necessary financing and make final investment decisions. "China offers the world's most predictable demand growth, providing the scale needed to anchor these US infrastructure investments," he said.

According to figures released by the institute, China imported 68.43 million tons of LNG in 2025 and is expected to maintain its position as the world's top LNG importer this year.

This synergy has already been evident in the market for years, with major Chinese State-owned enterprises such as China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, or Sinopec, and CNPC signing long-term purchase agreements with leading US exporters, including Cheniere Energy and Venture Global LNG.

According to the institute, energy has always been an important component of the broader trade balance between the two nations, highlighting the sector's role in addressing trade disparities.

In addition to direct trade, the two countries have also established investment links.

US oil major ExxonMobil began operating its mega ethylene project in Huizhou, Guangdong province, last year. It is one of the largest foreign investment projects in China, and the first major petrochemical project constructed in China solely by a US company.

According to Liu, US and Chinese companies have jointly invested nearly $200 billion in third-party oil and gas projects across the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa.

To maintain this momentum, Liu suggested that both sides should expand cooperation into emerging fields such as energy storage and power grid technology.

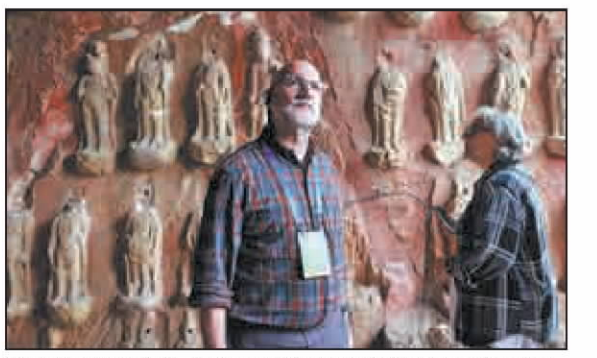
Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said that stable and predictable energy trade has provided an important area of mutual benefit.

As China's demand is predictable and the US supply is expanding, energy can serve as a bridge through which both sides can achieve tactical gains, Lin said.

Experts also recommended strengthening ties in traditional industrial sectors, including the supply of chemical feedstocks such as ethane and propane, as well as uranium mining.

"Establishing regular dialogue mechanisms between think tanks and industry bodies in both countries will be essential for stabilizing market expectations and deepening mutual consensus," said Liu from the Economics & Technology Research Institute. "This framework is necessary to ensure that energy cooperation remains a robust cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, even amid broader geopolitical shifts and profound changes in the global landscape," he added.

Heritage tour



Steve Carpenter (left), chairman of the Central China Executive Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, admires carvings at the Thousand Buddha Cliff in Guangyuan, Sichuan province, on March 25. More than 30 scholars and business representatives from China and the United States explored this largest grotto complex in Sichuan, which boasts over 7,000 Buddhist statues. The work started in the late Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) and flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). WANG LEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Visit: Both sides should be beacons for building bridges

From page 1

I have advocated, over decades, that the best way for the US to compete with China is to invest in our own people, infrastructure, technology and education, rather than trying to "knock China down". Pushing a strategy to hold China back will be as effective as starting to build a chain-link fence as a tsunami is coming ashore.

Worldwide, people are closely watching the development of the US-China interaction, hoping that agreements would be reached to promote a more stable world order.

China-US economic and trade cooperation has brought benefits and challenges to both countries for over half a century.

We are at an inflection point. A miscalculation or mistake will have a devastating global impact.

While we need to continue to work toward building sensible economic, cultural and military ties, it is vital that China and the US continue to follow a seven Cs framework to help manage this delicate bilateral relationship, which is critical to the world:

- Communication (Open, high-level and subnational channels)
- Collaboration (On global issues like health and climate)
- Cooperation (To seek win-win solutions)
- Coordination (On regional and global issues)
- Competition (Managed and constructive)
- Contextual Understanding (Grasping the history and perspectives of both nations)
- Avoiding confrontation, conflict and casualties

Worldwide, people are closely watching the development of the US-China interaction, hoping that agreements would be reached to promote a more stable world order.

As the 21st century unfolds, both the US and China should be the beacons for building bridges.

It is imperative that we find ways to develop a shared vision and common agenda in areas that are in our collective national interests while we have open dialogue on topics where we disagree.

Chinese and US activists, not just governments, should work to create and endow a robust international exchange, a people-to-people organization that connects students, artists, writers, athletes, tourists, educators, health and behavioral healthcare professionals, poets, sub-national government officials and NGOs between our two countries to listen, to understand and build bridges that will help sustain peace and prosperity for all.

These kinds of global connections lay the groundwork for meaningful dialogues, thoughtful synergy, mutual respect, joint prosperity and peaceful collaboration.

We need to get along and jointly prosper peacefully.

The author was deputy chief of staff to former Michigan governor James Blanchard, president and CEO of the economic council of Palm Beach County, Florida. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Summit: Cooperation is a realistic choice

From page 1

In March 2024, when meeting in Beijing with representatives from the US business, strategic and academic communities, Xi said that whether the two countries can find the right way to get along bears on the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity.

Sun said the most immediate benefit of a stable and predictable China-US relationship is that it reduces uncertainty for both sides.

"If tensions continue to rise, those affected first are often not abstract strategic interests, but ordinary businesses, farmers, consumers, international students and researchers," Sun said.

He added that trade barriers would push up costs, technology restrictions would narrow the space for innovation cooperation, and fewer people-to-people exchanges would weaken mutual understanding between the two societies.

Beyond the bilateral level, China-US cooperation is also closely watched in terms of its implications for global governance at a time when the world faces sluggish growth, geopolitical tensions and mounting challenges requiring international coordination.

In Busan last year, Xi told Trump: "The world today is confronted with many tough problems. China and the US can jointly shoulder our responsibility as major countries, and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of our two countries and the whole world."

According to Sun, many global challenges — from climate change and artificial intelligence to public health, financial stability and regional security — cannot be effectively addressed without sustained communication between the two countries.

Zhu, of Bucknell University, echoed that view, saying that if the two most powerful nations cannot get along well, the global economy will suffer and international cooperation on critical issues such as climate change and AI governance will become difficult.

The resilience of the relationship also depends on whether the two societies can maintain direct contact and mutual understanding.

David Chong, founder and president of the US-China Youth and Student Exchange Association, said that he has become increasingly aware that keeping the giant ship of China-US relations moving steadily requires joint efforts from both countries at all levels.

Since 2015, Chong's association has helped bring more than 2,000 young Americans to China for exchange programs. Through activities ranging from cultural and sports exchanges to experiencing cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, young Americans have been able to see, hear and experience China firsthand in concrete and everyday settings.

"People-to-people organizations may not be in the 'cockpit' of the giant ship," Chong said, "but they can serve as 'connectors' and 'road builders' by strengthening the cultural and social foundation for the steady development of China-US relations".

Sun, the researcher, said that cooperation remains the most realistic and responsible choice.

"The reason is simple: Competition cannot erase interdependence, and differences cannot eliminate shared risks," Sun said. "China and the US cannot expect a voyage without winds and waves, but they must not allow the storms to decide the course."

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Summit to chart path for Sino-US ties

Head-of-state diplomacy essential for restoring trade stability: Experts

By **BELINDA ROBINSON** in New York and **RENA LI** in Los Angeles

As the heads of state of the world's two largest economies start their meetings in Beijing this week, trade experts and economists said they expected the summit to chart the course for the future of bilateral ties and help restore stability to global trade.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump will meet in Beijing, as Trump arrived on Wednesday for a three-day state visit to China.

China said on Monday that it was ready to work with the United States to expand cooperation, manage differences and inject more stability and certainty into a turbulent and changing world.

During a Port of Los Angeles media briefing on Monday, former US trade representative Katherine Tai described the meeting as "a really important moment for the US-China trade relationship".

Responding to a China Daily question on what is most needed to help reduce global uncertainty surrounding tariffs, supply chains and broader trade relations — including lower tariffs, clearer rules, or greater predictability — Tai, who served as the principal trade adviser and negotiator on US trade policy during the administration of former president Joe Biden, emphasized the importance of policy clarity and long-term planning.

"I think that what we need most — and I say 'we' in the real collective sense, because this relationship impacts everybody around the world — is some clarity around the principles that the United States wants to put out there and to enforce in the relationship with China," Tai said.

She said uncertainty in recent trade policies and market expectations has affected governments, businesses and global supply chains, adding that clearer communication and more consistent policy direction would help support long-term economic planning and cooperation.

Tai further noted that strategic pressure alone cannot sustain a functional trade relationship despite the fact that both nations have the capability to "choke" each other in strategic sectors.

"Once you have each other's attention, then you actually need to have an agenda and a plan in place for the short term, the medium term and the long term, for making this very important, complicated and challenged trade relationship work," Tai said.

Jerry Nickelsburg, director & senior economist at the UCLA Anderson Forecast, said the meeting between Chinese and US leaders could help provide a more stable environment even as longer-term shifts continue.

Despite recent adjustments in global trade flows, the interdependence of the two markets remains significant. China continues to serve as the third-largest export market for the United States, following Canada and Mexico, according to US trade figures.

"There seems to be an interest in preserving the stability of the current situation in US-China economic relations on both sides," Nickelsburg said.

Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said that Chinese factories and exporters continue to operate steadily despite ongoing trade tensions.

Mitigating uncertainty

During recent visits to Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, Seroka noted that order volumes remained stable, even as China expanded its exports to other global trading partners to mitigate uncertainty.

Jim Sutter, CEO of the US Soybean Export Council, expressed hope that the meeting would reaffirm China's purchase of US agricultural goods, including soybeans, calling soybeans an "important indicator" of the strengthening ties between the two nations.

US industry leaders and local officials have echoed the call for cooperation.

Jeffery Jones, chairman of the Council for Trade and Investment Promotion in New Jersey, said that trade and business development should remain a priority.

"I'm a former mayor. On the political side of things, I don't have to go to the presidential level to say that from one town to another, municipal level, if we don't work together, nothing good happens," he added.

Daniel Mabey, Asia Region President for the United Natural Products Alliance, noted that because China is a major supply chain partner for numerous industries, it is essential that "dialogue continues and continues to move forward" to get the relationship back on a productive track.

"Most of the US-China relationship is based on trade and China is a big supply chain partner for a lot of industries, not just our industry," Mabey said.

"I used to live in Beijing for a long time ... I have had lots of industry dialogue. We need to get the tracks straightened again and work together."

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A visitor interacts with a robot from the Chinese robotics company Fourier during the 2026 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the United States, on Jan 8. The 2026 CES, the world's premier technology event, attracted thousands of exhibitors from more than 155 countries and regions, according to the US Consumer Technology Association, the organizer of CES. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

Eye on the ball



Enthusiasts from the US visit a pickleball production company in Shangyou county in Jiangxi province, on Sunday. The county has launched a comprehensive three-year plan for 2024 to 2026 that includes 13 million yuan ($1.8 million) in subsidies to support the sport and a special fund for hosting tournaments. ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Leaders' interactions offer 'irreplaceable strategic guidance' for US-China ties

By **ZHAO HUANXIN** in New York
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Beijing's top envoy in Washington has said that interactions between the heads of state provide "irreplaceable strategic guidance" for China-US ties, expressing hope that this week's summit will be a "successful one" that will chart the "right course" for future relations.

At the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump is visiting China from Wednesday to Friday.

In an interview with Newsweek published on Tuesday, Ambassador Xie Feng said that with the joint efforts of both sides, the summit will hopefully see the two countries expand cooperation and properly manage differences, while exploring ways to get along in the "new era" based on mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

"In an increasingly turbulent world, the strategic value of China-US relations becomes more prominent," Xie said. "A stable and constructive China-US relationship not only serves the fundamental interests of both our peoples, but also meets the shared expectation of the international community."

On the Taiwan question, Xie said that he believed the American people, who faced the danger of division and had a civil war in the past, can understand China's will and determination to safeguard national unity.

The Chinese side urges the US side to commit to the one-China principle, the three China-US joint communiques with concrete actions, make the right choice as early as possible, fundamentally remove the biggest obstacle to China-US relations, which is the Taiwan question — a burden that risks dragging the two countries into confrontation and conflict — and open up broader room for developing bilateral ties, Xie said.

Xie also said that history has proven once and again that a tariff war or trade war produces no winner, damages the interests of both sides, and hurts the whole world.

He noted that under the guidance of the two leaders, China and the United States have reached a series of common understandings through economic and trade consultations, and have stabilized bilateral economic and trade relations.

"This has not come easily and should be cherished. But it is still far from enough. We hope the US side will move further ahead and completely remove the unilateral tariffs and other restrictive measures," he said.

Xie said competition between the United States and China should be viewed as a "track-and-field race toward mutual excellence" rather than a "zero-sum boxing match".

"Let our two countries compete to offer more public goods to the world, to better help developing nations reduce and eliminate poverty, and to contribute more to the sustained and inclusive development of the global economy," the envoy said.

Turning to the fentanyl issue, Xie noted that the fentanyl crisis in the US was not created by China, but "out of the humanitarian spirit and for the sake of China-US friendship", China is providing assistance to combat the "common enemy of humanity".

He noted the current US administration has strengthened legislation, law enforcement and regulatory control to combat fentanyl, and the number of fentanyl-related deaths in the US has dropped by 37.5 percent, to which China also made important and positive contributions.

He urged Washington to appreciate and cherish China's goodwill, view bilateral cooperation outcomes in a just manner, stop shifting the blame for the fentanyl issue, avoid imposing alternative tariffs as substitutes for fentanyl-related tariffs, and remove China from the list of so-called "major drug source countries" as soon as possible.

On artificial intelligence, Xie said that the world does not want to see an "Iron Curtain" in AI, nor attempts at technological enclosure, let alone a Star Wars-style rivalry.

"China-US coordination on AI bears on the future of both our countries and the entire humanity. We hope the US side will work with us in the same direction, to enhance dialogue, manage competition and conduct cooperation, so that AI will become a new frontier for China-US cooperation and a new ladder for human progress," Xie said.

Chinese Americans welcome leaders' meeting

By **LIA ZHU** and **CHELSEA GE** in San Francisco

US President Donald Trump's state visit to Beijing from Wednesday to Friday, the first visit to China by a US president in nine years, has sparked enthusiasm among Chinese Americans, who view the meeting between the two heads of state as an important moment for dialogue, cooperation, and understanding between the two countries.

During the visit, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump are expected to have in-depth discussions on major issues, including China-US relations, world peace and international development.

"I'm excited at this opportunity for President Trump to go to China and visit President Xi," Phillip Chen, a California Assembly member, told China Daily. "I believe that this world right now is a very large village, and that the relationship between China and the United States will continue to blossom."

"I personally think that as it stands right now, we've been cooperating for many, many years. We have to make sure that we work closely together to make sure that our mutual interests are served sufficiently," he said, adding that he hoped the meeting would help open up opportunities for more exchanges and cooperation.

William Zhang, a San Francisco-based community leader and an ardent advocate for peaceful cross-Strait relations, called the meeting "a long-awaited conversation between the two heads of state".

"President Trump will hopefully learn firsthand how much importance the Chinese government places on the peaceful reunification of the nation," he said, adding that Washington should uphold the one-China principle. "It is a prerequisite for the stable and healthy development of China-US relations," Zhang said.

Lei Wang, a Chinese culture advocate in Southern California, sees the leaders' meeting as an opportunity to promote and expand understanding of Chinese culture at the federal level.

"This is a good thing. There's a popular song in China right now called *Better to Meet in Person* and I believe that a meeting between the two countries' leaders will help deepen mutual understanding," he told China Daily.

Wang, also a small-business owner, said he hoped the meeting would help promote business interaction, trade activities and business investment between the two countries.

California, located on the Pacific coast, is an important gateway for Chinese goods entering the US, said Wang. "If China-US relations aren't good and trade relations don't flow smoothly, it will seriously affect California's foreign trade, imports and exports, which in turn affects many people's employment and how businesses operate."

"We need the trade to continue to support the employment and the society here in the US," Wang said. "Therefore, I really hope that both sides can deepen understanding in trade and economic relations, reach consensus, and push the relationship toward a more positive and stable direction."

Despite differences and frictions that have marked bilateral relations, Hu Lirong, CEO of CW Bearing USA, expressed confidence in dialogue between the presidents.

"These are challenges that can ultimately be worked through under the leadership of the two countries' leaders," he told China Daily.

Hu said the company has focused on localized operations, creating jobs for the community, with young employees accounting for about 30 percent of its workforce. He added that the company places strong emphasis on technical expertise and cross-cultural communication.

Chang Jun in San Francisco and Li Mingmei in New York contributed to this story.

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Observers in Europe pin hopes on dialogue

By **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Brussels
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As US President Donald Trump began his visit to China on Wednesday — his second state visit to China following his previous trip in November 2017 and his first during his second presidential term — European political and business figures are closely watching the bilateral relationship.

The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump comes at a time of heightened global uncertainty, marked by geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, supply chain disruptions and slowing growth across major economies. Some observers in Europe believe that stable China-US relations are increasingly seen not only as a bilateral necessity, but also as a prerequisite for global economic predictability and international stability.

Ondrej Dostal, a Czech member of the European Parliament, described Trump's visit as a recognition of China's global importance and of the limits of confrontation-based policies.

Dostal argued that unilateral pressure and economic coercion have undermined international trust and damaged global trade. The world needs stable trade, mutual respect, diplomacy, infrastructure, development, and coexistence between civilizations.

According to Dostal, the leaders' meeting may also encourage European governments to reassess their own approach toward China. "If even Washington now recognizes that it must negotiate with Beijing, then European governments should finally stop pretending that confrontation with China serves European interests," he said.

Former director-general for international affairs in the German state of Hessen Michael Borchmann said the meeting carries significance far beyond bilateral ties.

Quoting a US research institute's description of the meeting as "Managing the World's Most Important Relationship", Borchmann said the phrase "absolutely fits" the current geopolitical environment.

Enhancing communication

"At a time when the world is facing growing uncertainty and fragmentation, enhancing communication, managing differences and maintaining stable China-US relations also benefits the world," he said.

Borchmann said the meeting follows last year's temporary trade truce reached in Busan, South Korea, where both sides attempted to halt escalating tariff retaliation. He expressed hope that the meeting would deepen consensus on trade and issues including the Middle East and global development.

He also referenced Xi's long-standing emphasis on stable bilateral ties. "There are a thousand reasons to make the China-US relationship a success, but not a single reason to break it," Borchmann quoted Xi as saying.

From the European business community, Bernard Dewit, chairman of the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, stressed the importance of constructive engagement between the world's two largest economies.

Speaking from a European perspective, Dewit described stable China-US relations as "very important" for global economic and geopolitical certainty.

He noted that many European countries are facing economic recovery challenges, inflationary pressures and security concerns, and said improved China-US ties could help reduce tensions, restore investor confidence and strengthen international cooperation.

Dewit also emphasized Europe's preference for dialogue over bloc confrontation. Europe, he said, does not want to see the world divided into opposing camps and instead supports multilateralism, predictability and strategic autonomy.

As the leaders' meeting unfolds in Beijing, many in Europe will be watching closely for signs that the two major powers can stabilize relations and provide a measure of certainty to an increasingly fragmented world.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Harley Seyedin

Strengthening bilateral ties for global stability

The relationship between the United States and China remains one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. As US President Donald Trump is visiting Beijing, both countries have an opportunity to strengthen cooperation, stabilize economic ties and promote prosperity for their peoples and the global economy.

Despite years of trade tensions and tariffs, the two economies are deeply interconnected. Research by the Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions emphasizes that the two nations benefit enormously from trade, investment, innovation, and educational exchange.

US consumers and businesses benefit from affordable goods and integrated supply chains, while Chinese consumers and businesses benefit from access to US technology, agricultural products, financial services, and higher education.

Millions of jobs in both countries are linked directly or indirectly to this economic relationship.

One major development in recent years has been the significant reduction in the US-China trade deficit.

According to data from the Office of the US Trade Representative and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, the US goods trade deficit with China fell to approximately $202.1 billion in 2025, down from $295.5 billion in 2024. This represents a 31.6 percent reduction in just one year.

The decline was due to changes in supply chains, increased domestic manufacturing in some sectors, diversification of trade partners, and evolving tariff policies. Yet even with these adjustments, bilateral trade remained enormous. Total China-US goods trade still exceeded $414 billion in 2025, demonstrating that the two economies continue to rely on each other in many areas.

Global Lens

By focusing on practical cooperation and long-term mutual benefit, the two countries can build a more positive and productive relationship that benefits not only themselves, but the entire world.

Trump's visit provides an opportunity to move beyond confrontation and toward practical cooperation.

Both nations share common interests in global economic stability, energy security, climate resilience, public health, artificial intelligence governance and financial market stability.

Cooperation between Washington and Beijing is not simply beneficial for US and Chinese citizens; it is essential for global growth and international confidence.

There are many areas where positive collaboration can expand. In agriculture, China remains an important market for US farmers exporting soybeans, corn, beef and other products. Increased agricultural purchases can help support rural communities across the US while ensuring food security and stable supplies for Chinese consumers.

In technology, both countries can cooperate on standards for AI safety, cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing. Joint research partnerships between universities and companies have historically produced breakthroughs in medicine, engineering and clean energy.

Climate and energy cooperation also present major opportunities. The US and China are the world's two largest economies and energy consumers.

By working together on renewable energy, battery storage, carbon reduction technologies, and electric vehicles, both countries can accelerate innovation while creating jobs and investment opportunities. Cooperation in these sectors could help reduce global emissions while improving energy affordability and reliability.

Educational and cultural exchanges are equally important. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students have studied in US universities over the past two decades, contributing billions of dollars to local economies while building people-to-people ties.

Academic collaboration and tourism help reduce misunderstandings and strengthen mutual respect. Business leaders, students, scientists, and cultural organizations all benefit when relations are stable and constructive.

The global economy also benefits from open communication between the US and China. Financial markets react positively to signs of dialogue and predictability between the two powers.

Businesses on both sides want stable policies, clear regulations, and reduced uncertainty. A cooperative atmosphere encourages investment, strengthens supply chains, and supports economic growth worldwide.

While differences will remain on trade, security, and geopolitical issues, history shows that engagement produces better outcomes than isolation. Strong diplomacy and mutual respect can help manage disagreements while preserving areas of common interest. The US and China are competitors in some areas, but they are also partners in maintaining global prosperity and stability.

Trump's visit could become an important moment to reset the tone of the relationship.

Constructive discussions on trade, investment, market access and economic cooperation could create new momentum for both nations.

The US and Chinese peoples both seek economic opportunity, stable growth, innovation, and peace.

By focusing on practical cooperation and long-term mutual benefit, the two countries can build a more positive and productive relationship that benefits not only themselves, but the entire world.

The author is the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in South China, and the winner of the 2017 Oslo Business for Peace Award, which is awarded by a committee consisting of Nobel laureates in peace and economics. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Jack Midgley

When friends far away can share daily life in real time

Young Chinese creators on Xiaohongshu post a smart study nook or a city workout routine, and peers from the United States quickly take notice.

They borrow the idea, tweak it for their own lives, and share it right back.

This digital back-and-forth links millions of young people, quietly building the trust and practical know-how that enables real innovation.

Global Lens

These are the new "people-to-people" exchanges. They happen daily without long flights or months of planning.

Free, effortless and constant, these digital connections are shaping an inclusive future of innovation among people in China and the United States.

Presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump have an important opportunity to amplify these connections when they meet in Beijing.

Together, they can help transform the grassroots energy into productive China-US ties that are already growing at the speed of digital connections.

Xiaohongshu's explosive growth brings this to life. The platform's lifestyle content routinely generates massive engagement domestically, while its cross-border search functionality has captured a multi-million-strong audience in the US.

US students respond to Chinese posts with duets and adaptations, often tagging back with comments like "Xiaohongshu changed my set-up!" as tips on lighting, storage, and focus zones flow freely.

President Xi captured the heart of this dynamic when he said that the hope of China-US relations lies in the people.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

The numbers reinforce this statement. Xiaohongshu racked up around 3.7 million US downloads in early 2025 and is projected to hit double digit millions this year, while already serving over 300 million monthly users worldwide.

A vast majority of these users are young people.

TikTok connects with 170 million US users, many of them young people sharing news and ideas, while in 2026 duets between Chinese and US creators have attracted hundreds of millions of views.

These platforms keep the innovative exchanges flowing constantly and cheaply, shrugging off diplomatic ups and downs in the relationship.

Miranda Qu, Xiaohongshu's co-founder, laid the groundwork for this trend by turning community input into viral lifestyle solutions that now draw global audiences.

The platform stands out because young Chinese creators blend personal stories with actionable advice on focus-boosting study setups, apartment-friendly fitness routines, and smart daily hacks.

US youth have joined in, blending Chinese precision with their own creative twists to build sharper, more intentional habits on both sides of the Pacific.

These real people-to-people exchanges build habits of cross-cultural innovation.

TikTok's Khaby Lame adds speed to the mix with his silent takedowns of overcomplicated life hacks that resonate universally, while Xiaohongshu provides the depth that makes these exchanges truly transformative.

What makes these digital exchanges so potent is their role in providing the secret sauce of innovation: an intuitive feel for what clicks with users.

When a Chinese creator's dorm organization trick reshapes a US student's space, or Khaby's simplicity sharpens a video edit, they are co-creating that shared sense in real time.

A joint summit statement pledging support for digital youth exchanges would encourage young people both from China and the US to build on today's rapidly-growing interactions.

The benefits can go far beyond feel-good moments.

These connections humanize people on both sides of the Pacific and equip the next generation with important skills to tackle global opportunities such as climate tech, supply chains, artificial intelligence and even the exploration of space.

Above all, they demonstrate that real cooperation can hum along even when global politics does not.

Curiosity has a way of outpacing the need for total agreement every time.

The real story of China and US relations is playing out on screens everywhere.

Young creators are already linking people and cultures across the Pacific.

The summit of the two leaders is helping to endorse those bridges and ensure they grow into the enduring ties that define a bright future for the countries that young people will lead one day.

The author is principal consultant at Midgley & Company and an adjunct associate professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Zhu Feng

Only cooperation with China serves US interests

US President Donald Trump's visit to China, and expected head-of-state meetings, are drawing a lot of attention at a time when the world is seeing conflicts in Ukraine and the Strait of Hormuz. A key task for both Beijing and Washington is to sustain a stable, manageable and enduring bilateral relationship.

Although geopolitical experts often refer to the "Thucydides Trap" theory — a phenomenon whereby a rising power can cause fear in an established power, escalating to war — to interpret Sino-US relations, China has taken a different approach.

This is evident in the strategies it employed to counter the tariff war initiated by Washington last year, and its vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, which is supported by four global initiatives and guided by principles of mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

This approach has worked, producing steady, positive outcomes in bilateral interactions, while acting as a stabilizing force in a turbulent, ever-changing world.

In this context, Washington should take advantage of the opportunity for dialogue presented by the US leader's visit, to seek closer cooperation with China.

While some in the US who view China as their greatest "strategic competitor" and seek to contain it have done little to conceal their intentions, the broader trend of China-US exchanges and collaboration remains unstoppable.

This disconnect on the US side needs to be addressed with an objective understanding of Beijing.

After the US Supreme Court ruled in February that the US administration's imposition of reciprocal tariffs on trading partners under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act was illegal, the US side levied an additional 10 percent import surcharge on all trading partners under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974.

As the Chinese side has repeatedly emphasized, China and the US need to enable each other's success as interests converge and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

The US also introduced a series of negative measures concerning China, including the Section 301 investigations, aimed at undermining China's production capacity advantages and reducing dependence on Chinese industry and supply chains.

However, Washington should have been aware that, given China's 35 percent share of global industrial output, a rapid and complete decoupling is unattainable.

Although the US administration is trying to keep a relatively low profile on the Taiwan question and disputes in the South China Sea, its arms sales to the Chinese island in late 2025 were the largest since 1979.

Additionally, joint military exercises with the Philippines and other external forces in the South China Sea have significantly increased in frequency.

The US should not treat softened rhetoric as a short-term, tactical measure to stabilize bilateral relations.

A US-led rare earths supply alliance designed to reduce dependence on China's rare earths is closely tied to technological innovation and access to critical resources. The same is true of Washington's ambition to revitalize and expand its manufacturing sector.

However, the path to "make America great again" is not necessarily contradictory to China's great rejuvenation. China's significant growth potential, as revealed in its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), can offer US enterprises many opportunities to cooperate with their Chinese counterparts.

For China-US relations to continue providing mutual economic benefits, fostering exchanges across various social sectors, and enhancing complementary security through normal engagement and cooperation, the US side needs to foster a correct perception of China within its broader strategic framework.

Despite some challenges, Sino-US relations have remained generally stable, thanks to head-of-state diplomacy, with the two leaders maintaining frequent communication and dialogue, and recalibrating the direction of ties at critical junctures.

As the Chinese side has repeatedly emphasized, China and the US need to enable each other's success as interests converge, and to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

Both China and the US should make mutual respect the cornerstone, peaceful coexistence the principle and win-win cooperation the goal.

This approach will help the two countries explore the appropriate way to interact, jointly contributing to global peace and stability.

China will never follow the obsolete model of a country seeking hegemony when growing stronger. It will instead remain committed to peaceful development.

Beijing hopes that Washington can respect China's core interests and work together to properly manage differences.

In a world facing increasing turmoil, a stable China-US relationship not only serves the fundamental interests of both nations but also aligns with the widespread expectations of the international community.

The author is the dean and a professor of the School of International Studies, Nanjing University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Star power



From left: New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson, United States actor Elijah Wood, Chinese actress Gong Li, US actress Jane Fonda and South Korean director Park Chan-wook wave during the opening ceremony and premiere screening of *The Electric Kiss* at the 79th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, on Tuesday. SAMEER AL-DOUMY / AFP

Iran hardens stance on strait

Tehran moves to draft new regulations for key waterway as oil flows dwindle

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

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that Tehran is currently in consultations to develop regulations governing arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz based on international law.

Araghchi made the remark during a meeting in Tehran with Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, formalizing what senior officials have been signaling in recent weeks — that Iran intends to establish a new legal order for the waterway.

Last month, International Maritime Organization Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said that countries have no right to blockade international straits or impede the freedom of navigation through straits used for international transit.

Iran's arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz could face setbacks as a United Nations Security Council draft resolution calling for freedom of navigation in the strait is gaining traction with 112 cosponsors, Al Jazeera reported on Wednesday.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have joined Bahrain and the United States as principal sponsors, according to the report. India, Japan, South Korea, Kenya, Argentina and most European Union member states have also signed on, it added.

More than one month after a tenuous ceasefire took effect, US and Iranian demands to end the war remain far apart.

Washington has called for Tehran to scrap its nuclear program and lift its chokehold on the strait, while Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to the US blockade and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said Israeli drones struck three vehicles on the main highway south of Beirut on Wednesday, killing eight people, including a woman and her two children.

Iran has urged the United States and Israel to accept its rights and demands, warning that any new aggression would be met with a swift and regretful response.

Iranian Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik told reporters that the US and Israel would have to submit to Iran's legitimate and definitive rights, either on the battlefield or at the diplomatic table.

"If the enemy does not yield to Iran's rightful demands in diplomacy, it should expect a repeat of its past defeats on the military field," Talaei-Nik said, the Mehr News Agency reported.

The conflict is weighing heavily on global energy markets. Global oil supply will fall by around 3.9 million barrels per day across 2026 and undershoot demand because of disruptions caused by the crisis, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday, with more than 1 billion barrels of Middle East supply already lost.

Brent crude futures edged down slightly to around $107 per barrel, after a three-day rally driven by the Hormuz deadlock.

Energy deals

Meanwhile, Iraq and Pakistan have cut deals with Iran to ship oil and liquefied natural gas from the Gulf, according to five sources with knowledge of the matter, Reuters reported.

In a deal between Baghdad and Tehran that has not been previously reported, Iraq secured safe passage for two very large crude carriers, each carrying about 2 million barrels of crude, that passed through the strait on Sunday.

Iraq is working to secure Iran's approval for more transits, an Iraqi oil ministry official familiar with the initial deal and current talks told Reuters, as the government seeks to safeguard the oil revenues that make up 95 percent of its budget.

A second ministry official and a shipping industry source also confirmed the talks with Tehran. All of the sources requested anonymity as they were not authorized to speak on the matter.

Similarly, two tankers loaded with Qatari liquefied natural gas are headed to Pakistan following a separate bilateral agreement between Islamabad and Tehran, two industry sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters, also asking not to be named as they were not permitted to speak with media.

In another development, the Arab League urged Iran on Tuesday to cease all hostile acts against Arab states and condemned the alleged infiltration of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps into Kuwait's Bubiyan Island, which resulted in the injury of one of the Kuwait Armed Forces' personnel.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the armed infiltration of Kuwaiti territory "constitutes a dangerous precedent that cannot be tolerated and represents a serious escalation".

Iran's Foreign Ministry rejected the claims as "baseless", saying four Iranian officers had entered Kuwait's territorial waters because of a navigation system disruption during a routine maritime patrol mission and called on Kuwaiti authorities to resolve the issue through official channels.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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US Senate approves Warsh to Federal Reserve board

NEW YORK — The United States Senate on Tuesday confirmed Kevin Warsh to a 14-year term as a Federal Reserve governor, marking a pivotal step toward his expected ascension as the next leader of the central bank.

The confirmation passed with a 51-45 vote. In a notable break from party lines, Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was the sole Democrat to join the Republican majority in supporting the appointment. Warsh will succeed Stephen Miran on the board, with his term retroactively beginning on Feb 1.

Following the vote, the Senate immediately initiated the confirmation process for Warsh's concurrent four-year term as Fed chair. The transition comes as the term of incumbent Jerome Powell is set to expire on Friday.

Warsh, 56, is a lawyer and financier who previously served as a Federal Reserve governor from 2006 to 2011, playing a key role in navigating the global financial crisis during that time. His return to the board comes amid heightened scrutiny of the central bank's political independence.

Powell has announced he intends to remain on the board as a governor after his chairmanship ends, saying he plans to keep a low profile.



Kevin Warsh testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington on April 21 during his nomination hearing to be a member and chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. JOSE LUIS MAGANA / AP

For his part, Warsh signaled a shift in direction for the Fed, calling for "regime change". His proposed strategy includes tighter coordination with the Treasury Department and the administration on nonmonetary policies.

However, the economic landscape remains challenging. A surge in global oil prices since the outbreak of the US-Israeli war against Iran has fueled domestic inflation, significantly dampening investor expectations for rate cuts this year.

Financial markets are currently pricing in a one-in-three chance of a rate hike by December. The Fed's current target range for short-term borrowing costs stands at 3.5 percent to 3.75 percent.

The Federal Open Market Committee is scheduled to hold its next policy-setting meeting on June 16-17.

Data released on Tuesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed US prices for most goods and services surged in April.

The Consumer Price Index increased at a seasonally adjusted 0.6 percent month-on-month and 3.8 percent year-on-year. Stripping out food and energy, the core CPI ticked up 0.4 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively.

The year-on-year headline rate of inflation hit the highest level since May 2023.

Analysts said the war in Iran is to blame, as prices have increased because of higher oil prices stemming from the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, through which some 20 percent of the world's oil flows.

Dean Baker, cofounder of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, said the war has sent oil prices higher and "we are beginning to see ripple effects in other areas".

"Prices are now outpacing wages, meaning that workers are on average worse off than they were a year ago," he said.

XINHUA

Australia extends EV tax breaks as fuel fears grow

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Australia has extended an electric vehicle purchase incentive program as it aims to cut dependence on fossil fuels amid the Middle East crisis, a move expected to benefit Chinese automakers that have been gaining ground in the country in recent years.

The federal budget, unveiled by Treasurer Jim Chalmers on Tuesday, keeps in place current tax exemptions for EVs under the Electric Car Discount policy until March next year, before the discounts — which go back to July 2022 — are wound down starting April 2027.

The ongoing support for EVs is part of measures to strengthen "fuel resilience", as the conflict in the Middle East has been "pushing up prices, pushing down growth, and punishing Australians", Chalmers said in his budget speech.

Hussein Dia, a professor of transport technology and sustainability at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, told China Daily that "one of the clearest signals" of the budget announcement is that "Australia is moving from early EV adoption toward a broader transport system transition".

"The focus is gradually expanding beyond short-term incentives toward longer-term resilience, infrastructure, productivity and energy security," Dia said.

"The continuation, but gradual recalibration, of the Electric Car Discount suggests the government believes the EV market is now maturing. The policy has played an important role in normalizing EVs in Australia and accelerating early uptake," he said.

Recent fuel disruptions and geopolitical uncertainty in global oil markets have also reinforced the importance of reducing dependence on imported liquid fuels, he added.

"In that sense, transport policy is increasingly becoming energy policy. Electrification is now being viewed not only through an environmental lens, but also through economic resilience and national security lenses," he said.

The continuation of the EV discount comes amid record sales, with EVs accounting for 16.4 percent of all new vehicle sales in Australia in April, according to the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries.

"The Electric Car Discount has provided important stimulus to the market, and its continuation will support the growth of EVs," the chamber's chief executive, Tony Weber, said.

Chinese players' role

The purchase incentive is expected to benefit Chinese automakers, which made up four of the top 10 selling brands in April, with one of BYD's best-selling EV models alone recording 1,780 units, or an increase of 139.6 percent year-on-year, according to the chamber.

Dia said Chinese EV makers are playing an increasingly important role in the Australian market.

"Brands such as BYD have helped expand the range of more affordable EV models available to Australian consumers, particularly during a cost-of-living period where price remains one of the biggest barriers to adoption," he said.

"Increased competition is helping make EVs more mainstream and accelerating the transition away from imported fossil fuels."

Aman Gaur, head of legal, policy and advocacy at the Electric Vehicle Council, likewise referred to the growing role of Chinese carmakers in Australia, which has a "competitive automotive market with over 60 brands providing a variety of cars for all lifestyles".

"Chinese manufacturers have added more options for Australians with a great range of electric cars on offer," he said.

Labour divisions in UK overshadow King's Speech

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer sought to shift the focus from personalities to policy on Wednesday as the King's Speech to Parliament set out his government's legislative agenda for the coming year.

The speech, written by the government but delivered with royal pageantry by King Charles III, outlined new initiatives on energy security, defense, immigration and education reform, but it was the internal wranglings of the governing Labour Party that continued to dominate the headlines across the UK.

Starmer, who has been in office for less than two years, has faced mounting pressure following Labour's dismal performance in last week's local elections, with his leadership being picked out as one of the main causes of voter rejection.

On Tuesday, four ministers resigned in protest against Starmer's continued leadership. The most high-profile departure was Health Secretary Wes Streeting, widely regarded as a serious contender to replace him.

Another possible candidate would be Andy Burnham, though the Greater Manchester mayor would first need to return to Parliament before mounting a leadership bid, likely requiring a sitting Labour lawmaker to vacate a seat and trigger a by-election.

On Wednesday morning, Streeting was called in to Starmer's Downing Street office for a face-to-face meeting, leaving less than 20 minutes later.

Around lunchtime, The Daily Telegraph reported that Streeting was set to quit his post, with an ally saying he was "going to go for it" after the meeting, and that a leadership contest could be triggered as soon as Thursday.

Starmer's spokesperson, meanwhile, told reporters on Wednesday that "the prime minister has full confidence in the health secretary".

The BBC's political editor, Chris Mason, quoted a Starmer loyalist as saying that Streeting lacked sufficient backing to trigger a formal leadership challenge, while Burnham "doesn't have a seat, for all this noise". "Wes has bottled it and caused massive damage and instability in the process," the ally added.

Sky News reported that more than 100 Labour lawmakers have added their names to a letter saying the party needs to focus on "working together to deliver the change the country needs ... this is no time for a leadership contest", but it is believed that around 90 others have come out and called on Starmer to go.

In a further blow to his authority, 11 major trade unions affiliated with the Labour Party have issued a joint statement calling the local election results "devastating", and saying they have no confidence in Starmer's continued leadership.

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COMMENT

Editorials

China ready to work with US in spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit

While global turbulence does not always stem from shifts in major-country relations, stable and healthy ties between the world's two largest economies can help facilitate the easing of international turmoil as their intertwined economic relationship is a stabilizer for the world economy.

Under such circumstances, US President Donald Trump's state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday has naturally attracted wide attention as head-of-state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable and strategically vital role in guiding China-US ties.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Wednesday, China welcomes Trump's visit, during which the two leaders will have in-depth exchanges of views on key issues concerning bilateral ties and global peace and development.

The Sino-US economic and trade consultations held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday also serve to highlight the two sides' commitment to managing their differences through dialogue and negotiation. The candid, in-depth and constructive exchanges on economic and trade issues of mutual concern, as well as on further expanding practical cooperation, carry on the momentum of the previous six rounds of talks and show the complementarity of Sino-US economic ties.

It is precisely this pragmatism that — despite their differences — has enabled practical cooperation between China and the United States to continue demonstrating vitality and potential under the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy over the past years — even in the face of attempts by some to derail it.

The business delegation led by Trump on his visit to China, which consists of business leaders of some big-name companies in a wide range of strategic sectors, including semiconductors, finance and artificial intelligence, further illustrates the willingness of the US business community to expand mutually beneficial cooperation with China.

The two countries possess broad space for cooperation in fields such as AI, health, green development, advanced manufacturing and supply-chain stability during China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period and beyond.

Experience has proved that China and the US stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. It is imperative that they strengthen their dialogue and cooperation in strategic sectors, particularly AI governance. The initiative on AI governance Beijing has put forward reflects China's commitment to promoting international cooperation on AI governance and ensuring that the era-defining technology benefits all humanity.

China's cooperative spirit is embodied in its four global initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative.

These initiatives underpin the country's international engagement across key areas, including its major-country diplomacy with the US. The four global initiatives respond to the common aspirations of the international community for peace, development, fairness, justice and mutual respect. And they are public goods China has contributed to advance world peace and development.

China does not seek spheres of influence, ideological confrontation or cliques. It should be clear that no country can address the grave global challenges the world faces today on its own, no matter how strong it is. Still less can any country achieve security through confrontation or "decoupling", not to mention at the cost of others' security or crossing others' red lines.

China supports multilateralism and an open world economy. Such concepts are rooted not only in China's diplomatic practices, but also in the principles of the modern international order established after World War II, including sovereign equality, peaceful coexistence and multilateral cooperation.

The world does not need a new Cold War — it needs peace and development achieved through dialogue and cooperation, grounded in responsible major-country diplomacy. When China and the US work together to promote peace, development and win-win cooperation, they serve not only their shared interests but also those of the entire world. Against this backdrop, Trump's visit to China has raised expectations that, even with their differences, China and the US can still engage in candid communication, expand practical cooperation and jointly shoulder responsibilities for global peace and development.

As Guo said in reply to questions about the first visit by a US president in nine years, China stands ready to work with the US in the spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit — expanding cooperation and managing differences — so as to bring greater stability and certainty to the world.

The more volatile the world situation becomes, the more major countries should work together to function as stabilizers. China is willing to work with all countries, including the US, to strengthen communication, properly manage differences and deepen win-win cooperation.

Country's innovation boon to the world

China's continuous efforts in scientific and technological innovation and its high-standard opening-up are having marked effects on both its economy and international cooperation.

Recent data indicate a shift in China's manufacturing industry toward high-end production. This reflects the country's transition to innovation-driven growth.

The country has made rapid progress in the development of emerging industries, with some strategic sectors, including artificial intelligence, intelligent robots, integrated circuits, advanced materials, new energy and biomedicine, growing rapidly. Future industries, including quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and nuclear fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces, embodied intelligence and 6G, are also gaining momentum.

The technological innovation in the field of AI is transforming the Chinese economy while having a profound effect globally. China is rapidly emerging as a major force in global AI advancement. As of early this year, the country's core AI industry was projected to be worth more than 1.2 trillion yuan ($176.71 billion), with an annual growth rate nearing 30 percent. China now holds 60 percent of the world's AI patents.

Chinese scientists unveiled six major achievements at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference that concluded on Wednesday in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Among them was a generative genomic large model named Carbon, which is being hailed as the "DeepSeek" for the life sciences field due to its nearly hundredfold improvement in computational efficiency.

The rapid development of China's AI sector is bolstered by both policies and strategic planning. In the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), AI is identified as a key driver of new quality productive forces. The government has launched a comprehensive "AI Plus" initiative. This policy framework supports AI research and accelerates its application across sectors.

Thanks to the progress made, AI and other technologies are empowering industries across the board. China has established tens of thousands of "smart factories" nationwide and accounts for more than half of the global increase in industrial robot installations. According to the World Economic Forum, China now boasts the world's highest number of "lighthouse factories", accounting for 40 percent of the world's total. These factories employ cutting-edge technologies to achieve more efficient and sustainable production processes.

China's experience in applied AI, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare, offers a reference for global industry transformation. The improvement in China's technological innovation capabilities has led to a substantial increase in its industrial competitiveness, enabling the country to transition from "running after" to "running together" and even "leading the way" in some fields. China's intelligent computing power was second only to the United States last year.

China's competitiveness in the open-source path for algorithmic models and its position in computing hardware capabilities further solidify its status as a major force in the AI industry.

The scale and network advantages of China's digital infrastructure are equally impressive. By 2025, the country had 4.84 million 5G base stations, accounting for about 60 percent of the world's total, and a staggering 74.99 million kilometers of optical fiber cables.

Additionally, as the world's largest producer of solar and wind power, China has a reliable and low-cost supply of green energy for power-intensive computing centers, further enhancing its role in the global AI ecosystem.

By sharing its innovation and experiences with the world, China is offering a new development path that emphasizes collaboration and openness, encouraging other countries to engage with AI in a way that promotes shared growth and mutual benefit. This is a vision of a connected world, where technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier.

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Asier Sanz



Opinion Line

Collaboration, science effective defenses against hantavirus

The recent outbreak of the Andes hantavirus aboard the cruise ship MV *Hondius* is a reminder to the international community that humanity's battle against infectious diseases is far from over.

While the World Health Organization has assessed that the overall global public health risk is low, the incident has nevertheless triggered concern because the Andes virus is currently the only known hantavirus strain capable of limited human-to-human transmission.

As of early this week, multiple confirmed and suspected cases linked to the cruise ship have been reported across several countries, and multiple deaths were recorded. Coordinated by WHO and relevant national authorities, international medical evacuations, quarantine arrangements and contact-tracing efforts are underway.

China's disease-control authorities have responded promptly. According to the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, no cases of human infection with the Andes virus have been reported in China as of early this week, nor has any natural host capable of carrying the virus been identified within the country. Wang Shiwen, deputy director of the National Institute for Viral Disease Control and Prevention under China CDC, told the media that the risk of imported transmission and large-scale outbreaks in China remains extremely low.

Experts further clarified an important scientific fact often overlooked amid sensational headlines: human-to-human transmission is not a common characteristic of hantaviruses in general. Under normal circumstances, hantavirus infection mainly occurs through contact with infected rodents or exposure to contaminated urine, feces and saliva. While the Andes virus represents a rare exception, transmission generally requires close and prolonged contact in enclosed environments. Existing evidence indicates that such transmission remains limited and controllable with proper public health measures.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the international community has learned that panic, politicization and disinformation can spread faster than the virus itself, thus undermining global prevention and control efforts.

The current hantavirus incident once again demonstrates the importance of adhering to science in the face of disease outbreaks. Yet climate factors have made it harder to respond by expanding rodent habitats and extending transmission seasons. Countries must strengthen their early warning systems, improve cross-border information sharing and enhance emergency coordination mechanisms. Infectious diseases do not respect national boundaries. The multinational response surrounding the outbreak aboard MV *Hondius* illustrates the importance of timely information sharing among governments, public health agencies and international organizations.

Equally important is the need to uphold the coordinating role of the WHO. Throughout the current outbreak, WHO has worked within the framework of the International Health Regulations to facilitate information exchange, coordinate contact tracing and provide scientific risk assessments. WHO has consistently stressed that the overall public risk remains low while urging continued vigilance and monitoring.

Professionalism and multilateral coordination are precisely what the world needs to confront future health threats. Attempts to stigmatize countries, float conspiracy theories or undermine international cooperation would only weaken the collective capacity to respond effectively.

At the same time, the outbreak underscores the importance of strengthening public health literacy. Public health experts note that ordinary preventive measures — such as avoiding contact with rodents and contaminated environments, maintaining hygiene standards and seeking timely medical treatment if symptoms arise — remain effective. WHO's hantavirus guidance also highlights the importance of rodent control, sanitation and rapid clinical management. Severely unwell patients can significantly improve their prognosis through early intensive medical care.

Humanity has paid a heavy price during past pandemics. Only through scientific response, openness, solidarity and strengthened global governance can the world better safeguard public health security. The hantavirus outbreak should serve as another reminder that international cooperation and respect for science remain humanity's strongest defenses against infectious diseases.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Experience economy will help upgrade businesses

Editor's note: *China's experience market reached 18.4 trillion yuan ($2.7 trillion) in 2025, a 22.6 percent year-on-year increase. China.org.cn spoke to Wei Xiang, a researcher in the National Academy of Economic Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, about the development of the experience economy. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The shift from buying goods to buying experiences marks a structural evolution driven by a growing demand for personalized and emotionally resonant consumption. The experience economy thrives on anticipation and the lasting memories created afterward.

Two major forces are fueling the rise of the experience economy. The first is the transformation of the broader economic structure. Demand for purely functional consumption has largely matured. What is growing now is demand for higher-level services and emotionally engaging experiences. People increasingly seek meaning, individuality and emotional resonance through consumption.

The second force is demographic change. Aging societies are reshaping consumption patterns. Older consumers tend to favor slower, more immersive forms of spending that emphasize enjoyment, health, culture and emotional fulfillment. This demographic shift also aligns with the development of experience-based industries.

The rise of the experience economy offers a broader lesson for both governments and businesses. The boundaries between production, consumption, services and experiences will increasingly blur. Future industries should create participatory experiences in which consumers themselves become part of the value-creation process.

The experience economy also generates new forms of personal value. One is cognitive value. Experiences expand people's horizons and reshape their understanding of the world. Personal growth does not result solely from meeting influential people or receiving external opportunities. Often, it is the direct experience itself that encourages individuals to improve their own perspectives and capacities.

Another is social value. Social interaction increasingly includes teamwork, openness, organizational abilities and other forms of noncognitive skills developed through shared experiences. In the future, social interaction may extend beyond human relationships to include interaction with intelligent machines and digital environments, creating entirely new forms of connection.

For the experience economy to remain sustainable, two capabilities are especially important. First, businesses must understand the relationship between functionality and emotion. Future competition will not depend solely on marketing, but also on the ability to measure, detect and respond to emotional change during production and service delivery.

Second, companies must develop stronger flexible customization capabilities. Businesses must have the ability to transform diverse emotional and experiential needs into scalable production systems.

Ultimately, the development of the experience economy will accelerate the transition toward higher-value service sectors and help drive the broader upgrading of economic structures. On the social side, it will enhance public well-being. Through thoughtfully designed experiences, individuals can enjoy a stronger sense of fulfillment, identity and emotional satisfaction. Such experiences do not necessarily need to be expensive.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

TARIQ H. MALIK

From AI visibility to developmental leadership

Turning technological strength into governance credibility and cross-border cooperation



Artificial intelligence is often framed as a race for models, chips and market share. However, discussions at the Forum on the Development of International Science and Technology Organizations and Global Science and Technology Governance, held on March 28 during the Zhongguancun Forum in Beijing, emphasized that the more important question goes beyond technological competition. For China, the central challenge is not simply whether the country is visible in AI, but whether that visibility can be converted into stronger governance, more credible international leadership and deeper cross-border cooperation. That is where the next phase of China's AI story will be decided.

China's strength in AI should be understood through its broader development path. Its developmental narrative could be described through four qualities: an equalizer, a bricoleur, a systemizer and a socioeconomic weaver. These are more than rhetorical labels. Together, they capture a development logic that widens access, combines tools pragmatically, organizes complexity at scale and links technology to broader social and economic transformation. This helps explain how a technological field becomes embedded in the wider fabric of production, administration and modernization.

This also helps clarify what is distinctive about China's position today. Many countries can develop advanced technologies, but few can connect them to long-term developmental coordination. China's historical policy trajectory, including the cumulative discipline of the five-year plans, has given it an unusual capacity to link technological ambition with industrial scaling and organizational follow-through. Over successive five-year plans, priorities have evolved in a structured manner — from early emphasis on informatization and industrial digitization, to the integration of digital technologies with the real economy, and more recently to the elevation of AI as a strategic driver of modernization.

In that sense, China's rise in AI reflects a deeper developmental logic: the ability to move from experimentation to infrastructure, from innovation to production and from technical potential to system-wide application. The more pressing question now is what comes next. If earlier stages of development focused on catching up, scaling up and building industrial capacity, the next stage requires China to play a stronger role in shaping the governance language around AI itself.

Governance should therefore move to the center of the discussion. AI is a matter of legitimacy, rules, institutions and cooperation. The narrative alignment theory helps explain this shift. Narratives are not decorative additions to technology; they shape the categories through which technology is understood, justified and accepted. They influence whether AI is seen as a source of fear or trust, fragmentation or cooperation, exclusion or development. They also affect whose rules, organizations and standards gain authority internationally. At this stage, leadership can no longer be measured only by who builds the most advanced technology. It should also be measured by who can connect technology to legitimate and credible governance frameworks.

This has direct implications for China. The country already has substantial material strengths: scale, industrial capacity, digital ecosystems and a strong policy commitment to scientific and technological advancement. But technological strength alone does not automatically generate narrative authority. A country may be highly capable in production and application, yet still remain less influential in defining the interpretive framework through which that capability is understood globally. China now faces a strategic transition. To move from AI visibility to developmental leadership, it should present AI not only as a field of innovation, but as part of a broader story of public value.

China's next task is to institutionalize AI through clearer governance pathways. One is rule-making: contributing more actively to technical standards, ethical protocols, data governance principles and cross-border interoperability. Another is organizational leadership: embedding AI in durable, credible and cooperative institutions, including international science and technology organizations, university networks, professional associations and public-private platforms linking research, industry and policy. A third is narrative clarity: communicating AI not only as a driver of growth, but also as a contributor to order, inclusion and long-term development. This requires a language that is internationally intelligible as well as institutionally persuasive.

Global science and technology governance is increasingly shaped by legitimacy and coordination, not by technology alone. If China wants to play a more prominent role in this environment, it should build frameworks in which innovation and governance develop together. That means showing how AI can support public administration, industrial resilience, the green transition, healthcare, education and cross-regional learning. It also means engaging more deeply in international cooperation, so that China is seen not merely as a powerful producer of technology, but as a constructive participant in shaping the rules and organizational architectures through which technology serves development. The future of leadership in AI will depend not only on invention but on the ability to align innovation with legitimate governance.

There is also a deeper historical lesson here. Successful economies often decline when they become imbalanced. Why did technological spirit and innovative capacity shift from one country to another, leaving once-successful economies behind? The answer points to an imbalance. Development weakens when institutions and structures no longer align with new realities. This lesson matters for AI as well. The danger is not only technological lag; it is also the failure to balance invention with meaning, production with legitimacy and capability with trust. China's opportunity is that it can still build this balance. It can connect technological advances with governance design before deeper misalignment takes hold.

China's position between the Global North and the Global South further strengthens this possibility. It is unusually placed to act as a bridge: learning from industrialized economies while also speaking to the developmental aspirations of emerging ones. This gives China a distinctive opportunity in AI governance. It can help formulate AI not simply as a luxury of the richest economies, but as a developmental instrument that can be adapted across different institutional contexts. In that sense, China's contribution could be larger than national advancement alone. It could help widen the global conversation from technological competition to developmental inclusion.

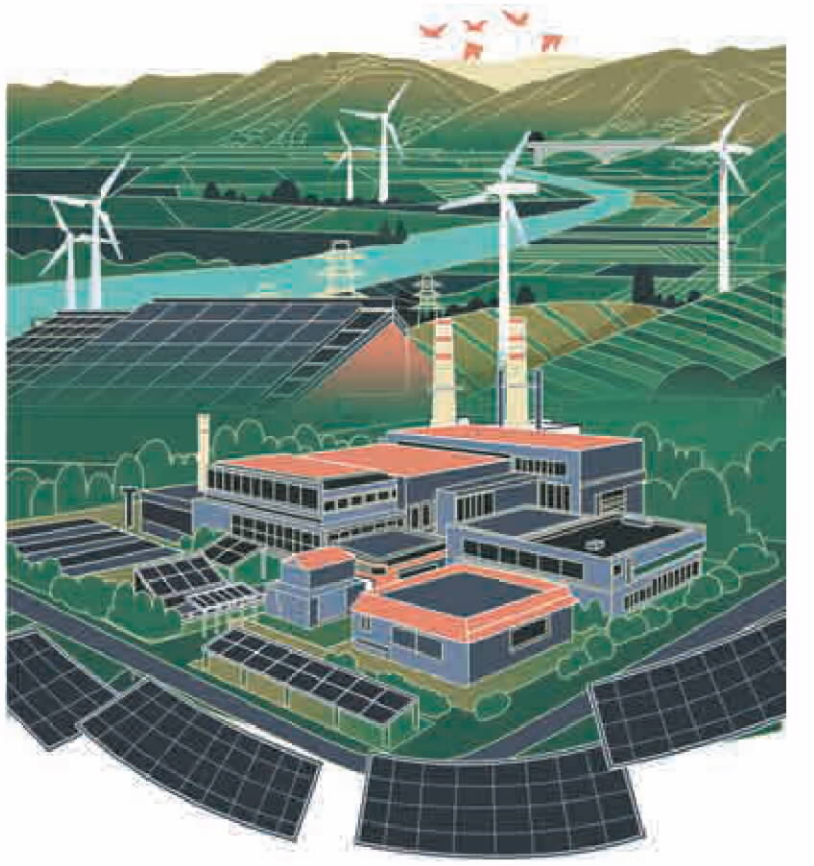
For this reason, the most important transition is conceptual as much as technical. China does not need only more AI. It needs stronger alignment between AI, governance and development, building on the basis of Beijing's series of provisional regulations over the past years and its five-year industrial projections. It must translate technological capability into governance credibility, industrial strength into institutional trust and national achievement into cross-border collaborative leadership. This is not a soft addition to hard technology. It is the condition under which technological strength gains lasting authority.

In the end, the countries that matter most in AI will not be those that simply build powerful systems. They will be the ones that embed those systems in legitimate institutions, credible rules and cooperative international relationships. China has already demonstrated considerable capacity in development and innovation of smart technologies. Its next challenge is to show that this capacity can also help shape a stable, trusted and development-oriented governance future for AI.

The author is a professor of innovation studies at Liaoning University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ZHANG FANG

Integrating smart tech and green innovation

Digital technology and systematic governance pave the way for high-quality green development

The green transition is no longer a matter of choice but a defining imperative for high-quality development in China. The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development, approved during the 2026 National People's Congress, sets a binding target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 17 percent, while raising the share of the core digital economy industries in GDP to 12.5 percent.



In terms of industrial development, the outline introduces a new strategic direction centered on "intelligent and green development, and integrated innovation of industries and technologies". Compared with the earlier five-year plan, which emphasized "upgrading of industry and value chains, in addition to intelligent and green development", the shift toward integrated approaches signals the entry into a new stage of development that has systemic integration as its core feature, as China accelerates its green and low-carbon transition to form a new low-carbon innovation paradigm driven by artificial intelligence technologies.

The integrated innovation of industries and technologies in the 15th Five-Year Plan period can be found in the deep coupling of electricity and computing power. With the rapid advancement of AI technologies, demand for clean computing power is surging.

According to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, electricity consumption by computing centers in China reached 150 billion kilowatt-hours in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 15.4 percent, with a projection to reach above 400 billion kWh by 2030 in the medium to high growth scenario. Against this backdrop, the 15th Five-Year Plan explicitly calls for the coordinated deployment of green electricity and computing power, while the 2026 Government Work Report has, for the first time, included "computing-power and electricity synergy" as part of the new infrastructure initiative.

Computing power and electricity synergy refers to the systemic integration of computing infrastructure with the electricity power system through digital technologies, intelligent algorithms, and information networks. On the one hand, models such as direct green power supply and integrated source-grid-load-storage systems help tap into the abundant clean energy in the western part of China, effectively reducing energy costs. On the other hand, some computing tasks are flexible, and can be interrupted and migrated by intelligent scheduling. This approach shifts the increased consumption of electricity to phases with lower electricity costs or lower network utilization through peak load shifting. It substantially transforms data centers from passive electricity consumers into active regulation units, thereby improving the utilization of renewable energy. This model addresses the curtailment of renewable energy and meets the growing green energy demand of computing power, achieving a mutually reinforcing balance between the environmental value of green electricity and the economic value of computing power.

Accurate carbon emissions accounting driven by precise data is the foundational pillar of carbon governance. The effectiveness of carbon reduction efforts depends critically on the transparency and verifiability of carbon accounting systems. China is accelerating the development of a unified national factor database of greenhouse gas emissions, while building an integrated "space-air-ground" monitoring network using satellite remote sensing, drones and ground sensors to ensure that carbon emissions and carbon sinks can be accurately measured and effectively managed.

Progress is also being made in tracing carbon emissions from electricity consumption. By establishing a provincial-level, time-of-use and location-specific factor database of electricity carbon emissions, companies can trace the sources and destinations of their carbon emissions. This technical pathway is expected to upgrade green development evaluation from traditional annual average indicators to higher-frequency, more granular metrics, providing scientific support for precise carbon reduction.

This data-driven foundation enables a broader transformation: moving beyond isolated improvements to achieve intelligent, systemic integration. The most compelling manifestation of this shift is occurring within the industrial sector, particularly in the realm of energy-saving equipment.

In March 2026, four central government departments, including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, rolled out a three-year action plan to accelerate the high-quality development of energy-saving equipment. The core thrust of the plan is to shift from optimizing equipment-level energy efficiency to achieving energy conservation. This policy orientation reflects three significant shifts: Technological innovation extends from equipment efficiency to the full chain, and from materials to processes; operating system coordination upgrades from stand-alone operation to wide-range high efficiency and precise matching; and digital empowerment advances from passive response to active optimization, using AI to enable cluster-level intelligent scheduling of energy-consuming units.

This direction is propelling China's energy-saving equipment industry from a single focus on individual equipment efficiency to a new stage characterized by system integration, intelligent drive and cross-sectoral convergence. It signifies a transformation in value creation from equipment sales to system services and a shift in technical pathways from local optimization to global optimization.

The new paradigm for China's green and low-carbon development, with computing-power-electricity synergy as a key pathway, data-driven carbon governance as a foundational pillar, and system-level intelligent integration as its technological signature, is accelerating a profound shift from granular, isolated optimization to system-wide integration innovation. This paradigm represents not only a strategic response to intensifying global green competition, but also a distinctive contribution of Chinese wisdom to global decarbonization efforts.

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BUSINESS

Striking the right chord



Visitors check out handcrafted acoustic guitars at a guitar industrial park in Yongzhou's Dong'an county, Central China's Hunan province, on Monday. The park boasts a complete guitar manufacturing chain, home to more than 30 musical instrument manufacturers and supporting upstream and downstream enterprises. The industrial base produces a full range of guitar products with an annual output of over 500,000 guitars in 2025 that were exported to more than 60 countries and regions worldwide. ZHAO ZHONGZHI / XINHUA

Metis TechBio records HK's largest healthcare IPO in '26

Company's float signals maturing AI pharma with diversified biz models

By **LI JING**
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Chinese mainland's artificial intelligence drug-delivery developer Metis TechBio Co Ltd raised more than HK$2.1 billion ($270 million) in its Hong Kong initial public offering on Wednesday, marking the largest healthcare listing in Hong Kong so far this year and underscoring strong investor interest in how AI could reshape pharmaceutical development.

Founded six years ago, the Beijing-based biotech firm issued about 201.2 million H shares in its global offering. Chris Lai, the company's co-founder and CEO, said the listing would help accelerate the company's goal of applying AI-driven nanotechnology to enable targeted drug delivery and new therapeutic approaches.

The listing places Metis alongside two earlier Hong Kong-listed peers — XtalPi Holdings Ltd and Insilico Medicine Cayman TopCo — referred to as Hong Kong's "AI drug discovery trio", though the companies pursue different commercial strategies in the rapidly evolving sector. XtalPi is a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based AI drug discovery company, while Insilico Medicine is a global AI-driven biotech firm with strong research roots in China.

AI has attracted billions of dollars globally as pharmaceutical companies seek to shorten drug development timelines, but the industry is still testing whether these technologies can generate sustainable revenues.

China's AI drug discovery sector is moving from laboratory experimentation toward early commercial validation, said Tian Lihui, a finance professor at Nankai University.

According to consultancy iiMedia Research, the sector's revenue expanded from about 70 million yuan ($9.7 million) in 2019 to more than 600 million yuan by 2025, reflecting rapid growth in AI-driven drug development in China.

Early financial milestones among industry peers reflect that shift. XtalPi reported its first annual profit in 2025, while Insilico — though still loss-making — has begun generating tens of millions of dollars in revenue from licensing deals and research collaborations.

"The key question for the industry is no longer whether the technology works," Tian said. "It is how to turn it into scalable profit."

Metis has taken a different route from its peers by focusing on nanotechnology-based drug delivery, a technically complex step in turning promising molecules into effective medicines.

Efficient delivery systems determine whether drugs can reach targeted tissues while minimizing side effects — a challenge highlighted during the development of mRNA vaccines and other next-generation therapies.

"Large-molecule drugs are becoming increasingly important, and effective delivery is a core bottleneck," said Liu Jing, professor of accounting and finance at Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business.

"AI gives companies like Metis an opportunity to narrow the technological gap with established Western leaders."

Metis' core platform, NanoForge, combines AI models, molecular simulation and high-throughput screening to design lipid nanoparticles and other nanomaterial drug carriers.

According to its prospectus, the platform has generated more than 10 pipeline programs, including several clinical-stage candidates. Its most advanced candidate, MTS-004, has completed Phase III clinical trials in China for pseudobulbar affect, a neurological disorder for which there are currently limited treatment options domestically, said the company.

Like many biotech startups, Metis is still in a heavy investment phase.

Revenue rose to 105 million yuan in 2025 from 1.5 million yuan a year earlier, largely due to an upfront payment tied to licensing rights for MTS-004.

The company reported a net loss of 392 million yuan in 2025, narrowing from 499 million yuan the previous year.

The company said about half of the IPO proceeds will fund expansion of its AI infrastructure and nanomaterial platform, while roughly 20 percent will fund ongoing and planned clinical trials.

Metis' listing also highlights how the AI pharma sector is diverging into several business models.

One approach, represented by XtalPi, treats AI primarily as a tech platform, providing computational research services and automated laboratory capabilities to pharmaceutical clients.

Insilico has adopted an AI-biotech strategy, using algorithms to design new drug candidates and advancing them into clinical trials before licensing them to pharmaceutical partners — a strategy with higher potential rewards but also higher financial risks.

Metis represents a more specialized strategy, applying AI specifically to the drug-delivery layer rather than the entire discovery pipeline.

"These paths reflect a broader debate between platform strategies and vertical specialization," Tian said, adding that companies capable of integrating both approaches may ultimately build stronger competitive advantages.

Despite renewed enthusiasm for AI drug development, analysts say capital markets are becoming more selective.

"Valuations are no longer driven purely by technological narratives," Tian said. "Investors are increasingly looking at clinical pipelines, partnerships with major pharmaceutical companies and tangible commercial contracts."

Metis' IPO attracted heavy demand, with the Hong Kong public tranche more than 6,900 times oversubscribed and the international placement 82 times oversubscribed, the company said.

The offering drew several cornerstone investors, including BlackRock, which subscribed about $50 million, as well as a State-backed investment fund under China Reform Holdings, which made its first investment in an AI pharma company.

Zero-tariff policy boosts Hunan-Africa biz ties

CHANGSHA — When more than 6,000 bottles of South African wine cleared customs at Changsha Huanghua International Airport in Central China's Hunan province on May 1, the importer received an immediate benefit from China's expanded tariff-free treatment for African goods, which amounted to 21,000 yuan ($3,093) in duty savings.

According to Zhang Xin, chairman of Hunan Express Wisdom Information Technology Co Ltd, South African wine was previously subject to a 14 percent tariff in China. Now that the tariff has been slashed to zero, the company anticipates an annual cost reduction of about 5 million yuan.

This shipment was among the first in Hunan to benefit after China expanded zero-tariff treatment to goods from all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, broadening an earlier policy that covered the least-developed countries among them.

Under the upgraded policy, China has become the first major economy to offer unilateral, across-the-board zero-tariff treatment to all its African diplomatic partners and to all least-developed countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

For this inland Chinese province, one of the country's busiest regional players in terms of trade with Africa, the tariff cut is more than just a customs adjustment. Local officials and companies see it as a way to lower import costs and draw more African raw materials and consumer goods through Hunan, including some products bound for re-export.

Hunan has spent years trying to position itself as an inland gateway for China-Africa commerce, using the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo and pilot zone for in-depth China-Africa economic and trade cooperation as its main platforms. The province's trade with Africa has grown by an average of 15 percent a year to 58 billion yuan, ranking first among provinces in central and western China.

The latest move follows an earlier policy that took effect on Dec 1, 2024, when China granted zero-tariff treatment on all tariff lines to the least-developed countries with which it has diplomatic ties, including 33 African countries.

From that day to March 31, Changsha Customs processed around 26.98 million yuan in tariff reductions for Hunan imports from those least-developed African countries.

The policy has, notably, coincided with stronger import growth. Hunan's imports from Africa rose 27.2 percent year-on-year to 30.92 billion yuan in 2025. In the first four months of 2026, its total trade with Africa reached 18.16 billion yuan, up 8.8 percent from a year earlier, with imports increasing 29.4 percent to 10.41 billion yuan.

The new broader coverage could have a bigger effect because it involves several of Hunan's main African suppliers, including Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Between January 2025 and March 2026, imports from these five countries accounted for 98.1 percent of the total tariffs collected from Hunan's imports from Africa.

Lan Shengbin, deputy head of Changsha Customs, said some Hunan manufacturers had previously paid tariffs of 7 to 10 percent on components from countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Removing such duties will lower production costs and help companies diversify their supply chains, he said.

Hunan is trying to turn its tariff savings into a broader trade model, using the province as a point for importing, processing and redistributing African goods, including some products re-exported overseas.

One example came in July 2024, when 400 fresh roses from Kenya were imported into Changsha and then re-exported through the Changsha Huanghua Comprehensive Bonded Zone to Uzbekistan. It was China's first re-export transaction involving African fresh flowers, according to Changsha Customs.

Hunan Xiyue Culture Media Co Ltd, the importer, now brings in flowers, fruit and ornamental fish from Africa, some of which are shipped on to overseas markets.

Huang Zinan, a company executive, said the tariff cuts would reduce import costs, improve cash flow and allow African products to be sold at more competitive prices.

Consumer goods are another target. During the May Day holiday, an African goods market in Changsha drew approximately 89,000 visitors over six days. Organizers said lower import costs for raw materials had allowed prices to be reduced on some products, including chocolate made with Ghanaian cocoa, shea-butter products from Mali and coffee from Zambia.

Hunan Yufei Industry Investment Co Ltd, which helped organize the market, said its Quality African Products brand now covers more than 400 products from 13 African countries, ranging from coffee and avocados to spices.

Hunan authorities are seeking to turn the tariff change into a wider trade push. In late April, the provincial commerce department announced seven measures covering expanded imports from Africa, overseas warehouse services, industrial capacity cooperation and more China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo activities in African countries.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



An African goods market is pictured during the May Day holiday in Changsha, Hunan province, on May 1. DENG YILIN / XINHUA

Major PV project launched to directly power computing facilities

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China has officially launched its first large-scale computing-electricity synergy project with direct green power supply, marking a milestone in the nation's massive commitment to building a unified, nationwide computing network by physically linking desert renewable energy directly to digital infrastructure.

The 500,000-kilowatt photovoltaic power station located in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region began operations recently. It signifies the first time that wind and solar resources from China's vast deserts are being funneled directly into data center loads through dedicated transmission lines, bypassing the traditional detours of the national power grid.

The facility is part of a larger 2-million-kW first-phase development involving a total investment of 8.7 billion yuan ($1.28 billion), which includes 1.5 million kW of wind power scheduled for full integration by September.

China established the "East Data, West Computing" initiative in 2022, a mega data project aimed at accelerating the development of an integrated national computing network.

Once the first phase is fully operational, it will provide 2.29 billion kilowatt-hours of green electricity annually to the large computing base in Zhongwei, Ningxia.

At the heart of this project is the concept of "direct green power supply". Traditionally, renewable energy is fed into the public grid, where it mixes with coal-fired power before reaching consumers. Direct supply, however, utilizes dedicated "point-to-point" transmission lines and "dual-track" supply systems.

In the Zhongwei project, new data center loads are served via physical direct lines, while existing loads utilize bilateral market trading. This setup allows data centers to achieve a high "green power ratio" while significantly reducing transmission costs and carbon footprints.

To ensure stability, the project employs a wind-solar complementary model that sees PV power dominate during the day, while wind power takes over at night. It is supported by on-site energy storage to smooth out fluctuations.

The launch coincides with the nation's efforts to synchronize energy and digital strategies. The National Energy Administration recently said it would permit renewable energy projects to supply green electricity directly to multiple users via dedicated lines.

According to the NEA, new policies will be released in the near future to perfect these synergy frameworks, guiding the relocation of energy-intensive computing facilities to regions rich in renewable resources, such as Ningxia Hui and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions.

Experts believe the Zhongwei project provides a blueprint for the rest of the country.

"By establishing a direct physical link between the energy source and digital load, we are solving the geographical mismatch between where energy is produced and where data is processed," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University. "This not only lowers the power usage effectiveness of data centers, but also insulates the digital economy from electricity price fluctuations."

Looking ahead, the Zhongwei project plans a second phase that will bring total capacity to 4.6 million kW with a total investment of nearly 20 billion yuan.

As China continues to expand its digital infrastructure, the synergy between "bits" and "watts" is set to become the primary engine driving the nation's high-quality, low-carbon development, Lin said.

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BUSINESS

New mall aims to meet evolving needs

Site's owner takes different approach, mixing commerce, culture and community together

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Visitors entering Westlake 66, the newly opened mixed-use complex in the bustling Wulin central business area of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, might be surprised to find that luxury brands are not front and center.

Instead, the first floor is mainly dominated by lifestyle and experiential retailers, including collective toy companies Pop Mart and Jellycat, as well as the folding bicycle brand Brompton. The second floor features sports and outdoor labels alongside e-commerce brands founded by online influencers, reflecting a shift in consumer preferences toward experiences rather than prestige alone.

The 390,200-square-meter project, developed by Hang Lung Properties Ltd, is the company's 11th venture in the Chinese mainland. Known for managing luxury shopping malls in cities such as Shanghai and Wuxi, Jiangsu province, Hang Lung is taking a different approach in Hangzhou — integrating commerce, culture and community to establish Westlake 66 as both a commercial hub and a social destination.

"Modern consumers don't just want to shop — they seek diverse scenarios, from coffee breaks and dining experiences to social interaction," said Derek Pang, Hang Lung's senior director of Chinese mainland business operation, during an interview. "We are building a platform where locals, tourists and different community groups can interact — whether cycling from West Lake or exploring the city's newly renovated shops."

Hangzhou has long attracted young professionals and technology-driven industries. Its economic mix of finance, professional services and tech, combined with steady population growth, makes it a compelling retail and office market. "The city's consumption power is immense," Pang said.

According to Cushman & Wakefield's Hangzhou 2025 Commercial Real Estate Annual Report, three malls — Hangzhou MixC, Hangzhou Tower and Yintai in77 — each generated over 10 billion yuan ($1.47 billion) in sales in 2025. This underscores Hangzhou's position as one of China's few cities with multiple high-performing shopping centers.

Westlake 66 occupies the Wulin business area, the city's most prosperous commercial hub, which welcomed 189 million visitors last year. While Hangzhou Tower and the other two department store operators have dominated the high-end luxury segment, Westlake 66 is expected to complement existing projects, offering a fresh, lifestyle-driven alternative.

Hang Lung sees Westlake 66 as a long-term investment. Despite a development cost of 16 billion yuan, the company has focused on operational efficiency from day one. "Opening well is crucial. Only then can long-term development and subsequent expansion be realized," Pang said.

The mall does maintain a luxury presence, though it is secondary to experiential offerings. Several high-end brands have opened on the first floor, with additional openings planned for the latter half of 2026. By 2028, Hang Lung aims to expand the retail footprint, reflecting confidence in the city's consumption potential and Westlake 66's appeal as a lifestyle destination.

At its soft opening in April, Westlake 66 was home to around 250 stores, over a third of which are first-to-market in Hangzhou. Janice Cheung, director of mainland business operation at Hang Lung, said the project targets a new generation of consumers, for whom shopping and dining are experiences defined as much by social interaction as by product consumption.

"The project aims to connect people across different circles, creating more social interaction," Cheung said. The office lobby, located on the fourth floor with direct access to the mall, hotel and park, exemplifies this philosophy. "We are rethinking traditional layouts to foster engagement and a richer experience for office tenants and visitors alike," she added.

To stand out in a crowded market where tenant mixes often overlap, Westlake 66 emphasizes operational capability and innovative concepts.

Lifestyle-oriented retailers such as Ole supermarket debuted its "Ole Lifestyle" concept, while Chinese brands like Truuzen, a leather bag brand from Foshan, Guangdong province, are provided a platform to grow alongside global names.

"We are pleased that many domestic brands are making an impact nowadays. We'd love to offer platforms for them to develop sustainably," said Cheung.

Cheung also highlighted the importance of bridging online discovery with offline engagement. Pop-up stores featuring debut or exclusive products offer a rotating experience for repeat visitors. "Consumers may discover a brand online, but physical stores allow them to fully experience it and build long-term loyalty," she said, citing AmandaX, an apparel brand for women aged 30-50, as an example. AmandaX started on Taobao in 2019 and opened its first offline store in Shanghai last year.

Hang Lung executives expressed optimism about Hangzhou's consumption climate. After a slow start in early 2025, retail sales rebounded sharply in the fourth quarter, returning to double-digit growth. The company forecast that the momentum will continue in 2026, partly supported by Westlake 66's dynamic retail mix and immersive experiences.

"Westlake 66 is designed to be the new pulse of the city," said Weber Lo, CEO of Hang Lung. "By creating a community-centric hub with first-to-market brands and memorable experiences, we are confident to set a new regional benchmark while contributing to the city's broader economic ecosystem."

Looking forward, Hang Lung plans to expand the retail area by 40 percent and triple prime street frontage to over 200 meters through its partnership with Baida Group. The next phase is scheduled for 2028, reinforcing the company's commitment to long-term urban development in Hangzhou.

Leading commercial operators have reported positive signals that the country's consumption market is on an upward trend. According to Swire Properties' first quarter report, retail sales at HKRI Taikoo Hui Shanghai rose 81.5 percent, while Taikoo Li Sanlitun in Beijing grew 56.2 percent. Its commercial estates in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Chengdu, Sichuan province, expanded by 17.6 percent and 18.4 percent, respectively.

Cushman & Wakefield said that Shanghai's retail leasing market remained active in early 2026, with foot traffic and sales surging during the Spring Festival holiday. Lifestyle, food and beverage, and entertainment sectors performed particularly well, signaling a broad-based recovery.





Above: A staff member cuts fresh fish for customers in the Ole Lifestyle supermarket at Westlake 66, the newly opened mixed-use complex in the bustling Wulin central business area in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, during the mall's soft opening on April 28.
Left: People shop at Westlake 66 in Hangzhou on April 28.
PHOTOS BY LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

390,200 square meters
floor space of Westlake 66 shopping mall in Hangzhou

Online
Unlock China's Treasures: Shop, Explore, Enjoy.

Luxury outlets drive niche consumption experiences

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**

Luxury outlet retail in China is demonstrating vitality and resilience as the sector capitalizes on the growing demand for cultural, lifestyle and vacation experience-centered shopping.

Among luxury outlet retail operators, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin Luxury Design Outlet leads the way.

The flagship project of Italy's RDM Group reported a 6 percent year-on-year increase in sales and a 7 percent rise in visitor traffic in 2025, signaling sustained consumer demand despite broader market headwinds.

On May 10, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin celebrated its 15th anniversary. The shopping complex has contributed to the diversification of the country's outlet market, integrating culture, commerce, tourism, sports, and exhibitions into a unified "micro-vacation" retail experience, said the company.

The shopping complex has established a 180,000-square-meter commercial footprint, hosting more than 200 internationally renowned brands. This includes national outlet exclusive brands such as Roger Vivier, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Peak Performance, as well as North China exclusives like Acne Studios, Mulberry, Mackage and Stone Island.

Jacopo De Vena, managing director of Florentia Village & RDM Asia, said the company has pioneered a "micro-vacation" model, combining authentic Italian architecture, a holiday-style setting, and immersive experiences.

Over the years, FV has adapted to shifting consumer preferences from transactional shopping toward lifestyle-oriented and experiential shopping, said the director. Notably, the sports and outdoor category has emerged as a critical revenue pillar, increasing nearly 20 percent in contribution to the revenue from 2024 to 2025.

Recent upgrades, including expanded VIP lounges, Italian espresso bars and new landscaped pathways, reinforce the shopping complex's signature "La Dolce Vita" atmosphere.

"Consumers today increasingly prefer relaxed, lifestyle-oriented scenarios. We've adapted to the trend and have seen these categories becoming a vital pillar of our revenue structure," De Vena said.

According to Bain & Company's 2025 China Personal Luxury Goods Report, 65 percent of Chinese luxury consumption occurred in the Chinese mainland market in 2025. The report anticipates moderate growth for the Chinese personal luxury market in 2026, with the region poised to remain the cornerstone of global luxury market growth.


A gondolier glides along the canal at Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin Luxury Design Outlet in Wuqing, Tianjin, as people stroll across the Venetian-style bridge on May 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Driven by the continued expansion of the middle-income group, a rebound in consumer confidence, and supportive policy measures, further repatriation of luxury spending to the Chinese mainland is expected. However, the degree of growth will remain highly dependent on specific product categories and individual brand performance.

The China Commerce Association for General Merchandise's 2024-2025 China Outlet Industry White Paper estimates that in 2025 there were about 251 outlet projects in operation nationwide, with a total sales scale of about 239 billion yuan ($35.2 billion).

The development of China's outlet industry is undergoing a strategic shift — moving away from sheer scale expansion toward a focus on achieving extreme operational efficiency, said the report.

Against this backdrop, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin, which is located within the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei one-hour economic circle, leverages high-speed railway and expressway access to capture intercity passenger flows.

This has allowed the outlet to convert transient visitors into a loyal customer base with high repurchase rates, said the director. Seasonal cultural and experiential programming has further boosted Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin as a dual-city micro-vacation destination, with nearly 80 million visitors to date.

"We broke free from the traditional outlet logic of over-reliance on discounts. By connecting deeply with consumer groups from both Beijing and Tianjin, we converted regional transit passenger flow into a stable consumer group with high stickiness and high repurchase rates," he said.

De Vena added that RDM Group continues to consolidate its market leadership by focusing on six strategic dimensions: scenario creation, high-end merchandising, stock iteration, digital operations, membership deepening, and regional integration.

Through immersive holiday environments, exclusive brand collaborations, and a mature digital ecosystem — encompassing 7.8 million registered members nationwide — the group has built a standardized model capable of replication across all Florentia Village's projects.

Looking ahead, RDM Group is expanding its national footprint with Shanghai third phase and Chongqing second phase, aiming to transform Florentia Village into localized micro-vacation cultural landmarks.

The group emphasizes high brand completeness, cross-border consumption facilitation, and multi-dimensional upgrades to brand matrices, experiential offerings, and commercial value.

Despite increasing competition, national projects achieved an 8 percent year-on-year increase in visitor traffic and 6 percent sales growth in 2025, demonstrating strong resilience and market recognition, said the company.

"Today's outlet is not just a shopping destination; it is a lifestyle and leisure experience," said De Vena. With strategic location, differentiated offerings, and refined operations, Florentia Village continues to be optimistic about the luxury retail and experiential consumption across the country.

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CHINA

Global South teachers to get digital skills training

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
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The world's first international action plan specifically designed to improve the digital skills of teachers in developing countries has been unveiled, aiming to systematically assist Global South nations tackle common challenges in the digital transformation of education.

The action plan for enhancing digital literacy of teachers in the Global South was released during a parallel session of the 2026 World Digital Education Conference in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday.

The plan, initiated by the Africa division of the Institute of Global Teacher Development, reflects China's practical efforts to deepen South-South cooperation and participate in global education governance.

The plan identifies four interlinked structural challenges: insufficient network and device access, a shortage of high-quality and locally adapted multilingual resources, weak foundational teacher skills coupled with a lack of systematic professional development, and fragmented coordination mechanisms. It argues that piecemeal interventions are no longer sufficient.

Key measures include establishing a collaborative mechanism for digital literacy among teachers in the Global South by engaging international organizations, education authorities, universities and enterprises.

The initiative will align with authoritative platforms such as UNESCO's Global Teacher Campus to provide tiered training programs.

The plan also leverages existing overseas platforms such as Confucius Institutes and Luban Workshops to deliver localized support for teachers.

According to the plan, Zhejiang Normal University will lead implementation efforts. Over the next three years, priority flagship projects will be launched, including the establishment of collaboration mechanisms, the joint development of advanced courses and the piloting of lighthouse schools, or model schools.

The lighthouse schools will be established in two or three host Global South countries, with initial design work and resource allocation set to begin in an effort to achieve early tangible outcomes.

Liu Hongwu, director of the College of African Area and Country Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, said the action plan directly addresses key challenges in improving digital literacy among teachers in the Global South during a critical period for the global digital transformation of education.

"The plan addresses four structural challenges widely faced by Global South countries: weak infrastructure, scarce localized resources, lack of training systems and fragmented cooperation mechanisms," Liu said.

He said the plan adopts a systematic four-dimensional framework that creates a closed loop spanning coordination mechanisms, training, demonstration schools and on-the-ground support networks.

"By focusing on teachers' digital literacy, the initiative represents a strategic shift from hardware construction to human capacity building in developing countries," Liu said.

He also acknowledged implementation challenges, including complex coordination among multiple stakeholders and insufficient adaptation of resources for low-bandwidth environments in many Global South countries.

Nevertheless, Liu described the action plan as a pragmatic step that contributes Chinese wisdom and feasible solutions in bridging the global digital divide and promoting equitable education.

Meanwhile, the Hangzhou Initiative on AI and Education, which was also released on Tuesday at the conference, stresses equitable access to the benefits of artificial intelligence and calls for greater use of smart education platforms to share quality resources and intelligent tools to help bridge the global digital divide.

The initiative proposes establishing a global network for teacher training and capacity building, with special attention given to children with special needs.

It also supports UNESCO's leadership role in using digital technologies for post-crisis remedial education, especially for girls and women.

Hidden city reopens



Visitors explore a museum about Beijing's civil air defense history in Qianmen area on Wednesday. Originally built in 1969 and once known as the Beijing underground city, the former civil air defense tunnel complex reopened to the public as a museum on Tuesday, after extensive renovations. HOU YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Smart steps forward



A robotic guide leads a staff member acting as a visually impaired pedestrian during an intelligent robot application competition in Mianyang, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. Designed to assist with safe travel, the robot can identify road conditions and respond to obstacles, sounds and route changes in real time. HAO FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Yunnan to promote lifestyle businesses

Better living conditions, policy support reshape province's tourism economy

By **YAN YUJIE** and **LI YINGQING** in Kunming

Yunnan is positioning itself as a destination not only for tourism, but also for long-term living and entrepreneurship, as the southwestern Chinese province recorded sharp growth in overnight international visitors and long-stay residents in 2025, Governor Wang Yubo said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a briefing on Yunnan's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), Wang said the province is looking to attract more people to "travel, settle and start businesses" in Yunnan, as improving living environments and lifestyle appeal reshape the province's tourism economy.

Yunnan received 8.64 million inbound tourist visits in 2025, up 30 percent year-on-year, according to official data.

Among them, overnight inbound visitors rose 51.8 percent to 4.95 million, outpacing overall growth and signaling rising demand for deeper travel experiences.

The province also saw a surge in long-stay visitors, locally referred to as "sojourners".

More than 5.5 million people chose to live temporarily in Yunnan last year, up 41.4 percent year-on-year, with an average stay of 83 days.

"Many visitors came as tourists but stayed on because they fell in love with the place, becoming new residents of Yunnan," Wang said.

He attributed the trend partly to sweeping improvements in urban and rural living conditions in recent years. According to Wang, all counties, cities and districts in Yunnan now meet national sanitary standards, while all natural villages have reached the top-tier standard for rural living environments.

"With better environments and more beautiful cities and villages, tourists from across China and around the world are flocking to Yunnan," he said.

Earlier this year, Alexandra Solovey, a 46-year-old tourist from the United States, visited Kunming with her husband and daughter. She said the pleasant weather, local cuisine, friendly residents and sense of safety made Yunnan "a fantastic destination".

Among those choosing to stay longer is Zhang Boai, a 35-year-old former flight attendant from Beijing. After traveling across Lijiang, Dali, Kunming, Pu'er and Xishuangbanna in mid-2025, Zhang and her husband relocated to a village in Pu'er with their 3-year-old son later that year.

"I want my son to have a happy childhood close to nature, where he can play freely," Zhang said.

The long-stay trend is also giving rise to new business models.

In Laozhuaqing village in Pu'er, 32-year-old Ying Xixi from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, has launched a digital nomad community, offering shared workspaces for remote workers.

Since opening in late February, the site has already hosted dozens of digital nomads.

"Yunnan has rich resources, diverse ethnic cultures and a great climate, which are all attractive to entrepreneurs like us," Ying said, adding that she hopes for more supportive policies for startup communities and lifestyle-based businesses.

Wang said the province plans to expand policy support, diversify business scenarios and cultivate more sectors suited to lifestyle entrepreneurship. Yunnan also aims to build a number of "cities of entrepreneurship" and "cities of thriving industries" to attract more innovators and business founders.

The growing sojourn economy is already bringing tangible benefits to rural communities.

Yan Di, Party branch secretary of Manhena village in Xishuangbanna, said long-stay tourism has increased significantly since 2024. Last year, the village received more than 10,000 sojourn visitors, many staying for more than 10 days at a time.

The village, home to 109 households and 486 residents, reported an average household income of 80,000 yuan ($11,780) last year, with tourism contributing more than 60 percent.

"Life is steadily getting better," Yan said.

In Lijiang's Yulong county, 57-year-old Fan Hongyan, originally from Xiangxi in Hunan province, opened a guesthouse in September after traveling to more than 50 countries.

"The first time I came here, I was deeply captivated by the scenery and environment," she said. "I knew this was where I wanted to live."

Contact the writers at yanyj@chinadaily.com.cn

Soundbites

Editor's note: *The State Council Information Office held a group interview on Wednesday featuring outstanding teachers to discuss advancing the spirit of educators and accelerating the building of China into a leading country in education.*



On Cuiying Mountain in Lanzhou, we established China's first semi-arid climate change observation station of international standards. I often take my students into the field, trekking across deserts, traversing glaciers and climbing plateaus. They are trained and tested in harsh natural environments, strengthening both their character and resilience. I like the saying along the Taklimakan Desert highway: "There is only a desolate desert, not a desolate life." I often tell my students the same: how could our research be anything but world-class, when we write our papers on the vast land of our motherland and pursue knowledge in the great deserts of the northwest?
Huang Jianping, *an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at Lanzhou University in Gansu province*



Labor education is not a decorative add-on, but a source of nourishment and energy for children's all-round development. To help children develop a love for work from an early age, we have designed a curriculum based on the 24 solar terms, encouraging them to engage in hands-on activities in tune with the seasons. Only when teachers remain curious about the world will children long to explore it. I hope our children will feel a spark of excitement at the sight of wild chrysanthemums, and pause to listen when they hear birds singing. Education, at its heart, is about nurturing the ability to perceive happiness and to create it.
Zhang Zhenle, *principal of Fuchun No 7 Primary School Education Group in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province*



I have always worked on the front line of teaching. Together with my institution, I have helped deepen the integration of industry and education, as well as school-enterprise cooperation. I hope to support companies in solving technical challenges while personally guiding students in developing practical skills. Watching them grow from novices to skilled professionals, then step out of campus and into major aviation enterprises, contributing to China's domestically developed aircraft and other critical national projects, gives me a deep sense of fulfillment.
Zhou Shuqiang, *professor at Chengdu Aeronautic Polytechnic University*



The essence of nurturing both intellect and character lies in "seeing every individual". At our school, each class is assigned a psychological counselor, and we have launched a smart mental health platform to support the well-being of both students and teachers. We focus not only on students' academic progress, but also on their emotional needs and individual differences. At the same time, we recognize the dedication of every teacher, providing practical support to help address real challenges, so that everyone on campus is seen and respected.
Xie Wei, *principal of Yinchuan No 15 Middle School, Ningxia Hui autonomous region*



We support teachers in defining clear development goals based on their individual circumstances, whether they are newly recruited or experienced backbone teachers. Taking into account teachers' years of experience and professional strengths, we design stage-specific learning content and practical opportunities, enabling them to grow steadily and continuously. We aim to ignite teachers' inner drive, helping them feel the nobility of the profession and sustain their intrinsic passion, while also strengthening their professional competence. There is only one character's difference between a "profession" and a "vocation", but it transforms teachers' mindset, energizes the entire team, and eventually benefits tens of thousands of children.
An Huixia, *principal of Xinghua Preschool Education Group in Taiyuan, Shanxi province*

ZHAO YIMENG

HK's emissions detector to aid climate research from Tiangong

By **WU KUNLING** in Hong Kong
amberwu@chinadailyhk.com

The world's first lightweight, high-resolution, high-precision carbon dioxide and methane point-source detector, developed by Hong Kong scientists, has arrived at the Tiangong, making it the city's first scientific payload aboard the orbiting national space station.

The project, hailed as proof of Hong Kong's ability to support the nation's space development and carbon neutrality drive, is able to detect over 99 percent of CO2 emissions from the nation's coal-burning power plants and CH4 emissions from its coal mines, providing precise and reliable data for policymakers in China and around the world, said Su Hui, co-leader of the project and chair professor of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, on Wednesday.

The Hong Kong-made payload, the Multi-Spectral Imaging Carbon Observatory, nicknamed "eye for space", arrived at Tiangong at 1:11 pm on Monday aboard the Tianzhou-10 cargo craft. It was part of a consignment of essential deliveries such as artificial human embryos and ultra-thin solar cells, and supplies including an extravehicular spacesuit.

The MUSICO will participate in China's first Earth observation project under its human spaceflight program.

Weighing less than 80 kilograms and smaller than a domestic washing machine, the payload is capable of accurately measuring CO2 and CH4 — two major greenhouse gases — from space, with extra-high spectral resolution and 100-meter spatial resolution, said the research team.

By analyzing intensity changes in sunlight over specific spectral bands as it passes through the atmosphere and reflects off the Earth's surface, the payload identifies gas-specific absorption features to determine gas concentrations and pinpoint individual emission sources, enabling effective monitoring of key facilities such as power plants and landfills.

Su said the detector's observation range covers latitudes from 42 degrees south to 42 degrees north — encompassing most of the world's densely populated and industrially active regions. The data it collects will be shared with government departments and research institutions in China and abroad under the nation's data management policies.

She added that recipients include the nation's Ministry of Ecology and Environment, and the United Nations Environment Programme which will add it to an open global dataset for researchers and authorities worldwide.

Zhang Limin, another co-lead of the project and head of HKUST's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, said that while the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has participated in many of the nation's space projects in the past, this payload is the first mission led by the SAR — a milestone.

He highlighted that the project's results will also provide a scientific basis for cross-regional climate research and emissions reduction efforts in economies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, contributing to the global response to climate change.

HKUST President Nancy Ip Yuk-yu said the project proves that Hong Kong's research capabilities can make substantial contributions to the nation's highest-level aerospace platforms.

It also supports the nation's dual-carbon goals and provides scientific backing for the Beautiful China Initiative and global climate governance, Ip said.

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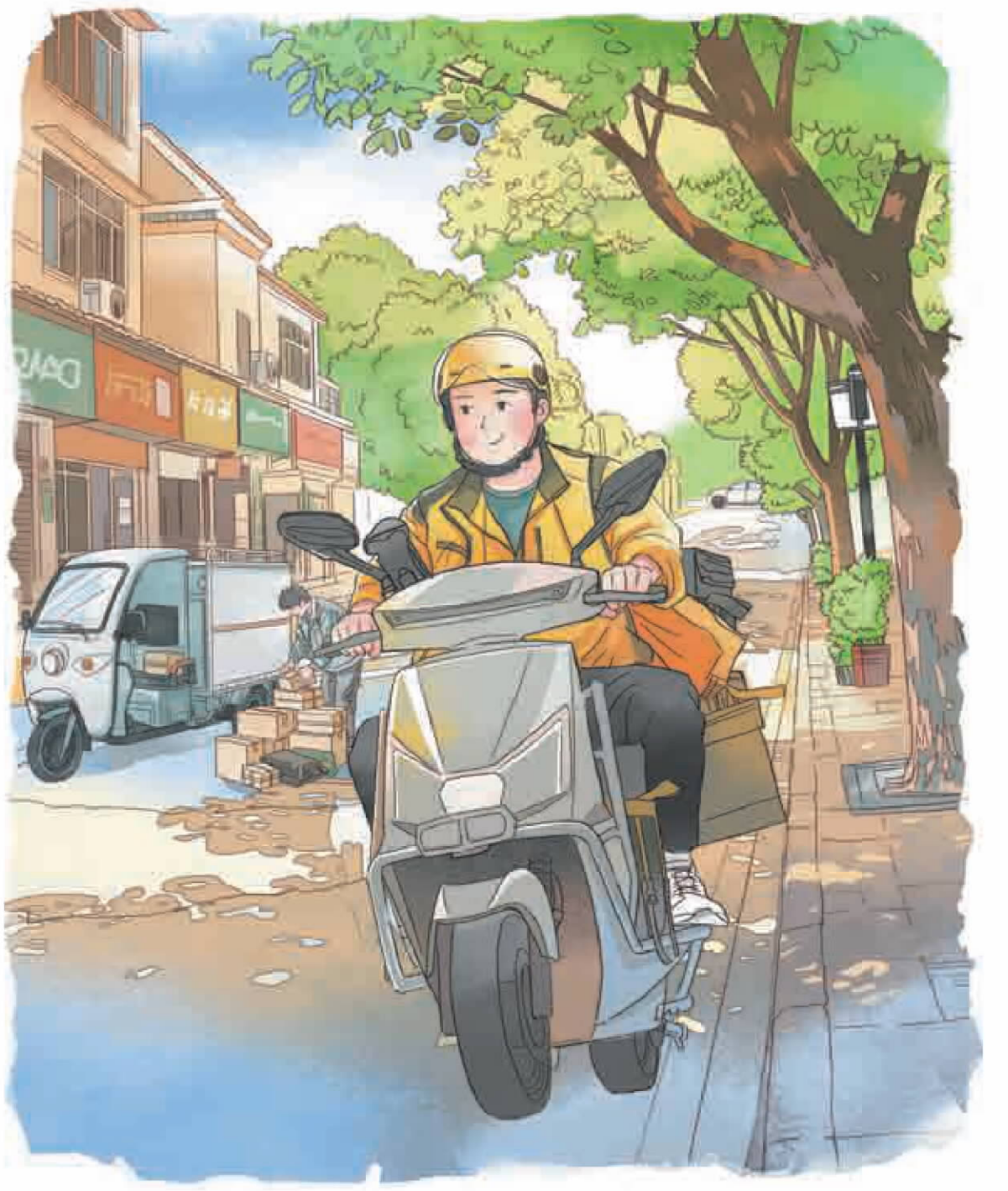
POLICY REVIEW

Guideline boosts gig worker protections

Government policy provides growing oversight over new employment types

By JI HAISHENG
jihaisheng@chinadaily.com.cn



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

During campus breaks, Xiao Tang, a university student from Hebei province, takes to Beijing's streets as a ride-hailing driver. A driving enthusiast, he has turned his time off campus into a source of income and a tangible sense of autonomy. "I enjoy it. It gives me control over my time," he said.

His experience is a snapshot of a much larger trend. "Young people across China are increasingly turning to digital platforms for work, forming the backbone of the country's expanding 'new forms of employment,'" said Zeng Yanbo, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Sociology.

"New forms of employment" are distinct from traditional full-time work, referring to jobs where tasks are matched, assigned, managed and compensated via internet platforms, such as online service provider Meituan, ride-hailing platform Didi and short-video app Douyin.

More than 70 percent of such workers are aged between 18 and 35, according to Zeng. "Young people are drawn to these jobs mainly for the low entry barriers, the quick settlement of income, and the freedom to set their own schedules," she said.

As this workforce continues to grow, the country has introduced a series of policy measures designed to safeguard these workers' rights, improve services and steer the high-quality development of the sector.

In April, the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a set of policy measures on strengthening service and management for new employment groups. Experts said that this marks the first central-level policy framework dedicated exclusively to platform-based workers.

They added that it signals a decisive shift for China's digital economy — from a phase of rapid expansion to a new stage of standardized development that balances innovation with labor dignity and security.

According to a survey on China's workforce in 2023, the country has approximately 84 million workers engaged in new forms of employment, accounting for 21 percent of its total workforce. Projections indicate the figure may surpass 100 million this year.

"The new employment group is an important component of China's workforce and an indispensable force for socioeconomic development. It has now become a crucial pillar of the job market," said Zhang Dandan, a professor of economics and vice-dean at Peking University's National School of Development.

Li Yan, 37, from Yuncheng in Shanxi province, has spent a decade delivering food in Beijing. For most of those years, he worked as a freelance courier on major platforms, appreciating the flexible hours but lacking any form of employment security.

A pivotal shift came in March of last year, when he joined e-commerce company JD as a full-time delivery rider.

Despite it currently being a low season for orders, Li said he still earns around 8,000 yuan ($1,180) per month. Beyond the pay, a transformative benefit has been his enrollment in a social security program, with JD covering the employer's mandatory contribution and subsidizing employees' personal contributions. For Li, this security has become a tangible foundation for his future. He said he is committed to building a long-term career with the company, with plans to stay until retirement.

While individual stories highlight the search for security, the sector's overall vitality remains robust. A recent report by Jinan University's Institute for Economic and Social Research in Guangdong province and recruitment portal Zhaopin showed job postings in new forms of employment rose 15.1 percent year-on-year in 2025, while job seekers rose 11 percent year-on-year, with over 80 percent of positions offering monthly salaries between 8,001 yuan and 15,000 yuan.

For years, the explosive growth of platform jobs, hailed for creating employment, outpaced the development of corresponding safeguards. "The core challenge lies in the mismatch between a new, flexible employment model and a social protection system designed for traditional, stable jobs," Zhang said.

The newly issued policy document provides a comprehensive, two-phase blueprint to bridge this gap. The primary goal is to standardize labor practices and ensure robust rights protection by 2027, followed by the establishment of a sound service and management system within the next three to five years.

It has urged internet platforms and express delivery companies to set reasonable wages for workers based on work tasks and labor intensity, and to ensure full and timely payment. Another pillar of the reform is bringing transparency and accountability to the algorithms that govern such work. Platforms are now required to disclose rules for order assignment, pricing, assessment and penalties, according to the document.

While the policy direction is clear, experts caution that its implementation faces deep-seated economic challenges. Zhang identified income as the primary, underlying concern. "For riders, the core issue is earnings from each delivery," she said.

Citing a widespread belief that any new cost levied on platforms — for social insurance subsidies or safety incentives — will be passed down to workers, Zhang said, "Real, sustainable security for workers must be built on a foundation of adequate earnings in the first place."

Alongside safeguards, she stressed that it is essential to introduce measures that curb cutthroat competition and strictly prevent the infringement of workers' rights and interests.

Yin Yu, a senior partner at Guangdong-based Guanghe Law Firm, urged lawmakers to expedite dedicated legislation to protect the rights of workers in new employment forms.

She told Legal Daily that the next critical step is to translate the proven measures outlined in the policy document to binding legal statutes. This legislation, she said, should systematically define the nature of employment relationships, the rights and obligations of all parties, liability divisions, and regulatory oversight responsibilities, thereby solidifying the institutional safeguards for this workforce.

Zeng emphasized the urgency of establishing comprehensive skill standards and structured promotion pathways for delivery riders and similar professions. She advocated benchmarking against the technical worker grading system, a strategic move aimed at elevating these roles from temporary positions to viable lifelong careers.

This transformation, she noted, is essential for providing workers with long-term growth opportunities and fundamentally reshaping the perception and stability of platform-based employment.

Delivery platform reforms prioritize riders' safety over speed

By JI HAISHENG

The removal of late-delivery penalties in early 2026 has marked a turning point for China's gig economy, signaling a shift from speed-first algorithms to worker safety.

For veteran riders like Li Xincang, 39, who has navigated Beijing's streets for over a decade, the shift represents the professionalization of a sector once defined by high-risk labor and social insecurity.

When Li, a native of Puyang in Central China's Henan province, arrived in the capital over two decades ago, he started working on construction sites like many other rural migrants.

"The wages were often delayed, and there were no social security benefits at all," he said.

Seeking a more predictable income, he switched to food delivery in 2014 and has worked for consumer services platform Meituan for almost nine years.

Today, the veteran leads a team of over 110 riders and earns more than 10,000 yuan ($1,470) a month. Earnings are deposited quickly, he said, explaining that part-time riders get paid the next day, while full-time team members receive weekly wages.

"Delivery work won't make you rich, but it can support a family steadily," Li said. The reliable and timely income allowed him to pay off debts of over 100,000 yuan and build a decent house back in his hometown.

Beyond the paycheck, Li cherishes the flexibility. "I can choose to work mornings, evenings, or nights, and manage my own schedule. I can even take a moment to relax if I need, or scroll through my phone during a break," he said. "This is something you hardly get on a factory floor or a construction site."

Li said that the most crucial improvement he has witnessed is the reform of the delivery algorithm, the system that organizes his daily work.

"In the past, we could get up to 12 orders at a time, with very tight deadlines. We had to rush and sometimes even risk traffic violations," he said. Now, influenced by the government and stakeholders, the system limits trips to six or seven orders with more reasonable time windows. "The algorithm now puts safety before speed," he added.

The platform reinforces this by issuing warnings or short-term account restrictions for repeated traffic violations. A pivotal relief came in early 2026 when penalties for late deliveries were removed.

"Riders no longer feel forced to risk their lives on the road," Li said. "This shift has significantly reduced the danger of accidents caused by overwork or rushed deliveries."

This growing sense of security extends from the daily grind to long-term planning. A key milestone was the introduction of a pension subsidy program late last year. Li and his teammates are now covered by the program that subsidizes their participation in basic pension insurance for gig workers.

"Compared with construction work that offers no proper social security, this job gives us a greater sense of security," Li said. "This pension scheme will protect us after we retire. Having it makes my family feel truly at ease."

Support on the ground has also been upgraded. Li praised the launch of hubs dedicated to delivery riders, which offer 24/7 shelter, charging ports and seasonal supplies. However, he is critical of commercial outlets that hang similar signs for show without providing real service and suggests resources should be directed toward stations that genuinely help workers.

For Li, the past decade traces a clear path — from chasing immediate wages to building a stable, secure life with a future to look forward to. He acknowledged his own story as part of a broader shift where the nation's policy direction and corporate initiatives are converging to provide millions with not just an income, but a growing sense of dignity.

Li said he may continue riding for a few more years, or he might return to his hometown to promote local farm produce online, leveraging a following he has built on social media.

He added that his plans remain flexible, while his next steps will ultimately depend on his family's needs.

Policy Digest

Roadmap to cultivate global textile leaders

China will cultivate no fewer than 25 leading textile and apparel brands by 2028 as part of efforts to significantly enhance the competitiveness and market influence of the sector, according to an action plan issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and four other departments that was recently publicized.

The action plan for the cultivation of excellence in textile and apparel brands (2026-28) sets out six key tasks, including the categorized cultivation of leading brands across supply chains, industrial ecosystems and consumer markets. Enterprises will be guided to focus on specialized market segments and consumer scenarios to create a group of supply-chain brands and consumer-facing brands.

The plan calls for stronger development of smart textiles, including smart wearables, intelligent home textiles, and products related to healthcare and medical applications.

To promote digital and intelligent upgrading, the plan encourages the release of innovative application scenarios for "AI plus textiles" across the entire industrial chain. It also supports the use of human-computer interaction and virtual interaction to better understand personalized consumer demand, while improving the technological level and wider application of virtual fitting, intelligent outfit recommendations and virtual anchors.

Campaign to uplift rural culture, health services

The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and 12 other departments recently issued a notice launching the 2026 campaign to bring culture, science and health services to the countryside, aiming to deliver more high-quality resources directly to rural communities.

Under the campaign, cultural and artistic services will be brought to rural areas by mobilizing literary and artistic teams to provide cultural services. Support will also be given to mass cultural and sports activities.

Legal services will be strengthened through regular rural-themed public legal education activities, while agricultural technology services will focus on the needs of rural industrial development.

The campaign will expand science outreach in rural communities through innovative science popularization demonstration activities and high-quality public science content.

Medical resources will be sent to rural communities via free clinic weeks, visits by renowned doctors to grassroots areas, and stationed or mobile medical services at township and village levels, and public welfare services will also be expanded.

Tap water coverage in countryside hits 96%

China's rural tap water coverage reached 96 percent by the end of 2025, the Ministry of Water Resources said on Tuesday.

By the end of last year, large-scale water supply projects covered 71 percent of the rural population, while 72 percent of counties had adopted unified county-level management for rural water supply, the ministry told a press conference.

China had nearly 3.82 million rural water supply projects by the end of 2025, forming a supply network covering 850 million rural residents. The number of people relying mainly on water cellars and water storage tanks for water supply had dropped by 79 percent by the end of last year from the level at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), areas lifted out of poverty completed 914.9 billion yuan ($133.71 billion) in water conservancy investment, including 145.5 billion yuan in key counties.

China aims to raise rural tap water coverage to 97 percent by the end of 2026, with large-scale water supply projects covering 73 percent of the rural population, according to the ministry. By 2030, the country aims to lift rural tap water coverage to 98 percent.

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CULTURE



Pearls of perspective

Growing up in China, award-winning novelist worked throughout her life to strengthen cross-cultural understanding, **Yang Yang** reports.

In the history of Sino-US exchanges, Nobel Prize-winner Pearl S Buck, a writer from the United States also known as Sai Zhenzhu, stands prominently as "the most influential Westerner to write about China since the 13th century's Marco Polo", as described by late US historian James C Thomson Jr.

Buck's true significance lies in her approach to cross-cultural understanding, says Guo Yingjian, a specially appointed professor at Renmin University of China, one of the earliest Chinese scholars to research Buck.

"She shows us that effective cultural exchange doesn't start with labels, ideological judgments, or demonization. Instead, it begins with understanding people's lives: their suffering, dignity, and shared emotions," he says.

Through reading her popular and sympathetic novels, particularly *The Good Earth*, Americans' perceptions of China changed significantly in the 1930s and 40s.

"The majority of Chinese were seen for the first time in literature as honest, kindhearted, frugal-living, hard-working, deity-fearing farmers who are much the same as American farmers," wrote Chinese scholar Liao Kang in 1997.

Buck's empathy went beyond pity, reflecting an understanding of others' circumstances, says Guo.

She captured both the hardships and resilience of Chinese farmers, writing about not only poverty but also dignity, not only backwardness but also human complexity, he says. Consequently, the China she depicted, though not a full picture, was warm, textured, and humane, he adds.

One important reason Buck was able to represent Chinese characters with empathy and compassion lies in the fact that "she did not view China as a foreign tourist on a brief visit; rather, she lived and grew up in China, and spent a long time sharing the same world with ordinary Chinese people," says Guo.

Her writing about China did not stem from an abstract "Oriental imagination", but from everyday life, land ethics, family relationships, and basic human emotions, he notes.

A daughter of Southern Presbyterian missionaries, Buck left her hometown of Hillsboro, West Virginia, for China in 1892, when she was about four months old. In 1896, her family moved from Huai'an to Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, where they lived for the next 18 years.

Unlike other missionaries, Buck's parents, Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker, chose to live among Chinese people to fully immerse themselves in local culture rather than in isolated Westernized compounds.

Life in Zhenjiang greatly influenced Buck and her writing, especially the daily interactions with her nanny and tutor, says Lu Zhangping, director of the Zhenjiang Pearl S Buck Research Association.

In Zhenjiang, a local Chinese woman surnamed Wang cared for Buck for 18 years. Wang, kind and diligent, often cooked her delicious meals and snacks. Their relationship went far beyond that of servant and master. Wang treated her like her own child. Whenever Buck was punished by her mother for disobedience, Wang would quietly help her with the chores and offer guidance. From a young age, Buck had developed a deep respect and admiration for Chinese women.

Wang often told Buck tales about the famine during her own childhood, her family, and bandits; martial arts stories about standing up to the powerful; fighting injustice; and Chinese classics set in Zhenjiang, including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Legend of the White Snake* and *The Water Margin* (or Outlaws of the Marsh).

Her parents hired a traditional scholar, 50-year-old Mr Kung, to teach Buck classical Chinese literature and thought. Mr Kung, originally from Beijing, moved to Zhenjiang after his house was burned down by German soldiers.

Every afternoon at 2 pm, Mr Kung arrived at Buck's home for two-hour lessons. He taught her about Confucius, Bodhisattva, Chinese history, classical literature, life maxims, and local customs and traditions. When answering her questions, he went beyond mere book knowledge, emphasizing the connection between the "source" and the "flow" that links the past, present and future. He also encouraged young Buck to study Chinese classical novels and taught her about the "Complete Library of the Four Treasuries" that was stored in Zhenjiang's Wenzong Ge, an ancient library.

For 10 years, through reading classical texts and practicing calligraphy, She not only became well-versed in traditional Chinese classics and familiar with Chinese history, culture and geography, but also developed a beautiful regular-script style of writing, spoke fluent Mandarin, and even learned to carve seals. In Zhenjiang, she also witnessed the miserable lives of victims of the 1905 Yangtze River flood, which provided first-hand material for *The Good Earth*.

In 1910, Pearl Buck returned to the United States to attend Randolph-Macon Woman's College and, shortly after graduating in 1914, returned to China. She taught English in middle schools in Zhenjiang for two years and, after marrying John Lossing Buck in 1917, the couple went north to live in the countryside of Suzhou, Anhui province, to research life and agriculture in rural areas.







Top: Pearl S Buck (right) at a United China Relief fundraising event in the US in 1941. She played an active role in encouraging and organizing fundraising efforts in the US. **Middle left:** Buck speaking at the National Press Club in Washington. **Middle right:** A photo taken on August 17, 2025, in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, shows a Western-style building, which is now home to the Pearl S Buck Memorial House. **Above:** *The Patriot*, released in New York in 1939, was the first novel Pearl S Buck published after receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1938. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"During her four to five years in Suzhou, Pearl Buck learned about the rural areas and farmers in China more profoundly," Lu says.

From 1919 to 1934, the Bucks both taught at the University of Nanking. In the house located at No 3 Pingcang Alley, now in the Gulou Campus of Nanjing University, she completed her first novels, including *East Wind, West Wind* (1930), *The Good Earth* (1931), *Sons* (1933), and *The Mother* (1933), as well as a translation.

In 1933, Buck published the first English translation of *The Water Margin*, one of Chinese literature's Four Great Classic Novels of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), giving it the title *All Men Are Brothers*, a line she learned from the Confucian classic *The Analects*.

In 1938, when Buck received the Nobel Prize in literature, she gave a lecture, *The Chinese Novel*, in which she said, "My earliest knowledge of story, of how to tell and write stories, came to me in China". She also mentioned the "Complete Library of the Four Treasuries" she learned from Mr Kung.

The Good Earth, featuring a poor Chinese farmer's family caught in the tides of history, became an instant best-seller in the US and was translated into more than 30 languages. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. In 1937, a film adaptation was produced and won an Oscar for Best Actress the following year.

In 1934, with much reluctance, Pearl Buck left China, but her connection with the Chinese people was never severed.

Since the 1920s, she had been writing articles for US magazines, including The Atlantic, Asia, The Chinese Recorder, and The Nation, on Chinese farmer's life, culture, the shifting roles of women, and China's social dynamics.

In the United States, Buck fully committed herself to humanitarian and cultural endeavors related to China.

In 1941, she became president of Asia magazine to promote modern Chinese literature, aiming to create vibrant, multidimensional Chinese characters that challenged Western stereotypes.

The same year, the East and West Association was established, and as the president, Buck utilized lectures, publications, broadcasts, and translations to spread Chinese culture and provide crucial international support for wartime China.

In 1943, Buck joined the Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion as a key spokesperson, publicly criticizing the exclusion laws. Her efforts contributed to the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act later that year.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Buck steadfastly supported China's mission. Since the September 18th Incident in 1931, she had openly condemned Japanese militarism and consistently informed the American public about the realities of the war in China.

To aid China, she initiated the Book of Hope fundraising campaign in 1940 and subsequently led the China Emergency Relief Committee and the United China Relief agency, organizing large-scale fundraising efforts to provide medical supplies, build hospitals, and aid civilians and war orphans.

Throughout the war, she frequently used media platforms to voice her support. In 1938, she reviewed the book *Red Star Over China*, predicting China's revolutionary victory and in another article published later that year she praised Chinese guerrilla tactics. In 1942, she published the novel *Dragon Seed*, set against the backdrop of the Nanjing Massacre in 1937, during which 300,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed, making it one of the most horrific atrocities of World War II.

In 1938, in the Banquet Speech of the Nobel Prize, Buck said: "I have never admired China more than I do now, when I see her uniting as she has never before, against the enemy who threatens her freedom. With this determination for freedom, which is in so profound a sense the essential quality in her nature, I know that she is unconquerable."

In 1945, she witnessed Japan's surrender to the Allies, marking the end of the war. In 1973, Buck died in Danby, Vermont, at 80. According to her will, her tombstone at Green Hills Farm in Pennsylvania bears no English name, no birth or death dates, and no epitaph — only three Chinese characters in seal script, handwritten by Buck herself: *Sai Zhen Zhu*, her Chinese name.

In the Statement on the Death of Pearl S Buck in 1973, former US president Richard Nixon said: "In life, Pearl Buck was a human bridge between the civilization of the East and West."

Today, China is quite different from the one depicted in Buck's works. Characterized with modernity, urbanization, globalization, and digitalization, modern China is a far cry from the one focused on land, villages, and family ethics in *The Good Earth*, Guo, the professor, says.

"If we still read Buck solely as a way to understand China's reality, we're missing the point," Guo says.

"In today's context of challenging Sino-US relations, her significance is in her reminder that even if relations between countries are tense, the possibility for understanding between individuals should remain," Guo says, adding, "It is an agreement we reached after discussing the significance of Pearl Buck with the Ministry of Education's China Center for International People-to-People Exchange in current cultural exchanges.

"No matter how dominant political narratives become, they cannot completely obscure the reality of ordinary people's lives. While the China she wrote about is in the past, the method she represents — understanding people through their humanity — is still relevant today," he stresses.

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A well-versed exchange between Chinese and Arab writers

GUANGZHOU — Young poets, writers and scholars from China and Arab countries have gathered in South China's Guangzhou, Guangdong province, for a poetry festival aimed at deepening literary dialogue and people-to-people exchanges.

A China-Arab States special session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival began over the weekend in the southern metropolis, drawing more than 40 young poets, Sinologists and writers from 13 Arab countries, including Morocco, Syria and Egypt, alongside more than 40 young Chinese poets.

The event will run through Sunday. In the coming days, Chinese and Arab poets will take part in a series of cultural exchange activities in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, both in Guangdong province, and Beijing, including poetry readings, academic dialogues, poetry seminars, and field visits.





The opening ceremony of China-Arab States special session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on May 9. PHOTOS BY LU HANXIN / XINHUA

"Though separated by thousands of miles and different languages, the two great poetic traditions of China and the Arab world have become both the root and soul of their civilizations, with condensed language, profound wisdom, and sincere emotion," says Zhang Hongsen, chairman of the China Writers Association.

Zhang says he hopes young poets from both sides will draw inspiration from one another while staying rooted in their own cultures, allowing poetry to flourish through exchanges between tradition and modernity, and the local and the global.

For Egyptian poet Yahia Mohamed Wagdy Lotfy Omar, poetry can travel across languages and borders.

"When I write a line of poetry, a friend on the other side of the world who speaks a different language can still be moved by it and understand it. That is poetry," he says, adding that translation serves as an important bridge, and such gatherings can help poets break through their own limitations.

Launched by the China Writers Association in 2024, the International Youth Poetry Festival has previously held special sessions for BRICS countries and China-Latin America exchanges.

Organizers say the platform is growing into an international venue for young writers to promote literary dialogue and mutual learning among civilizations.

XINHUA

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LIFE



Blending tea culture with travel

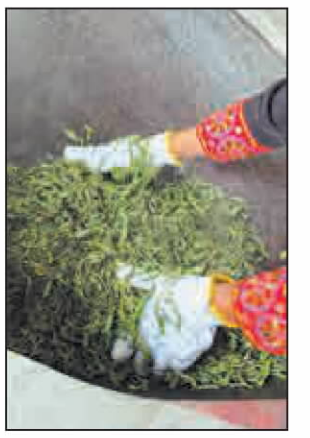
Enthusiast-turned-entrepreneur shares his appreciation for the drink along with his sourcing adventures, report **Zheng Zheng** and **Wu Wanzhen** in Shanghai.

When Derek Poskin first arrived in the historic canal city of Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, in 2016, he was tracing a poem by Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai and developing a growing appreciation for Chinese tea culture. Nearly a decade later, the American, born in 1988, has become a tea entrepreneur, sourcing premium leaves across China and selling them to customers worldwide.

"Coffee is for work. Tea, though, is for life. I've always been passionate about Chinese tea," Poskin says from Empty Cup, his renovated tea house nestled in Yangzhou's old quarter, where he introduces visitors from around the world to China's tea traditions.

"I started drinking and buying more, and eventually turned my house into a warehouse. I had to share it somehow, and that's how the business began."





From passion to business

Poskin launched his tea venture in 2018 as a side project, aiming to connect Western tea enthusiasts with the traditions behind it. However, the early years were challenging.

"The first three or four years were really slow," he admits, recalling how only family members purchased his products initially. "I still remember the first time I got an order from somebody I didn't know. I was like, 'Oh my gosh'. That was the moment I knew I was making it. It's been a long, long process."

Navigating China's tea landscape is no simple feat. The country produces thousands of varieties across six main categories — green, white, yellow, oolong, black, and dark teas like Pu'er.

Rather than working through middlemen, Poskin travels directly to tea-growing regions across China, from the ancient forests of Yunnan province in the southwest to the oolong gardens of Fujian province along the eastern coast.

"One of the reasons I came to China was to live the tea culture. The best way to do that is to go where the tea is made," he explains. "Before coming to China, I had been drinking tea for a long time but had never actually seen a tea plant. Now I've hiked through some of the country's most remote tea mountains."

Connective expeditions

One of Poskin's most memorable expeditions took him to Guafengzhai, a remote village of the Yao ethnic group in Yunnan's Yiwu town, about two kilometers from the border with Laos. Renowned for its high-quality Pu'er tea, the village had long been a bucket list destination for the entrepreneur.

The journey began with a leap of faith — connecting through social media with a young, local farmer named Zhao Xiaoyun. "I had this prearranged date with a person I'd never met, in a town I'd never been to, to venture to the borders of China," Poskin recalls. "But as soon as I met her, I knew we were on the same page. We both spoke the language of tea."

The four-day expedition immersed him in every aspect of tea production. Joining Zhao, her mother, sister, and friends deep in the tea forests, he picked leaves, laid them out to sun-dry, and helped with the roasting.

"We've hosted foreign tea merchants who have visited our plantation for business before, but Derek stands out for his exceptional knowledge of tea," says Zhao. "When we taught him the leaf fixation process, a critical step that halts oxidation and preserves flavor, he learned it immediately."

The primeval forests, with tea trees hundreds of years old growing wild among other vegetation, left an enduring impression. "Walking through those ancient groves felt like stepping into another world," Poskin describes. "The farmers would point out edible herbs along the way, letting me taste spicy leaves that would numb my mouth like Sichuan peppercorns.

"That's one of the most magical aspects — experiencing the land with the people who live on it," he adds.

Pieces of a puzzle

Poskin's dedication to understanding tea goes beyond sourcing trips. He spent a year in Chaozhou, Guangdong province, studying the art of making clay teapots used for *gongfu cha* (tea with skill). This method uses small pots and cups to bring out complex flavors through multiple short infusions.

He has participated in some local customs and festivals during his trips, often as the only foreigner. "One time, around Qingming Festival, I was invited to join a family's tomb-sweeping ritual," he recounts. "We killed chickens, burned incense and paper money, and set out meals for the ancestors. It was incredible to be part of that living tea culture."

The tea is just the surface, he emphasizes. "When I experience the world through the eyes of the people in the mountains, I realize how deep tea culture really is. The leaves themselves are just a piece of the puzzle."

Through his travels across different provinces, Poskin's understanding of the drink itself has shifted from a search for correctness to an appreciation for diversity.

"I came thinking there was one correct way to drink tea," he explains. "But I've learned that Chinese tea culture is incredibly fluid and varies by region." For example, people might drink green tea straight from a glass jar in Yangzhou, while in Chaozhou, elaborate *gongfu cha* sets are the norm.

"Chinese tea culture is fluid, more Taoist," he says. "Every place has its own style, and any way you drink tea is the right way. I find that very welcoming and liberating."

Bridging East and West

These experiences have become central to his business model. Poskin documents his sourcing journeys through videos and photographs, sharing them with customers to create transparency and a connection between consumers and producers.

His content creation extends to a podcast called Tea Soup, a YouTube channel, and an active social media presence through which he has built a following of enthusiasts eager to learn about authentic Chinese tea culture.

Most of his customers are based in the United States, with significant sales to Germany and other EU countries. To introduce premium flavors to a wider audience, he utilizes blending techniques that maintain high quality while remaining affordable.

"I buy some really good tea and blend it with a less expensive tea that complements it, so people can try something high-quality at an affordable price," he explains. For each product, he creates detailed tasting notes, origin information, and brewing instructions.

Unlike many e-commerce businesses, Poskin operates exclusively through his own website, maintaining full control over the customer experience — from freshly coined tea names to packaging designs. "It's something I have complete control of. For me, this is a creative expression," he says.

Looking ahead, Poskin envisions his business evolving into a social enterprise that gives back to farming communities. His new teahouse project in Yangzhou aims to create a physical space where people can experience Chinese tea culture firsthand.

"The business is doing well. My partner and I are interested in making it a social enterprise — giving back to the farmers and doing something positive," he reflects. "I don't need to make endless money. I'd rather cap it and use the excess for good.

"From the start, this has been a passion project," he emphasizes. "I want a deeper understanding of Chinese tea, to source better tea, and to awaken more people to Chinese tea culture."

Reflecting on a decade in China, Poskin offers fellow entrepreneurs a perspective of patience. "China is a world of opportunities. There are so many people who can help you. But don't rush it," he notes. "Great things take years, and then they happen all at once."



Clockwise from top: Derek Poskin on the tea mountain in Guafengzhai, which is located on the southwest border of Yunnan province and is renowned for its high-quality Pu'er tea;
The leaf fixation process;
Poskin shows fresh and sun-dried tea leaves;
Poskin and Zhao rolling tea leaves. PHOTOS BY ZHENG ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Contact the writers at zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Salon and music strengthen Sino-New Zealand friendship

WELLINGTON — Featuring a concert by the Amber Quartet, the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" in late April integrated Chinese tea culture with classical Western music in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city.

Organized by the China Cultural Center in Auckland, the event opened with tea tasting, traditional tea preparation, tea appreciation, and storytelling about tea culture, creating an elegant, harmonious atmosphere. Participants were invited to make a personalized cup of tea using an ancient Chinese style in which tea powder is applied to "draw" pictures on the tea's foam.

The Amber Quartet was founded in 2005 and has become an internationally influential string quartet in China. During the event, Debussy's *String Quartet* and works featuring the ethnic cultures of both countries were performed. "They were truly amazing," Sharon Ann from the audience says, speaking of the performers' superb skills.

Chen Shijie, Chinese consul general in Auckland, says that the event uses music as a bridge and tea as a bond to convey the friendship of the Chinese people, helping deepen mutual understanding and relations between the people of China and New Zealand, and strengthening the public foundation of bilateral relations.

Bob Harvey, former mayor of Waitakere, says he values the historical ties and current cooperation with China. "This night is cemented with tea for harmony and peace. It is such a special moment."





Left: A participant experiences traditional Chinese tea culture during the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" in Auckland, New Zealand, in April. **Right:** Auckland people enjoy traditional Chinese tea culture at the event organized by the city's China Cultural Center.
PHOTOS BY WU JIAXIANG / XINHUA

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LIFE

An island's women on wheels

On remote Qushan in Zhejiang province, a team of female delivery drivers is reshaping traditional roles, balancing motherhood and work while forging independence and solidarity, **Chen Nan** reports.

Part of the Zhoushan Islands in China's Zhejiang province, hundreds of kilometers from the mainland, lies Qushan Island, home to fewer than 100,000 residents.

Life here revolves around a main road, which is a narrow stretch lined with schools, a clinic, a handful of shops, four bubble-tea cafes, and a lone coffeehouse. This modest cluster forms the island's "central business district". Yet, in the past year, it has become the stage for an extraordinary cast of women.

They are mothers averaging 40 years of age who have traded the predictable rhythms of domestic life for the hum of electric scooters and the uniform of the island's delivery service. Day after day, clad in orange and black, they navigate winding lanes and stair-stepped alleyways, threading the island together one takeout order at a time.

Once tied to roles defined by family and circumstance, such as wives awaiting fishermen at sea, and mothers trapped in part-time work, they now claim a new agency in these small, daily movements, quietly "rebuilding themselves" with every delivery.

From February to March this year, renowned Chinese photographer Xie Hailong, whose work has chronicled ordinary lives for 35 years, visited Qushan, drawn by curiosity.

"On an island surrounded by wind and sea, I wanted to see how these women could seize their own lives," he says. More than 10 of his photographs are being displayed in an exhibition titled *Seeing: Cities and Riders*, running from April 17 to the coming Sunday at public locations across 12 cities nationwide, capturing these women, who root themselves in a life defined not by circumstance, but by choice, against the rhythm of waves and wind.

Xie, 75, is known for a photo that he took in 1991, telling the story of Su Mingjuan, then 8 years old, with great sparkling eyes and a pencil in hand, in rural Jinzhai county, Anhui province. The photo became a household image after it was used as a poster for Project Hope, which was launched by the China Youth Development Foundation in 1989 and is dedicated to helping underprivileged children get an education.

Xie was inspired by a video online that he watched in 2025, featuring this group of women whose optimism, smiles and authenticity shone through every frame.

"I was captivated by their energy and found myself curious about this unique team — how, in such an isolated place, surrounded only by wind and sea, could they courageously choose their path, work tirelessly, and hold tightly to the life they wanted to live," the photographer says.

The first time he saw them in person, their vibe instantly drew him in. They were a diverse group of women, aged between 30 and 50, all dressed in bright orange uniforms. They gathered at the "CBD" of the island and chatted and laughed together.

"Their electric bikes were parked nearby, and they were like a burst of color against the backdrop of the island. When an order came in, one of them would zip off to deliver it, only to return afterward and join the group once again," says Xie.

During the days when their husbands were out at sea, these women became each other's family, supporting one another through thick and thin. When one of them had fewer orders, the others would step in and share theirs. If a newcomer was unfamiliar with the island's streets, the experienced riders would patiently guide her. Between orders, they would pull out little mirrors and lipsticks to touch up their makeup, reminding each other that, even in their uniforms, they never forgot the importance of feeling beautiful.

"It is a life that is both modest and deeply connected, where community comes first, and every little act of kindness carries weight. These women aren't just making deliveries; they are building lives for themselves and each other, grounded in determination, sisterhood and joy," the photographer says.

Among these women is Chen Lirong, born in 1997 and the youngest and fastest of Qushan's female riders. She is also the navigator, the one steering the small team through the chaos of rising orders. Each day begins at 7 am with the routine of family: delivering her two daughters to school. By 8:30 am, her delivery box is already brimming with orders. She rides until mid-afternoon, pauses to pick up her children, and then continues the cycle — juggling work and motherhood with the precision of someone who has spent years learning to adapt.

For Chen, deliveries are more than a job; it is the first work she has ever held that allows her to earn a living while tending to her children. Even at the busiest moments, she can glance at her phone, or quickly dash out an order and return home to care for her daughters.

In April 2025, when Taobao Shangou, or Taobao Instant Commerce, an online daily life services platform, officially launched operations on Qushan Island, Chen's reliability earned her the trust of Hu Gaoyang, the logistics manager. She became the leader of the all-female riders, guiding new mothers into the unfamiliar, physically demanding world of delivery work.

Initially, both Chen and Hu worried that the women, many long accustomed to full-time childcare or household work, might not adapt to the harsh rhythms of outdoor delivery. But as the first surge of orders hit, those doubts quickly vanished.

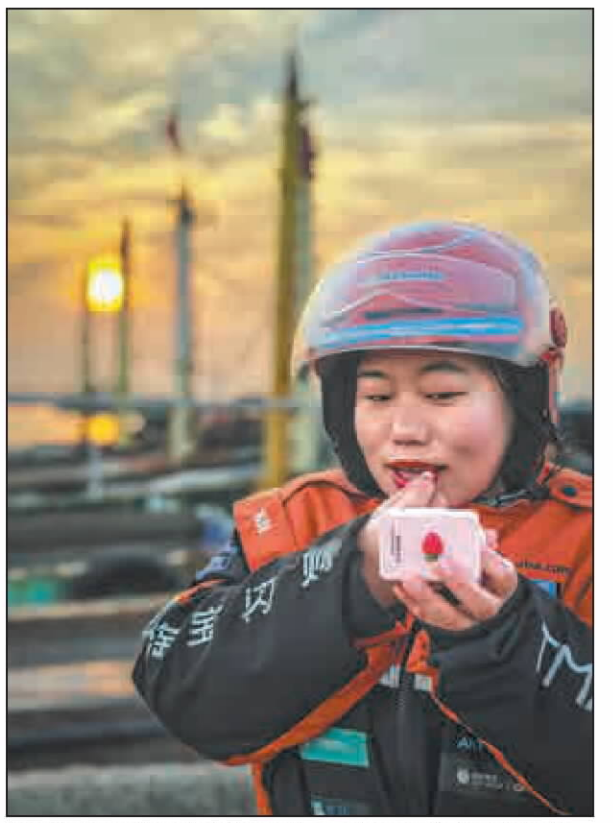
During the summer of 2025, order volumes skyrocketed by more than 1,000 percent. Some riders, brand-new to the job, handled 189 deliveries in a single day, and over the course of a month, completed more than 2,000.







> These women aren't just making deliveries; they are building lives for themselves and each other, grounded in determination, sisterhood and joy."
>
> **Xie Hailong,** veteran photographer



Top: A group of female delivery riders gathers on Qushan Island's wharf for a photo. **Middle left:** In the rapeseed fields outside their homes, team member Wang Jinrong (left) picks a yellow flower, placing it on team leader Chen Lirong's head. **Middle right:** On an island with almost no elevators, these female delivery riders climb four to five floors per order — sometimes scaling hundreds of stairs in a single day. **Above:** Thirty-three-year-old Xu Limei loves bright lipstick. PHOTOS BY XIE HAILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chen herself was no stranger to struggle. Born in Anhui, she had drifted from factory work in Guangdong province to follow her husband to Jiangsu province. By 2016, marriage and childbirth brought her to Qushan, where her husband became a fisherman and she a homemaker, bound to domestic responsibilities while he went out to sea. Early one March morning, photographer Xie captured a photograph of her sending her husband off at 4 am, the harbor dark and silent.

"There was no dramatic embrace," Xie recalls. "Just a quiet farewell. The silent care between them hit me harder than any posed shot. I found myself tearing up behind the camera."

Raising two daughters while managing household repairs, medical trips and family errands, Chen's desire to work and earn never waned. A previous job in a local factory ended when it shut down, leaving her life once again in a transitional state. But as a delivery rider, she found not only an income, but also her calling. She schedules her team around childcare needs: mothers with younger children ride the mid-shift, those with older children the early shift, while those without children cover the late hours. In high season, she stays late to help manage orders herself, ensuring no one is overburdened.

At 46, Hu Yingrong became the first female delivery rider to join Chen's team. Having lived on the island for nearly 20 years, she's seen her life unfold in ways she never expected. Her eldest daughter is now in college, while her youngest son is still in middle school.

For nearly a decade, Hu Yingrong searched for work on the island that would allow her to balance earning an income with taking care of her children. Before she became a delivery rider, she tried various jobs but found herself doing the laborious task of mending fishing nets.

For a decade, she was bound to those nets. While the men of the island used fishing nets to bring in the harvest, Hu believed that women on the island had their own "mission" — the work of repairing and maintaining them. When the boats returned from fishing, they were filled with nets that needed mending: some torn and some covered in small fish and shrimp that had to be removed.

When her children were on vacation or at school, she would work in a fishnet factory surrounded by piles of discarded nets alongside other women just like her. They worked from sunrise to sunset, often losing track of time.

Then, in 2025, a new opportunity appeared. She became the second female delivery rider on the island, marking the beginning of a new chapter in her life. Finally, she had a job with a base salary, and the harder she worked, the more she earned.

However, the transition wasn't easy. Unlike younger riders like Chen, Hu Yingrong struggled at first. When she joined the team, she was faced with the busy periods of July and August — times when the number of orders was overwhelming. She couldn't even read the delivery routes on her phone's navigation system because they looked like a tangle of branches and twigs, constantly splitting and extending. But with persistence and a willingness to learn, she quickly adapted.

The island is full of buildings without elevators, and she often found herself climbing staircases, sometimes multiple flights in a row.

"My legs would hurt so much," she says, recalling the physical toll. Yet, she pushed through and excelled during the peak seasons, earning over 10,000 yuan ($1,472) a month — figures she had never dreamed of while working in the factory. During the off-season, she could still make 7,000 to 8,000 yuan — an amount that once seemed impossible.

Now, she has carved out some time for herself. After sending her son to school in the morning, and finishing her deliveries, she returns home to do housework or tend to her small vegetable garden.

The exhibition also features photos of other delivery riders taken by other photographers. According to the photo exhibition's curator Yang Han, more than 2,000 works were submitted for the event, with nearly 100,000 riders participating in the voting to select 200 images to be exhibited. The total number of votes surpassed 1 million.

Alongside Xie, more than 50 other photographers are featured, including Zhang Boyuan who has taken pictures of Tang Qi, a rider in Chengdu, Sichuan province, who twice jumped into an icy river to save people.

"Many photographers and ordinary people pick up their cameras and phones to document the riders around them," Yang notes.

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough," Xie says, quoting famous war photographer Robert Capa. "The same applies to portrait photography — this 'closeness' refers to how close you are to the life and heart of the person you're photographing.

"During this shoot, I was moved to tears several times by the passion and optimism of these mothers. Each of them faces various difficulties at home, yet they still wear a smile on their faces. In the past, I've often revisited the children I photographed for Project Hope, checking in on them every few years to see if they're still in school. I hope that in the future, I'll have the chance to return to this small island, to the 'CBD' they've been waiting for, to that little milk tea shop, and see them still wearing smiles on their faces, with their lives getting better and better," Xie says.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Ancelotti: Neymar call to be made on form, not sentiment



As Brazil's coach gets set to announce his World Cup squad, questions remain over inclusion of 34-year-old Santos star

Neymar (center) of Brazilian side Santos fights for the ball with Matias Reali (left) and Manuel Insaurralde of Argentine club San Lorenzo during a Copa Sudamericana group-stage match at the Pedro Bidegain stadium in Buenos Aires in April. AFP

Carlo Ancelotti will walk into Monday's Brazil squad announcement with a nation peering over his shoulder and one burning question hanging in the Rio de Janeiro air: Neymar, or no Neymar?

The 34-year-old forward is Brazil's all-time leading scorer, but his place at the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off next month, hangs in the balance after years of injury troubles and an underwhelming return to Santos.

That leaves Ancelotti weighing romance against the cold, practical demands of fitness, as he lays out his high-intensity blueprint for the record five-time champion.

"When you have to choose, you have to consider many things," Ancelotti told reporters on Tuesday.

"Neymar is an important player for this country because of the talent he has always shown, but he has had problems and is working hard to recover. He has improved a lot recently, and is playing regularly. It is, obviously, not such an easy decision for me. We have to weigh up the pros and cons carefully."

Ancelotti hosted reporters at the Brazilian Football Confederation's headquarters in Rio, overlooking Barra da Tijuca, and spoke about the delicate selection call with the calm that has defined one of soccer's most decorated managerial careers.

The Italian is the only coach to have won league titles in all of Europe's big five leagues and has lifted a record five Champions League trophies as a manager, in addition to two as a player.

'Much loved'

Yet, few selection decisions will be picked apart quite like this one. Teammates have publicly lobbied for Neymar's inclusion, while supporters remain split between affection and anxiety over whether his body can still keep pace with his imagination.

"I know full well that Neymar is much loved, not only by the public, but also by the players," Ancelotti said.

"This is also a factor, because we have to consider the atmosphere that will surround Neymar's call-up. It's not as if I'm going to drop a bombshell in the dressing room. He's very well-liked, he's very much loved.

"I think it's normal for the players to express their opinion. I'm grateful to everyone who has given me advice; I thank you all.

"But, ultimately, the right person to make this decision, the one best placed to do so, is me."

Asked whether the players' appeals had influenced him, Ancelotti said they mattered only in one respect: they underlined that Neymar would not disrupt the group.

For Ancelotti, the dressing room is not the concern. The circus outside it may be.

"The internal atmosphere, I don't think it will affect the team at all. The atmosphere is a very positive, very clean one, and no matter which player is in the squad, it will remain positive and clean right to the end," Ancelotti said.

"But I can't control the external atmosphere and what the media says."

'Improved'

The bigger question may be whether or not Neymar still fits the soccer Ancelotti wants: four forwards who can run, press and track back, a demanding template for a player who has struggled to string together a sustained run of matches.



Carlo Ancelotti

The Italian, however, said Neymar had shown signs of progress.

"He has improved his fitness a lot in recent matches," Ancelotti said.

"He has played some very good matches lately and he can maintain a high intensity in a match, but there are matches and matches..."

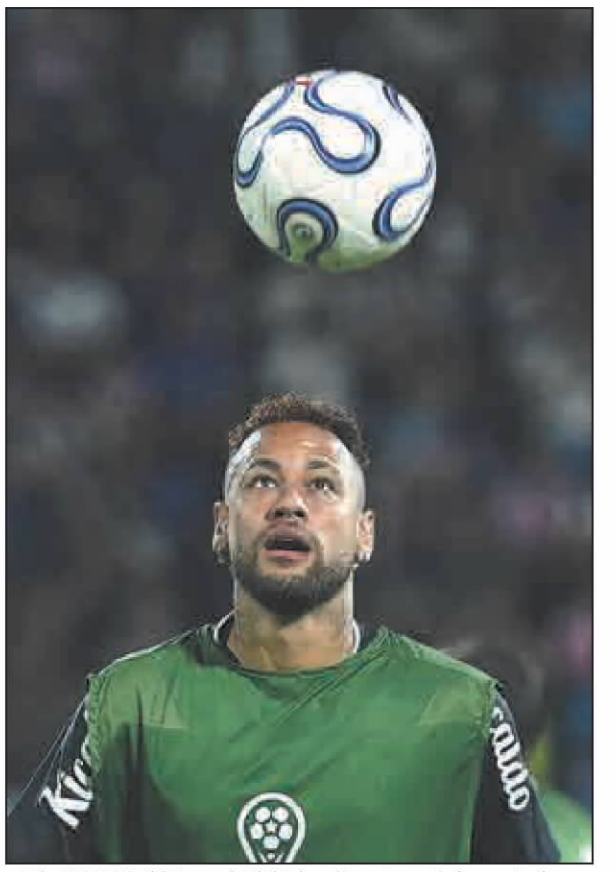
Ancelotti said the decision whether or not to select Neymar would be his alone.

"I haven't been pressured by anyone to call up Neymar. I have complete autonomy," he said. "The decision will be 100 percent professional. I will only take into account how he is performing as a footballer. Nothing else.

"Can I draw up a perfect squad? Impossible! But I can draw up a squad with fewer mistakes than others who might do so. Of that I am certain."

REUTERS





The 34-year-old Neymar is Brazil's all-time leading scorer, but his place at the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off next month, hangs in the balance after years of injury troubles and an underwhelming return to Santos, though he has shown signs of progress recently. REUTERS / AFP

With 30 days to go, LA has everything in place for the World Cup — except the pitch

INGLEWOOD, California — With 30 days to go until its first World Cup match, Los Angeles has the transportation and food nailed down. The playing surface, though? Not just yet.

The United States opens its campaign at SoFi Stadium (to be known as Los Angeles Stadium) against Paraguay on June 12, the first of eight matches to be played at the NFL stadium in Inglewood.

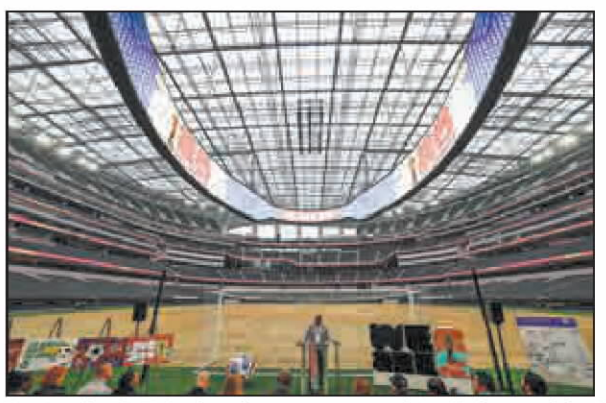
On Tuesday, though, the field was still dirt.

That was set to change on Wednesday, when, after a 1,600-mile trip in refrigerated trucks from Washington state, sod was due to arrive, ready to be laid over the next two days.

"This surface is the players' stage," said Otto Benedict, senior vice-president of facilities and campus operation for SoFi Stadium.

Construction on the field began April 13 after the stadium hosted a Monster truck event.

The stadium modified the field shared by the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers in two phases. Auxiliary space and wider dimensions were created by removing corner seats to meet FIFA specifications, and a sophisticated irrigation system was installed to maintain the grass.





Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium hosts an event marking 30 days until the World Cup on Tuesday, featuring themed desserts of a World Cup trophy made of chocolate mousse and a soccer ball filled with vanilla mousse, that will be available to fans during the tournament. AFP / AP

"To be the place where the energy first ignites, where the home crowd gets to set the tone for the rest of the tournament is a responsibility we don't take lightly," Benedict said.

Construction, landscape, grass and engineering crews were applauded by local World Cup organizers and community ambassador Magic Johnson, who pointed out his suite where he'll be watching.

"When you think about the financial impact it's going to have on Los Angeles, it's going to be amazing," said Johnson, who is a co-owner of LAFC in Major League Soccer and the Washington Spirit of the National Women's Soccer League.

Tours of the stadium during the tournament are being sold for $86.50 and premium seats, suites and hospitality packages are still available.

Fans availing themselves of those tickets will have access to a variety of food and drink options, from lime marinated shrimp and spiced lamb rack, to aged ribeye cap with bordelaise and mashed potatoes.

There is also a range of themed desserts, including a World Cup trophy made of chocolate mousse, raspberry, chocolate crunch and chocolate sponge.

Metro debuted special edition TAP cards featuring three FIFA-themed designs, 17 country-specific designs, four FIFA collector cards, including a light-up card, and a collector's box.

"We want to provide a system that is safe, fast and fun," LA Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins said.

Metro is working with 11 other transit lines in the region to offer direct-to-stadium bus services for $3.75 from 15 park-and-ride lots in the LA and Orange counties. Reserved parking lots range in price from $55 to more than $100. Fans can access 300 dedicated buses to every match in an effort to avoid disrupting regular services.

The official FIFA Fan Festival will be held from June 11-14 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum with big screens showing games. Ten fan zones around LA county will host activities and watch parties.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日報 FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026



President Xi Jinping hosts a banquet at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday to welcome US President Donald Trump, who is on a state visit to China. YAN YAN / XINHUA

China, US set out new vision for ties

Building constructive bilateral relations of strategic stability agreed to at Beijing summit

By **CAO DESHENG** and **ZHANG YUNBI**

China and the United States will work toward building a constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability, a new vision that President Xi Jinping and visiting US President Donald Trump agreed was how the world's two largest economies should handle their relations.

The two leaders on Friday met for tea at the Zhongnanhai compound, which Xi said is the place where the Chinese leaders work and live, "including myself".

The compound used to be part of the imperial garden, and there is a lot of history here, Xi said, adding that one of the trees he and Trump admired during their walk is 490 years old.

Xi said he would send the seeds of the Chinese roses they saw in the garden to Trump as a gift.

During their summit on Thursday at the Great Hall of the People in the Chinese capital, Xi said that China is committed to the steady, sound and sustainable development of China-US relations.

The new vision will provide strategic guidance for China-US relations over the next three years and beyond, and should be welcomed by the people of both countries and the international community, he said.

Xi said that "constructive strategic stability" means positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, sound stability with moderate competition, constant stability with manageable differences, and enduring stability with promises of peace.

Building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability should not be a mere slogan, but concrete action taken by both sides toward the same goal, he added.

Xi expressed his readiness to work with Trump to set the course and steer the giant ship of China-US relations, in order to make 2026 a historic and landmark year that opens a new chapter in bilateral ties.

He also urged the US to handle the Taiwan question with extra caution, saying that it is the most important issue in China-US relations.

He emphasized that if it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, he said.

Xi also called on both countries to make better use of communication channels in the political, diplomatic and military-to-military fields, and expand exchanges and cooperation in areas such as the economy and trade, health, agriculture, tourism, people-to-people ties and law enforcement.

Trump called Xi "a great leader" and China "a great country", saying that he has tremendous respect for the Chinese president and the Chinese people.

Noting that the meeting between Xi and himself was the biggest summit the world was watching, Trump said he will work together with Xi to strengthen communication and cooperation, properly handle differences, make bilateral relations better than ever and embrace a "fantastic" future.

He said that the US and China are the most important and most powerful countries in the world. Together they can do a lot of big and good things for the two countries and the world, Trump said.

Su Xiaohui, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said that the Sino-US summit once again served as a testament to the pivotal role of head-of-state diplomacy, and showed the remarkable importance both countries attach to bilateral relations.

The new vision of building a constructive relationship of strategic stability is the latest reminder of China's proactive approach in shaping its ties with the US, she said.

Diao Daming, professor with Renmin University of China, said the new vision could usher in a new phase in China-US relations and help the two nations explore the right way to get along with each other in the new era.

Diao pointed out that bilateral ties are expected to remain generally stable for a period of time if the US manages to carry forward and keep endorsing this new vision as a bilateral consensus.

Su said that both countries shared a need for strategic stability.

"Constructive strategic stability does not mean that China and the US have no differences. Given the different national conditions of the two countries, differences are inevitable," Su said.

"However, when it comes to managing these differences and maintaining strategic stability, both sides need to work together toward the same goal. This is a test of wisdom for both nations."

Diao said that taking cooperation as the mainstay of the relationship means that although both sides have their own economic and trade interests, the relationship is generally mutually beneficial.

"We believe that competition in these areas should remain within reasonable bounds. The competition should be healthy, allowing both sides to achieve development while supporting each other, instead of a life-and-death struggle or a battle for victory," he said.

Seeking "sound stability with moderate competition" means the entire landscape of China-US relations should not be defined by "strategic competition", Diao said.

"In recent years, bilateral relations have remained generally stable and avoided a free fall. The next step should be to build on this progress," he added.

Meanwhile, the Chinese Foreign Ministry reiterated its position on the Iran situation in a press release on Friday. The statement was released after the two heads of state exchanged their views on major international and regional issues, including the situation in the Middle East, during the summit.

The ministry's spokesperson said that finding an early way out of the conflict serves the interests of both the US and Iran, as well as countries in the region and the rest of the world.

China always believes that dialogue and negotiation are the right way forward, and the use of force is a dead end, the spokesperson said.

It is important to reach a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as soon as possible, enable peace and stability to return to the Middle East and Gulf region at an early date, and lay the foundation for building a sustainable security architecture for the region, the spokesperson added.

Contact the writers at caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

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Heritage site visit adds another dimension to dialogue

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

The more than 600-year-old Temple of Heaven in Beijing provided a symbolic setting on Thursday for President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump as they posed for photos at the site after their closely watched talks earlier in the day.

The visit to the UNESCO World Heritage site added a cultural dimension to the summit between the leaders of the world's two largest economies.

Built in 1420 during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the architectural marvel welcomed the two leaders on an early summer afternoon, as ancient cypresses stood in quiet grace and a gentle breeze refreshed the air.

Xi greeted Trump outside the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, the Temple of Heaven's iconic, triple-eaved, blue-tiled landmark.

The two presidents walked up the steps and entered the hall, where they viewed its architectural features, from the precise fittings of its mortise-and-tenon joints and interlocking wooden brackets to the seamless integration of astronomical calendar concepts with its structure.

In the hall, they appreciated the concept of harmony among all things and respect for the law of nature.

Xi noted that in 2017, he and Trump toured the Palace Museum along Beijing's Central Axis.

The Temple of Heaven dates from the same period as the Palace Museum and embodies the idea that Heaven is round and Earth is square, reflecting the view of the universe and guiding philosophy of the Chinese people, he said.

Xi told Trump that ancient Chinese rulers would hold prayer ceremonies at the site for prosperity of the nation, happiness of the people and favorable weather for good harvests. It embodies the traditional Chinese ethos that people are the foundation of a country and only when the people lead a good life can the country thrive, he said.

*See **Summit,** page 2*

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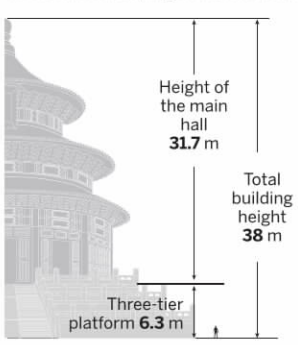
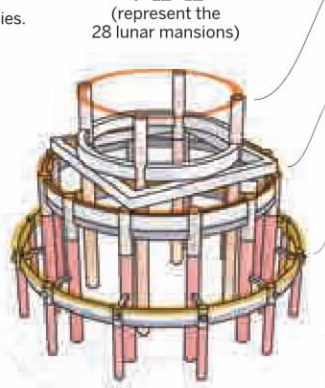
CULTURAL MEANINGS OF THE TEMPLE OF HEAVEN

First built in 1420, the Temple of Heaven is China's largest and best-preserved Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) era complex, meant for heaven-worshiping rituals and ceremonies.



The 28 columns
4+12+12
(represent the 28 lunar mansions)



4 Inner Ring Dragon Well Columns
(represent the four seasons)
Height **19.2** m
Column diameter **1.2** m

12 Middle Ring Golden Columns
(represent the 12 lunar months)
Height **15** m
Column diameter **1** m

12 Outer Ring Eaves Columns
(represent the 12 two-hour periods)
Height **12** m
Column diameter **0.8** m

Together they represent the **24** solar terms.

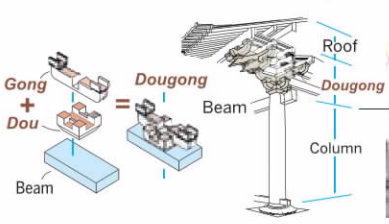
The three-tier platform is made of marble.



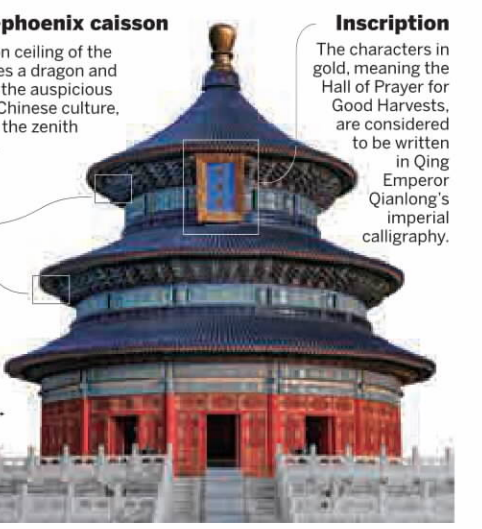


Dragon-phoenix caisson
The caisson ceiling of the hall features a dragon and a phoenix, the auspicious totems in Chinese culture, flying over the zenith of heaven.

Dougong
Interlocking wooden brackets assembled without nails showcase ancient Chinese craftsmanship.



Inscription
The characters in gold, meaning the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, are considered to be written in Qing Emperor Qianlong's imperial calligraphy.



GRAPHICS BY TIAN CHI, JORGE CORTES, MUKESH MOHANAN, WANG KAIHAO / CHINA DAILY

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Xi: As partners, China and US can help each other succeed

Nations 'must make it work' to advance global well-being, he says

By **ZHAO JIA**
zhaojia@chinadaily.com.cn





Left: President Xi Jinping addresses a banquet held on Thursday to welcome US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. LI XIANG / XINHUA **Right:** US President Donald Trump makes a speech at the welcoming banquet on Thursday in Beijing. BRENDAN SMIALOWSKI / AFP

Achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation and making America great again can go hand in hand, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday, adding that China and the United States can help each other succeed and advance the well-being of the whole world.

Xi made the remarks when delivering a toast at a welcoming banquet hosted at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing in honor of visiting US President Donald Trump.

As this year marks the start of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for economic and social development, Xi said that over 1.4 billion Chinese people, drawing on the rich heritage of the nation's more than 5,000-year-old civilization, are advancing Chinese modernization on all fronts through high-quality development.

He noted that this year marks the 250th anniversary of US independence, and over 300 million people in the US are reinvigorating the spirit of patriotism, innovation and enterprise, embarking on a new journey for the development of their country.

"The peoples of China and the US are both great peoples," Xi said.

Looking back on the history of China-US relations, Xi emphasized that 55 years ago, the two countries engaged in Ping-Pong Diplomacy. "The door that had remained frozen for over 20 years was opened," he said, describing that diplomatic endeavor as a milestone in contemporary international relations.

Since then, through numerous examples of mutual openness and cooperation, China and the US have continuously written tales of friendship, he added.

Under the new circumstances, Xi said that he and Trump have held multiple meetings and phone calls, working to maintain the overall stability of China-US relations.

He said they both believe that the China-US relationship is "the most important bilateral relationship in the world", and that the two countries "must make it work and never mess it up".

"Both China and the US stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation," Xi said, emphasizing that the two countries should be partners, not rivals.

Xi added that he and Trump have agreed to promote steady, sound and sustainable development of bilateral ties and bring more peace, prosperity and progress to the world.

Reviewing the history of China-US relations, Xi said that the key to the steady development of bilateral relations lies in whether the two sides can uphold mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation.

The China-US relationship concerns the well-being of more than 1.7 billion people in both countries and affects the interests of over 8 billion people across the world, Xi noted. "Both sides should rise up to this historic responsibility and steer the giant ship of China-US relations forward steadily and in the right direction," he said.

Trump, in his toast, thanked Xi for the gracious reception accorded to him. He described the day as "fantastic" and the visit as important, adding that both sides engaged in positive and constructive conversations.

The people of the US and China share mutual appreciation and respect, and their friendship goes back a long way, Trump said.

He said the relationship between the US and China is the most consequential bilateral relationship in the world and that, together, the two countries have the opportunity to create a better future for the world.



Business leaders from the United States, including Tim Cook (left) of Apple and Jensen Huang (second from left) of Nvidia, arrive on Thursday at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing to attend a group meeting with Premier Li Qiang. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Country to open door wider to foreign businesses

By **CAO DESHENG**
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

President Xi Jinping said on Thursday that China will open its door wider to the world, and it welcomes more mutually beneficial cooperation with the United States.

Xi made the remarks when meeting with US entrepreneurs accompanying US President Donald Trump on his state visit to China. The meeting took place during talks between Xi and Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Trump asked each of the leaders to present themselves to Xi, saying that he encourages them to expand their cooperation with China.

Xi noted that US enterprises are deeply involved in China's reform and opening-up, and both sides benefit from this engagement.

He said that US companies will have even broader prospects in China going forward.

The business leaders accompanying Trump include Chief Executive Officer of Tesla and SpaceX Elon Musk, Apple CEO Tim Cook, Nvidia CEO Jensen Huang, BlackRock CEO Larry Fink, Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg and Goldman Sachs CEO David Solomon, among others.

On Thursday afternoon, Premier Li Qiang also met with the US entrepreneurs. He emphasized that a stable and predictable economic and trade relationship between China and the US serves the interests of both countries and the world.

Li said that amid growing instability and uncertainty in the current international situation, it is of great significance for both countries to maintain open and unimpeded dialogue and communication to sustain a stable and healthy bilateral relationship, as this injects certainty and positive energy into global peace and development.

Noting that the economic and trade cooperation between China and the US is large scale, Li said that strengthening cooperation can promote mutual benefit and win-win outcomes and contribute to global economic growth.

As the world's two largest economies, he said, China and the US should work together to lead in promoting open cooperation, manage their differences properly and maintain their economic and trade relationship, serving as a stabilizing and constructive force in the world.

A Chinese economy with steady growth will provide more opportunities for enterprises from all countries, the premier said.

Li highlighted the prominent feature of the Chinese market in terms of scale, growth and stability, saying that new demands are being rapidly unleashed and the new drivers of growth are being strengthened, leading to sustained and positive momentum for economic growth.

The nation welcomes more foreign enterprises to explore the Chinese market and share in the development opportunities, he said.

The premier expressed the Chinese government's unwavering commitment to upholding a stable and open policy environment, and said that China will continue to expand high-standard opening-up, provide high-quality services to foreign enterprises and improve policies.

He expressed the hope that more US enterprises will continue to expand their presence in the Chinese market, strengthen the bond of mutually beneficial China-US cooperation and serve as a bridge to promote communication and dialogue between the two countries, and help US people from all walks of life view China's development more objectively and rationally.

The US business executives emphasized the critical importance of US-China relations, saying that the successful meeting between the leaders of the two countries has injected new momentum into US-China economic and trade cooperation.

The US business community is optimistic about China's development prospects and positively views China's ongoing efforts to advance high-standard opening-up and create a world-class business environment, they said, adding that they are willing to expand cooperation with China and make greater efforts to enhance mutual understanding and cooperation between the two countries.

New vision of stability guiding relationship

WORLD WATCH
By Anthony Moretti

What people all over the globe want to see during this state visit is the identification of areas of cooperation that will advance bilateral stability between the two nations and boost global peace prospects.

The smiles that could be seen when United States President Donald Trump arrived in Beijing on Wednesday for a state visit were again on display hours later when he met with President Xi Jinping.

The world wants China and the US to be partners. Therefore, what people all over the globe want to see during this state visit is the identification of areas of cooperation that will advance bilateral stability between the two nations and boost global peace prospects. After the meeting, there is every reason to believe that such a framework is being created.

At one point, the Chinese president said that the two countries should work together to make 2026 "a historic and landmark year" for China-US relations.

Chinese officials have consistently noted that ideas such as mutual respect and win-win cooperation are essential ingredients of diplomacy in the modern world. The global community will respond positively knowing that respect was regularly on display during the state visit.

China has shown time and time again in recent years that it is committed to stable, healthy and sustainable China-US relations. Due to the "strategic guidance" that President Xi said both presidents could offer their governments and other officials, there is more reassurance.

This is exactly what the global community wanted to see: China and the US creating the necessary structure as they have agreed to work toward building a bilateral relationship of "constructive strategic stability" to make the world a better place.

As Xi said, the "constructive strategic stability" should be positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, sound stability with moderate competition, constant stability with manageable differences, and enduring stability with promises of peace.

Such a structure is crucial at a time when the world is facing fragmentation, unilateralism, tensions and even wars.

The foundation for that structure? Willingness for cooperation; competition that is managed creatively and not destructively; an understanding that differences must be discussed openly; and a firm commitment to peace.

Similarities, not differences, should define the bilateral relationship and allow for a brighter future. Moving forward, it is incumbent on both governments to consistently deliver a message that as major powers, they are determined to be positive stewards for the world for this generation and future generations.

President Trump said that he expects a positive future for China-US relations as well. The global community will breathe easier if it is convinced that the two countries can work toward closer cooperation and more commitments in resolving differences, which will benefit bilateral relations and contribute to the stability of the world at large.

This state visit, if it remains on its trajectory, could very well be remembered for giving people the hope that new vision of constructive strategic stability will provide well-needed guidance for bilateral relations and the well-being of the international community.

While the atmosphere in Beijing was positive on Thursday, concrete results were expected to follow as the state visit continues.

It is important that the two sides first work through equal-footed consultations to bridge their differences and find more fields of common interest. As the Chinese president said in a meeting with US business leaders accompanying Trump, US businesses have been deeply involved in China's reform and opening-up, which benefits both sides. He promised that China's opening-up will be deepened, and China welcomes business cooperation from the US side on the basis of mutual benefit.

Moreover, what might a "historic and landmark year" look like? Imagine China and the US creating an environment in which they unceasingly work together to tackle the world's most challenging problems: global unrest, climate change, food insecurity, the potential for improper use of artificial intelligence, income inequality, the next world health crisis, barriers to free trade and more. Granted the two presidents will not find solutions to all of those issues in just two days, but they can — and so far have — set the right tone. Sustaining the positive momentum displayed at Thursday's meeting in Beijing will be critical. The world is eager to see that it does.

As always, the open hand of friendship prevails over confrontation and estrangement.

The author is an associate professor in the Communication and Organizational Leadership Department at Robert Morris University in the US state of Pennsylvania. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily or Robert Morris University.

Summit: Temple of Heaven visit continues a tradition in diplomacy

From page 1

Xi said the Communist Party of China has inherited and carried forward the people-centered philosophy rooted in Chinese civilization, and has always adhered to its fundamental commitment of serving the people wholeheartedly, thereby gaining the firm support and heartfelt endorsement of the people.

Trump said he still has vivid memories of his 2017 visit to the Palace Museum.

The Temple of Heaven, which has stood magnificently for more than six centuries, showcases the fine art of classical Chinese architecture as well as the splendid and profound traditional culture, he said.

"It's great. Great place. Incredible. China is beautiful," Trump said.

Both the United States and China are great countries, and their peoples are both great and wise, Trump said, adding that the two countries should deepen mutual understanding and enhance friendship between their peoples.

The Temple of Heaven visit on Thursday continued a tradition in China-US diplomacy in which culturally significant venues are used to convey messages beyond the formal agenda.

Trump's visit to the Temple of Heaven marked the first time in 51 years that a sitting US president had visited the landmark since then-US president Gerald Ford toured it during his visit to China in 1975.

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SINO-US SUMMIT



President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump pose for a photo on Friday at the Zhongnanhai compound in Beijing. EVAN VUCCI / REUTERS

HISTORIC BEIJING SUMMIT



President Xi and US President Trump pose for a photo in front of the Qiniandian, or the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests, while visiting the Temple of Heaven in Beijing on Thursday.
SHEN HONG / XINHUA



President Xi greets US President Trump outside the Great Hall of the People prior to their talks in Beijing on Thursday.
HUANG JINGWEN / XINHUA



President Xi holds a welcoming ceremony for US President Trump outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday.
ZHAI JIANLAN / XINHUA



President Xi holds talks with US President Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Thursday. YIN BOGU / XINHUA



Members of the delegation accompanying US President Trump on his state visit to China wait ahead of the welcoming ceremony in Beijing on Thursday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Exchange programs offer youths firsthand experience

By **XU LIN** in Beijing
and **CHEN YE** in Hangzhou



US students experience traditional Chinese rubbing in April during the 3rd Sino-US Youth Connect Season launched by Wenzhou-Kean University. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

University students from the United States are making rubbings from inscriptions on wooden tablets. They carefully apply ink and press paper to create prints, experiencing the intangible cultural heritage firsthand.

Over the years, Wenzhou-Kean University in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, has offered various exchange programs. Students from the US visit museums, companies, and villages, experience cultural heritage, join handicraft workshops and interact with Chinese peers.

"My exchange experience in China was life-changing. I've come to not only love Chinese culture but also the hospitable people," said Zinnyah Nutornti, who's an undergraduate in an exchange program at Wenzhou-Kean University.

Nutornti from Kean University in the US joined a two-week summer exchange program at Wenzhou-Kean University in 2025 and eager to experience more of life in China, she later applied for a semester-long exchange.

She recently took a weekend trip to Hangzhou in Zhejiang province with her roommate.

"Words can't even begin to describe the immeasurable amount of joy, exploring the mountains and West Lake. I became so overwhelmed with emotion. There were multiple moments when I had to stop in the middle of our trip to think about how much more life has to offer. After returning, I began to consider moving to China to settle down," she said.

She said such opportunities open doors for the younger generation to explore the world and build real connections.

This year marks the 20th anniversary of the official signing of the cooperation agreement between Wenzhou University and Kean University to jointly establish Wenzhou-Kean University.

Back in 2006, President Xi Jinping, then secretary of the Communist Party of China Zhejiang Provincial Committee, witnessed the signing ceremony in the US.

In November 2023, Xi announced an initiative to invite 50,000 young people from the US to China for exchange and study programs over a five-year period.

In early 2024, the university responded to the call with a plan to welcome 1,000 teenagers from the US to China over the next five years, and it has already hosted 501 young people from the US.

Pan Jianzhong, chair of the board of directors of the university, said China-US youth exchanges have shifted from "having exchanges" to "willing to engage", and from "visiting China" to "immersing themselves in China". It proves that when young people challenge stereotypes and reach out to each other, their connection can become the most vibrant and solid foundation for China-US people-to-people friendship.

Taishun county in Wenzhou is known for its well-preserved wooden arch bridges, built with traditional Chinese mortise-and-tenon joints that require no nails or rivets.

In 2024, traditional designs and practices for building Chinese wooden arch bridges were transferred from UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding to its Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

In 2021, Wenzhou-Kean University started the Kean Twin Bridge Program to promote the culture of Chinese arch bridges abroad. The university has organized students from the US to visit Wenzhou's covered bridges, produced a bilingual short video about them, and held an artificial intelligence video contest on covered bridges.

"Through this concrete cultural symbol, we aim to give young people from the US a more direct sense of the Chinese culture," Pan said. He added that they encourage joint research on the culture and protection of covered bridges, with resources from both universities in China and the US.

Matthew Wood, lecturer of graphic design at Wenzhou-Kean University, teaches students to create three-dimensional reconstructions of the ancient covered bridges in Wenzhou. "Students can learn practical skills, local history and the importance of preserving cultural heritage at the same time," he said.

"China boasts rich and unique regional cultures. Wenzhou's covered bridges are aesthetically pleasing and integrated into the surrounding mountains and rivers; they still function as social hubs for locals."

Contact the writers at xulin@chinadaily.com.cn

US martial arts enthusiast makes the right moves

By **CHEN MEILING** in Beijing
and **LIU KUN** in Wuhan



Jake Pinnick practices tai chi at the Wudang Mountain in Shiyan, Central China's Hubei province, in October.
CAO LINGLING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Time is silent, yet it never fails those who keep moving forward," Jake Pinnick said on RedNote.

Wearing a loose-sleeved training uniform with a flowing black beard and a topknot tied up with a hairpin, Pinnick, 36, from the United States, told an unusual story of "Becoming Chinese".

At Wudang Mountain in Shiyan, Hubei province, Pinnick was seen guiding a group of students practicing martial arts. The mountain is one of China's most famous and sacred Taoist sites, where Pinnick is known as a famous foreign coach.

He first demonstrated the sword routines once, then let the students follow along. He moved among the crowd, correcting each one's posture one by one.

In his view, Wudang martial arts are never meant to compete against or defeat others, but to achieve balance between inner spirit and outer strength, and integrate hardness with softness.

"They are supposed to develop you into a morally better person through some kind of character building," said Pinnick, whose fans have surpassed 2 million online.

Over the last decade in China, Pinnick has completely adapted to local culture. Now he likes drinking hot tea. He plays a vertical bamboo flute instead of the piano. He refuses waiters' kind offers of a knife and fork. Over the years, even his hair and beard have turned black, which, in his explanation, is that "each land shapes its people". He is proud of his Chinese name Li Zigen, which was given by his master.

Though facing doubts from some netizens, he never regrets his choice.

"I hope that, as a foreigner who has studied and inherited traditional Chinese culture in China, I can promote understanding and exchanges between different cultures. I want to let people from all over the world appreciate the charm of traditional Chinese culture and benefit from it," he said.

And his experience has proven that what began with a teenager's kung fu dream has borne fruitful results in promoting China-US friendship.

A fan of Jackie Chan and Bruce Lee, Pinnick had always wanted to learn "real kung fu from its roots". Fascinated by Yuan Shimao's graceful movements with the Eight Immortals Staff, a classic long weapon routine in Wudang martial arts, on YouTube, he finally made up his mind to come to China and explore the world of martial arts in 2010.

At that time, Yuan, the 15th-generation inheritor of the Wudang Sanfeng School, was recruiting students for a five-year international traditional martial arts program. He spent over a year arranging his university studies and flew to China.

"Back then, I could only speak a few simple Chinese (sentences). I could neither read nor understand the language. Every time the train stopped at a station, I grew extremely nervous and kept asking others: 'Is this Wudang Mountain?'" he said.

Twenty-four students from countries, including the US, Australia, Canada and Germany, were admitted to this class.

"It was so hard to begin with," Pinnick said, adding he had a hard time meeting the demands of the training because of his lack of flexibility and suppleness. "I couldn't straighten my back, and I couldn't do the splits at all."

He woke up at 5:30 am every morning to practice, irrespective of rain or shine, had his body hit with bamboo strips to build resilience, and was punished with palm strikes and horse stance squats for making mistakes.

By repeating every move dozens, or even hundreds of times each day, putting in far more effort than most people, Pinnick gradually realized martial arts are not merely a set of routines, but a philosophy of cultivating both inner character and physical form.

"In the past, I always insisted on winning every argument. Now I am able to control and calm my emotions. My master taught me: Cultivate virtue before practicing martial arts. For example, the tai chi opening form requires moving with both arms as if holding water. Though it looks like simple physical training, it actually teaches humility and tolerance."

Yuan, his teacher, said many students learn kung fu out of temporary curiosity. Over the years, he had seen countless students arrive full of excitement, only to leave dejected and discouraged.

Despite the language barrier and vast cultural differences, Pinnick's burning passion for martial arts as well as his perseverance deeply moved Yuan.

During this period on the mountain, he met his future wife, a Chinese woman. They got married in 2014. They have a daughter.

After completing the program, he went back to the US with his family, only to find himself "suspended between Chinese and American culture", so he decided to go back to Wudang Mountain in 2018 to teach and promote Wudang culture.

With encouragement from his wife, in 2020 Pinnick started posting videos about martial arts, vertical bamboo flute performances, and interpretations of Taoism philosophy, which went viral on social media platforms, attracting a lot of fans.

By now, he has taught some 700 foreign students, with the oldest studying for 8 years. Some visited Wudang Mountain to seek in-person instruction.

In April last year, he secured China's Foreign Permanent Resident ID Card.

Currently, he is busy preparing for a new international summer camp. "I hope my own experience can inspire more people to pursue their dreams. Whether it is a passion for martial arts or a desire to explore different cultures, everyone should try and persist," he said.

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WWII legacy honors peace and friendship

Internment camp's painful history also shows resilience in shared humanity

By **YANG RAN** in Beijing
and **ZHAO RUIXUE** in Jinan

While the name Auschwitz echoes through history as a grim symbol of Nazi atrocities during World War II, another camp, half a world away in China's Shandong province, holds a story less known.

In the city of Weifang, once known as Weixian or Weihsien, stands the Courtyard of the Happy Way. Established as a church, school and hospital complex by a US missionary in 1882, Japanese forces converted it into the Weihsien Internment Camp to imprison foreign nationals in China during WWII.

Unlike the well-documented concentration camps of Europe, the camp in China has remained largely obscure, even for the families of those who endured it.

For John Stanley, a history professor at Kutztown University of Pennsylvania, the journey into this forgotten history began in 1991, when he accompanied his father, Charles A. Stanley, on a visit to the Weihsien Internment Camp site.

Charles A. Stanley was interned at Weihsien with his parents in 1943 when he was just 10 months old. He remained there until US soldiers and a Chinese translator liberated the camp in 1945.

But this part of his family's history had been shrouded in silence. "The camp wasn't discussed when I was growing up and, according to my father, it didn't come up much with his mother or father either," John Stanley explained. "I believe that many have left that part of their lives behind and do not wish to engage with it."

Stanley's own journey to uncover this history began in 1991 during a visit to the site to dedicate a memorial to Eric Liddell, the 1924 Olympic 400-meter champion who died of illness in the camp. Liddell was one of at least 31 internees who died during imprisonment due to a severe shortage of supplies and medical care.

"It was that trip that started my interest in studying China and East Asia more generally," said Stanley. "In all of my research, I learned much more about the makeup of the internees and the role of the local Chinese population."

The camp was set up in retaliation for the US internment of Japanese nationals and Japanese Americans following the attack on Pearl Harbor. Over 2,000 civilians from 25 Allied nations were rounded up across China and imprisoned in the largest internment camp in Asia.

The internees include some prominent figures like Arthur W. Hummel Jr, who later became the second US ambassador to China. Hummel managed to escape before the camp's liberation with the aid of local Chinese.

Stanley emphasized that the help from the local Chinese "served to keep up the spirits of the internees as news became harder to find during the later years of the war".

Most notable were their efforts to communicate with the internees and set up a 'Black Market' for foodstuffs they could not get at the camp store, or they were short on, he said.

"Eggs were the most famous, but I believe that at one point, a live chicken was thrown over the camp wall," he added.

Touching story

Zhang Zhiren, a Europe-based writer who spent years researching and writing a book on the camp, said: "The bravery of the local Chinese, who risked their lives to help the foreign internees, is the most touching part of the story."

Zhang's book, *Weihsien West Civilians Concentration Camp: 1943-1945*, documents the cruel treatment of Allied civilians in the camp, their efforts to survive in extreme conditions and the acts of bravery and kindness of local Chinese to help the foreigners.

Zhang highlighted the story of Zhang Xingtai, a local villager who worked as a latrine cleaner in the camp. "The Japanese thought of him as just an ordinary farmer, not a threat, but didn't realize he became a 'bridge of information'," Zhang said. The internees were cut off from news of the outside. "Risking their lives, Zhang Xingtai and his son brought news from the outside in and smuggled information out. The news of Japan's defeat was passed on by them at great risk."

Despite their own hardships, the local people gathered food to send to the starving internees, risking everything to cross the Japanese-controlled barbed wire and electric fences, Zhang said. He shared the tragic story of a local child who was electrocuted on the camp's perimeter fence while trying to deliver food, with the Japanese forbidding the retrieval of the body.

"The people of Weifang didn't care what nationality the internees were," Zhang said. "They only knew that people were suffering and that they had to help. This kindness transcended war and national boundaries."

> "The bravery of the local Chinese, who risked their lives to help the foreign internees, is the most touching part of the story."
>
> **Zhang Zhiren,** writer of *Weihsien West Civilians Concentration Camp: 1943-1945*

Zhang stressed the importance of remembering the history of the Weihsien Internment Camp. "The memories of the camp are so painful that for decades, survivors were almost silent. As time passes, the survivors of the camp are dwindling, and fewer and fewer people know about this history."

His book is an attempt to rescue this shared memory, said Zhang. "Eighty years ago, Chinese people and foreign nationals helped each other through thick and thin. This story is the best footnote to the concept of a community of shared future for humanity."

The history of the Weihsien Internment Camp led the International Cities of Peace, a nonprofit organization promoting the global peace movement, to designate Weifang as the 308th International City of Peace in 2021, making it the second such city in China after Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province.

In celebration of Weifang's fifth anniversary as an International City of Peace, J. Frederick Arment, chair of the International Cities of Peace, said Weifang has consistently moved forward in the profound and healing steps of building peace from historical trauma with future hope.

In 2024, as China and the US marked the 45th anniversary of diplomatic relations, the story of the Weihsien Internment Camp made its way to San Francisco in the form of a special exhibition. Stanley also attended the opening ceremony as a representative of the descendants of former camp internees.

"I believe their (Weifang's) efforts to maintain the buildings and their efforts to create a traveling exhibition that went to San Francisco show a commitment to raising awareness about war and its consequences," Stanley said.

Speaking of the relevance of the spirit of peace from the Weihsien Internment Camp history, Stanley expressed hope that this history would encourage diplomacy and the use of international institutions to resolve conflicts rather than resorting to violence or other pressure tactics.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Music underscores shared quest for harmony

Educators, students, players united by bonds of curiosity, common goals

By **CHEN NAN**
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It began with a *dizi*, the traditional Chinese small bamboo flute with a tone both piercing and plaintive, capable of sliding effortlessly between virtuosic runs and tender fragile whispers.

Born and raised in San Antonio, Texas, 37-year-old composer Niccolo Athens, a faculty member at The Tianjin Juilliard School, vividly recalls the first time he heard *dizi* music played at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. It felt like discovering a new musical universe, he said.

"It was fluent, sophisticated, and completely unfamiliar to me," Athens said of hearing a piece for three *dizi* composed by Guo Wenjing. "It combined modern compositional techniques with a deep understanding of the instruments."

A graduate of Cornell University in New York, Athens was awarded a Fulbright grant, and spent an academic year in residence at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing in 2014, beginning a China journey that would also include Shanghai and Tianjin.

In 2019, he was appointed to the inaugural faculty of The Tianjin Juilliard School.

As the first overseas branch of the renowned New York Juilliard School, the Tianjin campus broke ground in 2017 and offers a US-accredited master's degree from the prestigious school. The Tianjin school's graduate program opened in the fall of 2020 with the first intake of students.



Young musicians from different countries perform during a concert conducted by David Robertson at The Tianjin Juilliard School on May 30, 2025. XINHUA

Instrumental changes

Two of Athens' new works are going to be premiered at the Tianjin school. He recently composed *Five Classical Lyrics*, based on classical poetry from the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties chosen by his students, and featuring music drawing inspiration from lesser-known Sichuan folk songs preserved in provincial songbooks from the 1980s.

He believes music carries a unique capacity to foster connection. "There's really nothing that bridges these two countries right now in the same way music can," he said.

He still vividly recalls his time at the Central Conservatory of Music in Beijing. Athens said he encountered intense dedication to performance and an unexpected embrace of contemporary composition, which inspired him to compose his own works. Unlike Western music conservatories, where classical repertoires often dominate, Chinese musicians actively sought new works from living composers, creating a vibrant culture of collaboration and innovation.

"The people I met are what really sticks with me," Athens said. Friendships formed in classrooms, concerts, and workshops became as formative as any formal instruction.



Above left: Niccolo Athens, a faculty member at The Tianjin Juilliard School, conducts during Festival Connect, Tianjin Juilliard's flagship performance festival, in Tianjin on Jan 16. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above right: Violist Molly Carr exchanges performance techniques with a student during a masterclass session on Nov 4. XINHUA



Right: Athens lectures students during a class at the school. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "There's really nothing that bridges these two countries right now in the same way music can."
>
> **Niccolo Athens,** a US composer and faculty member at The Tianjin Juilliard School

Learning to compose music for Chinese instruments proved a gradual process. His early attempts involved the *pipa* (a traditional lute) and *sheng* (a free-reed wind instrument), which he mostly learned about from video tutorials and guidance from friends abroad.

"I had to adapt my writing to the character of the instruments," he said. "It wasn't about capability — they (musicians) could play all the notes — but about understanding the way the instrument wants to speak."

He said the first piece he wrote that he felt truly reflected both his voice and the instrument's spirit was for the *guqin* (traditional Chinese zither) and string quartet, a milestone in his creative journey.

Language, too, was a path of careful immersion. Athens began studying Chinese while at the Juilliard in New York, where he received his Bachelor of Music in composition in 2010, motivated by a desire to engage fully with the culture.

"Some people ask me how I feel in China now, and I just tell them it feels like home," he said.

Beyond language

For the students at Tianjin Juilliard, the bridging of cultures is not theoretical — it is a daily practice.

When the 23-year-old Manou Magdalena Chakravorty arrived in Tianjin from Chicago last August to study cello, she expected the city to feel foreign and overwhelming.

During her undergraduate study, her professor was He Sihao, a former faculty member at the Robert McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University. But instead of being overwhelmed, she found herself captivated by Tianjin.

"The campus was incredibly beautiful. Sometimes I just walk along the river and take it all in — it's very calming," said Chakravorty, who grew up in a multicultural family that embraced the cultures of both Europe and Asia.

Chakravorty, who started playing cello at the age of 4, has embraced Chinese music as part of her studies.

Performing pieces with flowing melodies and microtones that differ from Western compositions, she has learned the subtle art of Chinese music.

"Music here allows you to communicate across language barriers. Even when words fail, playing together creates understanding," she said.

"Before I came to China to study at the Tianjin Juilliard, I planned to go back home after graduation. But now, I am thinking about working here," she added.

Apollo Rayme Parish Mitchell, 23, born and raised in San Francisco, shares the same sentiment.

Drawn to Tianjin's historic streets and lively rhythm, Mitchell has immersed himself in both Chinese culture and rigorous musical study. He has attended concerts, explored historic sites in Shanghai and Xi'an, Shaanxi province, and engaged deeply with Chinese musical traditions.

In 2024 and 2025, he also toured with the Tianjin Juilliard Orchestra, with concerts performed in Beijing, Guangzhou of Guangdong province, and Hong Kong.

"Even when language was limited in rehearsals, we communicated through music. It's immediate, visceral, and universal," said Mitchell, who studied with the oboist Mingjia Liu at the school in Tianjin.

"Living here has taught me that music can communicate even when words fall short. That's the real power of what we do," Mitchell said.

Shanghai Quartet basks in memories, plaudits during return tour

By **CHEN NAN**

From April 9 to 19, the Shanghai Quartet embarked on a highly anticipated tour across the United States, performing in Washington DC, Boston, Maine, Florida, and concluding at the Chamber Music Society of Lincoln Center in New York.

Their program was a delicate interplay of Eastern and Western musical traditions, featuring composer Tan Dun's evocative *Feng Ya Song*, Franz Joseph Haydn's *String Quartet in G minor, Op. 74, No. 3,* or *"Rider"*, George Gershwin's *Lullaby*, and Antonin Dvorak's *American Quartet*.

But beyond the music itself, this tour became a poignant reflection on time, mentorship, and the enduring power of cultural exchange.

Formed at the Shanghai Conservatory of Music in 1983 by first violinist Weigang Li and his brother, viola player Honggang Li, the Shanghai Quartet has toured worldwide and joined The Tianjin Juilliard School in the fall of 2021.

The quartet now consists of cellist He Sihao, violinist Yu Xiang and the two founding members.

For second violinist Yu, Boston, the capital of Massachusetts, has always held a special place in his heart. Yu first experienced the Shanghai Quartet as a student at the New England Conservatory, sitting in the audience during a performance of Johannes Brahms' *Piano Quintet* with pianist Hung-Kuan Chen.

It was only his second live encounter with the quartet, the first having been in Shanghai. Years later, Yu returned — not as a student, but as a performer, stepping onto the same Jordan Hall stage at the conservatory as a member of the ensemble he once admired.

The Shanghai Quartet's program elegantly reflected a dialogue between cultures. Tan's *Feng Ya Song* brought contemporary Chinese textures to United States audiences, merging traditional tonalities with modern compositional techniques.

Haydn's *String Quartet in G minor Op. 74, No. 3* and Gershwin's *Lullaby* offered Western classical and US sensibilities.

Czech composer Dvorak's work served as a mirror of cultural exchange. The *American Quartet* was composed in 1893 when Dvorak was in the US, serving as director of the National Conservatory of Music of America in New York. He was inspired by the music he encountered there, but he composed it through a European classical lens, with the piece a blend of cultural influences.

Joseph Polisi, president emeritus of the Juilliard School, who now serves as its chief China officer, attended the performance, underscoring the deep bonds connecting Chinese and US musical institutions.

Reviewed by Lee Eiseman in The Boston Musical Intelligencer, "angelic" Yu was praised for his inner voice, He and Weigang for matching tones "marvelously", while the young cellist "brought an extravagantly romantic sensibility to the bottom line with the ever-elegant Honggang".

New York, however, carried the weight of history for Weigang who reflected on his journey back to the city. The quartet's New York debut in 1987 launched their international careers.

Weigang said the quartet arrived in the US in August 1985 to continue their music studies. From September 1985 to May 1987, they were enrolled at Northern Illinois University. During that time, the school offered them a remarkable opportunity: their very first performance in New York. The concert took place on March 2, 1987.

"We prepared diligently for that performance. I remember our program included Mozart's *String Quartet No. 19 in C major, K. 465* and *String Quartet No. 3* by Bela Bartok, followed in the second half by Brahms' *String Quartet No. 1, Op. 51, No. 1,*" Weigang recalled.

"Looking back, that concert probably captured the Shanghai Quartet at its finest, just four years after our founding. Oddly enough, when we finished playing, we didn't feel anything extraordinary," he said.

He also fondly remembers that after the concert, a woman in her 50s came backstage, introduced herself as Patricia Winter, and asked a simple question: "Are you looking for a manager?"

"We had never met her before, but her timing was perfect. Naturally, we were very interested, and that marked the beginning of our connection with her, which would become a pivotal part of our career," said Weigang.

In 2020, the Shanghai Quartet members returned to China and began teaching at The Tianjin Juilliard School.

"After living and working in the US for almost 40 years, this is our first performance in New York since returning to develop our careers in China. At the same time, this is also the Shanghai Quartet's first New York appearance with the new lineup featuring Yu Xiang and He Sihao, which makes it especially significant," he said.





Left: Members of the Shanghai Quartet pose for a photo after their performance in Boston, Massachusetts, with Cathy Chan (center), presenter of the concert, on April 10. **Right:** The Shanghai Quartet performs during the concert. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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SINO-US SUMMIT



Zhao Minghao

New vision for stable, constructive ties

The summit between the leaders of the world's two largest economies on Thursday is widely expected to inject stability into the turbulent world, as both sides agreed to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability.

The new vision is designed to provide strategic guidance for bilateral relations over the next three years and beyond.

The "constructive strategic stability" is interpreted to be a positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, a sound stability with moderate competition, a constant stability with manageable differences, and an enduring stability with promises of peace.

No wonder the meeting between President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump will open a new chapter in Sino-US ties.

The goal to make 2026 a historic and landmark year for US-China relations is crucial, as historically, landmark years have typically included events like former US president Richard Nixon's visit to China in 1972 and the establishment of Sino-US diplomatic ties in 1979.

The questions about whether the two countries can overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations need both countries to answer.

Since the beginning of the US leader's second term in office, China-US relations have transitioned from intense tensions — after Washington launched a tariff war — to gradual stabilization.

Both sides need to grasp the precious opportunity presented by the summit to preserve this hard-won stability.

US policymakers have come to realize that China is not as vulnerable as they had once assumed, and that even extreme pressure would not force Beijing to yield.

Despite the repercussions of the tariff war, China remains firmly established as the world's second-largest economy, with its domestic growth and exports showing remarkable resilience.

In 2025, China reported a trade surplus of nearly $1.2 trillion, a 20 percent increase year-on-year. In the first quarter of 2026, China's GDP grew by 5.0 percent year-on-year, calculated at constant prices.

Recent developments prove that Beijing's tactics of "fighting for talks" and "struggling for stability" in its dealings with Washington have been effective.

Some senior US officials have abandoned their previous arrogance and recognized that China is a strong player; making exorbitant demands and bluffing won't work.

In areas such as rare earths, China has continued to strengthen its national economic security system and advance legislation on counter-sanctions and anti-long-arm jurisdiction, thereby enhancing its tool kit for responding to US pressure.

According to an analysis by Bloomberg Economics, approximately 4 percent of US GDP, or about $1.2 trillion, is generated in industries that use rare earths, and most of these industries lack effective alternatives to Chinese suppliers.

The Economist has pointed out that more than a year after the US administration initiated the tariff war, countries around the world are seeking new markets and forging new trade deals, gradually shifting the center of gravity in global trade away from the US.

In contrast, China has remained committed to an open world economy and worked to promote universally beneficial and inclusive globalization.

Starting May 1, China removed tariffs on 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, becoming the first major economy to grant unilateral zero-tariff treatment to Africa.

This move reflects Beijing's willingness to pursue shared development with Global South countries.

China has remained the largest trading partner of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations since 2009, with bilateral trade exceeding 7.55 trillion yuan ($1.11 trillion) in 2025.

Notably, a trilateral cooperation mechanism among ASEAN, China and the Gulf Cooperation Council has been established, leveraging the strengths of all parties to create synergy for win-win development.

Clearly, in a contest defined by openness and certainty, China has gained the upper hand.

Over the past few years, China has notably strengthened its ability to steer Sino-US relations, consistently adhering to the approach of "if forced to fight, China will fight to the end, and for talks, the door is open".

The White House's new National Security Strategy describes China as a "near-peer" and proposes building a "genuinely mutually advantageous economic relationship with Beijing".

Importantly, US public opinion on China is also showing positive signs.

A Pew Research Center poll released in mid-April found that around 27 percent of people in the US hold a favorable view of China, a 6 percentage-point increase from 2025 and double the lowest point recorded in 2023.

Many US residents are skeptical about the effectiveness of confrontational policies such as tariffs and express concern about blowback on the US economy.

Additionally, survey data from Chatham House, an independent London-based policy institute, show that more than half of respondents support their government purchasing China's clean technology products.

Within the US strategic community, there is a growing chorus supporting a pragmatic and flexible approach to Sino-US relations.

Lyle Goldstein, director of the Asia Program at Defense Priorities, a think tank, has argued that the current international context presents an opportunity to stabilize Sino-US ties.

He has even suggested the need for a new political document to establish a model of peaceful coexistence between the two countries — a "fourth joint communiqué".

Deep-seated differences between Beijing and Washington undeniably persist in areas such as the economy, trade, military affairs, and technology.

The Taiwan question — at the core of China's core interests — is the most important issue in Sino-US relations.

If it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability.

Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, Xi said, urging the US side to exercise extra caution in handling the Taiwan question.

In this context, the Xi-Trump summit not only provides an important opportunity for both sides to explore more constructive ways of engagement, fostering conditions for increased face-to-face communication between the two heads of state, but may also prove to be historic if the new vision of Sino-US ties can be heeded and acted on.

This is important for the two countries, the world and humanity.

The author is a professor at the Center for American Studies at Fudan University and a China Forum expert.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Dennis Wilder

Educational bridges vital for two largest economies



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Global Lens

Since joining the faculty at Georgetown University in Washington in 2016, I have been deeply involved in academic exchanges between the United States and China at the university level. Georgetown's connection with China dates back to 1885 when the then US president Grover Cleveland appointed Georgetown alumnus Charles Denby as the US minister to China.

Denby once remarked, "There is no country in the world more underrated than China."

Over the years, Georgetown has proudly welcomed thousands of Chinese students, including Wang Yi, the current director of the Office of the Central Commission for Foreign Affairs, and Minister of Foreign Affairs, who spent time as a visiting scholar at the Walsh School of Foreign Service.

As the oldest Catholic and Jesuit university in the US, Georgetown draws inspiration from the legacy of the great Jesuit priest Matteo Ricci. Ricci mastered the Chinese language and became the first European to enter the Forbidden City of Beijing in 1601.

He was invited by the Wanli Emperor, who sought his services in matters such as court astronomy and calendrical science.

One of my favorite ways to introduce Chinese and US students to each other is by asking them how their lives are different from their grandparents'.

Chinese students often recount the vast changes their parents experienced during the reform and opening-up period.

They describe a transition from a more traditional, resource-constrained lifestyle to the modern conveniences of today. Many families had no running water and the only machines they typically had were bicycles and sewing machines.

US students remember that their grandparents had only black-and-white televisions with three channels — ABC, NBC and CBS. Many grandparents had vivid memories of the Vietnam War, with some being veterans of that conflict.

Through these reflections, students can gain a deeper understanding of how different their family heritages are and why they have different perspectives on various issues.

I also ask students what they share in common today.

Not surprisingly, since most of them never let their phones out of their hands, both Chinese and US students emphasize the centrality of social media in their lives.

Living in cyberspace, this generation is not just aware of the trends in their own country, but also of global youth culture.

Indeed, my students, while still citizens of their home countries, are also distinctly a generation of global citizens. They are eager to make a better world and are impatient with the failures of past generations to deal with problems such as climate change and food insecurity in the Global South.

From personal experience, I know that interactions between Chinese and US students can be life-altering.

In 1975, US students could not study in China, so I did the second-best thing.

I applied for the Yale-in-China Program at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. From the rooftop of my dorm in the New Territories in Hong Kong, I could see the Chinese mainland, which I vowed to visit someday.

As a member of the university swimming team, I bonded with a teammate from Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province.

We would spend hours comparing our family histories and hoping that the opening that Chairman Mao Zedong and the then US president Richard Nixon had initiated would flourish.

I never imagined that a few years later, on a cold January morning in 1979, I would stand on the White House lawn as a student representative to witness the ceremonial welcome accorded to the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping by the then US president Jimmy Carter.

Today, I regret that fewer Chinese and US students have the same opportunities to expand their mindsets. The number of US students studying in China and the number of Chinese students studying in the US are both declining.

Although we can initiate virtual dialogues to keep the interaction going, they are not substitutes for the kind of experience that comes only with immersive programs of language and cultural study.

Hopefully the US and Chinese leaders can open the doors wider for academic exchanges to flourish once again, enabling the shared benefit of all humanity.

The author is a senior fellow in the Initiative for US-China Dialogue on Global Issues at Georgetown University. He previously served as the National Security Council's director for China.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Rattan Lal

China and US can partner on soil health for global prosperity

China and the United States may differ in geography, demography and political systems, but in agriculture they share a remarkable distinction: both are global breadbaskets whose success has an impact far beyond their borders.

China, with a population of over 1.4 billion and 129 million hectares of arable land, produced about 724 million tons of food-grain in 2025. The US, with around 350 million people and roughly 150 million hectares of arable land, produced around 546 million tons in 2025. Together, they demonstrate that feeding the world is not merely an economic activity, but also a civilizational achievement through science -based agriculture.

However, the challenge of the 21st century is not simply to produce more food but to do so while restoring the soil health that sustains it.

Agriculture in both countries needs to be transformed from being part of the environmental problem into becoming part of the solution.

This evolution is key to achieving the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals under Agenda 2030. Key agriculture-related SDGs include ending poverty, eliminating hunger, ensuring good health, combating climate change, protecting life on land, strengthening institutions for peace and justice and fostering global partnerships.

Particularly important is the concept of "One Health", which recognizes that the health of soil, plants, animals, people, ecoregions and the planet is interconnected and inseparable.

For this reason, China and the US must cooperate to strengthen agroecosystems and address global challenges. There are a range of strategies that are of common interest for China and the US.

A promising approach is eco-intensification, which applies ecological principles to agriculture instead of relying on the heavy use of fertilizers and pesticides. The concept focuses on "producing more from less" by enhancing the efficiency of inputs and reducing leakage into the environment.

Global Lens

Fertilizers and pesticides are not enemies of agriculture, but they should be used as supplements or medicine. Their indiscriminate use makes them poisonous. The difference between poison and medicine is the dose, formulation, timing and method of application.

For this reason, China and the US must cooperate to strengthen agroecosystems and address global challenges.

The world must also get over the outdated obsession with high yields. Adopting nutrition-sensitive agriculture is more important than harvesting record yields.

Dietary diversity and complex farming and cropping systems can alleviate malnutrition and hidden hunger problems not only in China and the US but also around the world.

In addition, greater attention should be given to so-called "forgotten" or "orphan" crops that were largely marginalized by the Green Revolution of the 1960s which focused on rice, wheat and corn.

The emphasis should be on growing diverse crops of native origin such as sorghum, millet, cowpeas, beans, pulses and root crops. They require less water, tolerate climatic stress and enrich soils naturally through biological processes.

Equally important is the re-carbonization of soils and terrestrial agroecosystems by capturing atmospheric carbon dioxide and storing it in soil, trees and other landscape units.

The organic matter content in soils should be 2 to 3 percent in the root zone.

However, most soils of the agroecosystems in China and the US have lost their soil organic matter stock due to excessive plowing, accelerated soil erosion and extractive farming practices. Re-carbonization of the soil is a win-win strategy because it mitigates climate change, restores soil and environmental health and boosts biodiversity above and below the ground.

Soils can also be viewed metaphorically as a "bank", with carbon as its currency. This requires continuous deposition of carbonaceous biomass — such as compost, manure and crop residue mulch — at rates exceeding losses from decomposition, respiration, soil erosion and leaching.

To increase carbon stocks in this "soil bank", the deposits must consistently exceed the withdrawals.

From a policy perspective, it is also important to move beyond traditional subsidies and instead pay land managers for providing key ecosystem services through the adoption of best management practices.

Until the carbon market develops for trading carbon credits, it is important to pay farmers for carbon sequestration in soil and trees. The rate of payments must be equivalent to the social value of soil carbon which may be equal to $50 per credit, or the equivalent of one metric ton of carbon dioxide computed by converting methane and nitrous oxide into carbon dioxide.

At the institutional level, a stronger soil protection policy is needed to safeguard the finite and irreplaceable soil resources. Some agricultural land in China and the US is being converted to urban and industrial uses. Prime agricultural land must be mapped and designated as protected against urbanization and other uses. Prime soil must be saved for future generations.

Education reform is also essential. The curricula in schools should include soil and environmental health education at all levels.

It is important to attract the best and the brightest to study agriculture, soil sciences and environmental conservation at an early age. Even children's alphabet books must be soil and environment-oriented.

Beyond production systems, saving land and water for nature should become a guiding principle, supported by dietary choices that promote planetary health, reductions in food waste, and the return of agriculturally marginal lands to natural ecosystems. The objective is to live in harmony with nature rather than dominate and exploit it.

Ultimately, the restoration of soil health is critical for sustaining terrestrial life. Access to adequate, healthy and nutritious food is essential for human well-being. An empty stomach leads to violence, civil strife, political unrest and war.

War and hunger are both human-made tragedies that must be tackled urgently. While war destroys soil and its life-support system, peace restores soil health.

In that sense, science-based and nutrition-sensitive agriculture is the foundation of long-lasting peace and tranquility in the world. Let us therefore promote the food-energy-water-soil nexus for human well-being and living in harmony with nature.

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SINO-US SUMMIT

JIN ZHEN

Substantial ballast

The stock of China-US cooperation accumulated over many years remains substantial, deeply rooted and resilient



In discussing today's relations between China and the United States, an important reality should not be overlooked: The stock of bilateral cooperation accumulated over many years remains substantial, deeply rooted and resilient. This is reflected in economic and trade exchanges, subnational engagement, corporate presence and global governance collaboration. These long-standing economic ties serve as a key pillar of the bilateral relationship. The weight of China-US economic ties is evident in their sheer scale and deep integration. The economic relationship is mutually beneficial and win-win in nature, just as President Xi Jinping pointed out when holding talks with US President Donald Trump in Beijing on Thursday.

According to China's General Administration of Customs, the country's total imports and exports with the US reached 4.01 trillion yuan ($590.5 billion) in 2025, accounting for 8.8 percent of its total foreign trade value. Based on US statistics, in the first 10 months of 2025, the US' total imports and exports with China stood at $373.64 billion, representing 7.8 percent of the US' total foreign trade value. China counts as the US' third-largest partner for both exports and imports, while the US is China's top goods export market and its third-largest import source.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Early 2026 has evidenced some changes in China's trade structure. China's General Administration of Customs data released in May showed that in the January-April period, China-US trade totaled 1.25 trillion yuan, a 12.9 percent drop year-on-year, while China's trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the European Union and members of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership grew over that period. This suggests that China is diversifying its trade ties and building a more balanced mix of partners, which will boost its resilience to external shocks.

But China's diversifying market footprint does not mean its cooperation with the US is becoming less important. Beijing has consistently called for stable and mutually beneficial economic exchanges. Even under maximum external pressure and high tariff rates, two-way trade held above the trillion-yuan mark — a sign of the deep complementarity between the two economies. Their economic ties — spanning consumer markets, manufacturing systems, supply chains and the industrial division of labor — are not easily replaceable in the short term.

Over the longer term, China-US economic and trade relations have transcended simple commodity transactions. US companies remain deeply embedded in China's market, while key segments of Chinese supply chains have forged long-term synergies with the US market. This decades-old cooperation network has become an integral part of the economic fabric of both countries.

Despite periodic fluctuations in China-US relations, local exchanges and business cooperation have remained resilient, acting as a stabilizing force in the relationship. As of August 2025, China and the US had established 288 pairs of sister provinces/states and sister cities, covering large populations and economically vibrant regions in both countries. In April this year, Shenzhen's Nanshan district and Tacoma, Washington, held their first in-person exchange event since establishing a friendly city partnership. Participants in the Ping-Pong Diplomacy 55 years ago took up their bats once again. Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng said on social media platform that 55 years later, the friendship continues to thrive, and grow across generations.

The corporate side tells a similar story. According to the US-China Business Council's 2025 Member Survey, almost all the surveyed companies recognize that they cannot remain globally competitive without their China operations.

In April this year, the US-China Business Council led its largest and most broadly representative delegation to visit Guangzhou and Shenzhen, with dozens of companies making up the delegation.

Meanwhile, the 2026 Special Report on the State of Business in South China, released by the American Chamber of Commerce in South China, also revealed that 95 percent of participating companies report a commitment to maintaining their operations in China.

Beneath the surface, this reflects the logic of market dynamics and the pragmatic choices of enterprises. China's vast market, complete industrial system, mature supply chains and continuous opening-up have long held strong appeal for multinationals. The brand influence, local partnership networks and industrial footprint many US companies have built here are pivotal cooperative assets in bilateral relations.

The existing stock of bilateral cooperation also manifests in the two sides' governance capacity, industrial strengths and technological edge. As the world's two largest economies, the two nations have major influence over global issues spanning climate change, artificial intelligence, public health and financial stability. Few of these challenges can be addressed by either side alone. Maintaining sound bilateral coordination will add greater certainty to the global landscape.

The energy sector best exemplifies this dynamic. Though the US is now refocusing on fossil fuels, energy independence and a revival of traditional manufacturing, it retains clear strengths in energy technology, green finance, grid modernization and energy storage. AI advances are also driving up US power demand.

China, for its part, is in a critical energy transition phase during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. It has formed a complete industry chain and secured economies of scale across photovoltaics, power batteries, electric vehicles and the wider green supply chain. Should both sides maintain long-term cooperation in specific areas such as energy storage, power grids, energy efficiency and green investment, their respective strengths can fuel the global green transition.

The same holds true in the AI domain. Both China and the US stand as key players in global tech innovation, boasting strong research capabilities, enormous markets and abundant application scenarios. Challenges brought by this technology — including energy consumption, data security, technology misuse and standards alignment — have gone beyond any single country's capacity to address. Maintaining necessary communication amid competition and exploring cooperation on technological security, risk prevention and regulatory coordination serve both sides' interests and help mitigate risks in global tech governance.

Global governance is evolving into a far more complex era. The more complicated global challenges become, the more major powers should step up to shoulder responsibilities; the further technological influences extend, the more imperative it is for leading innovators to enhance coordination.

China and the US each boast comparative advantages. By leveraging their respective endowments to scale up cooperation, the two can deliver tangible global public goods and unlock new space for bilateral collaboration.

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CAI CUIHONG

Shared safety responsibility

Sino-US cooperation is crucial for developing the practical guardrails that are imperative in a world in which AI races and risks are increasingly intertwined



As the development of artificial intelligence reshapes industries, intensifies corporate competition and creates shared risks, building guardrails and setting credible rules and public-safety foundations for technological development are global responsibilities shared by China and the United States.

In today's AI landscape, the US still holds a comparative advantage in multiple fields. That advantage is reflected not only in the continued release of frontier models by companies such as OpenAI, Google, Anthropic and Meta, but also in advanced GPUs, cloud platforms, foundational software, model-evaluation systems, standards bodies, alliance networks and the ability to export a global technology stack. Stanford University's 2026 AI Index Report shows that in 2025, US institutions produced 59 notable AI models, compared with 35 from China. The US remains the leading force in frontier model innovation, computing ecosystems and platform capacity, and it is increasingly converting these technological edges into rule-shaping power.

China, however, boasts its own advantages instead of playing catch-up. China possesses a vast domestic market, rich industrial applications, a complete manufacturing base, strong engineering and deployment capacity, a fast-growing open-source ecosystem and significant room for digital cooperation with other Global South countries. The Stanford report shows that China ranks first worldwide in AI paper output, citations and granted patents, reflecting deep research accumulation and a sustained innovation base. In recent years, China has advanced its "AI Plus" initiative, accelerating AI adoption in manufacturing, healthcare, education, transportation and urban governance, while expanding access through open-source models and low-cost deployment. China's strength does not lie in a single frontier breakthrough; it lies in application, implementation, cost efficiency and the ability to translate technology into industrial capacity.

This is why China-US AI relations cannot be reduced to a simple choice between cooperation and confrontation. The US is unlikely to loosen its grip on key technology chains, frontier model ecosystems or international rule-setting power. China, for its part, will not accept being folded passively into risk-assessment, technology-review or compliance frameworks defined unilaterally by the US. Acknowledging competition is not a rejection of cooperation. It is the necessary starting point for any serious cooperative governance effort.

AI needs governance guardrails because its pervasive reach magnifies the costs of competition. Even when traditional technologies have strategic significance, their impact often remains concentrated in specific sectors or dimensions of national power. Once AI is widely deployed, however, it will be embedded in products, services, manufacturing processes, infrastructure and daily life. In this context, without a basic framework of trust between China and the US, trade in AI-enabled products, technological cooperation and industrial ties could all be consumed by security concerns, while the lack of trust would directly impede industrial cooperation and the functioning of global markets.

AI also creates threats that neither country can manage alone. In a recent column, Thomas Friedman argued that the new common threat facing the US and China is not another state, but the risk created by "the malign uses of artificial intelligence". Agentic AI, automated hacking tools and deepfake systems could give "small, malign actors" destructive capabilities once available only to states. They could launch cyberattacks, spread false information, manipulate public perception and disrupt critical infrastructure at far lower cost. Autonomous weapons, unmanned systems and automated military decision-making could also heighten the risk of miscalculation, loss of control and crisis escalation. These dangers do not respect geopolitical blocs. Both countries are potential targets.

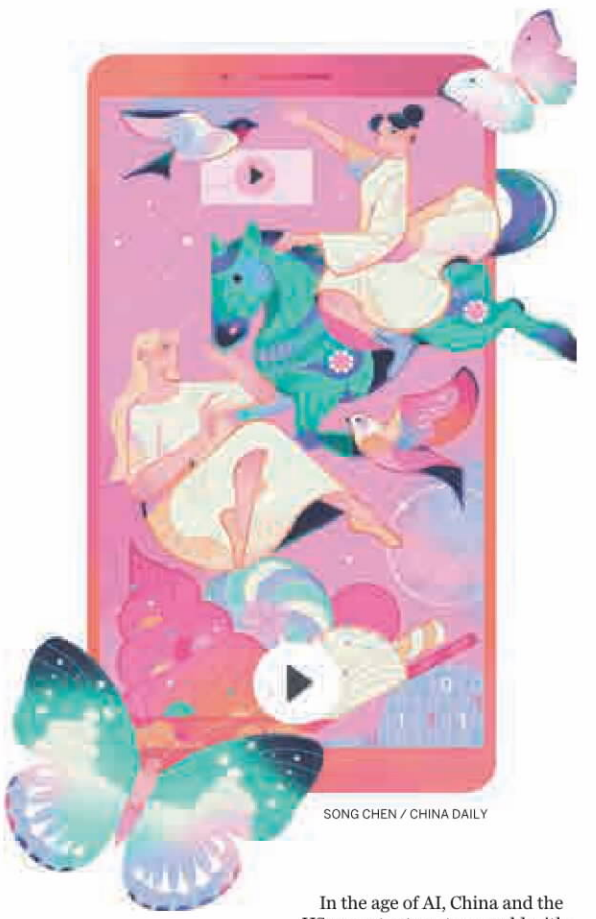
Compounding these risks is a serious governance lag. Model capabilities, agentic behavior, autonomous decision-making, content generation and algorithmic integration are advancing faster than rules can be written. Many risks will not be visible at the moment of invention; they will emerge only through deployment at scale and cross-border diffusion. That is the deeper paradox of China-US AI competition: the harder each side tries to secure itself through technological advantage, the more insecurity both may create if there is a lack of shared guardrails.

Guardrails mean creating mechanisms — risk alerts, incident reporting, interoperable technical standards, crisis communication and boundaries around high-risk uses — to prevent AI competition from sliding into miscalculation, loss of control or systemic risk. Such guardrails should rest on three principles: reciprocity, boundaries and openness.

First, cooperation should be reciprocal. Washington and Beijing can exchange views on risk classification, safety-incident reporting, model-evaluation methods, red-teaming, deepfake detection and content provenance. These are areas with clear public-safety implications and some room for technical consensus. AI governance cannot become a process in which one side writes the standards and the other submits to inspection. China can support interoperable evaluation formats, shared risk terminology and exchanges on testing methods. It cannot accept one country's unilateral testing results as the equivalent of international compliance standards, nor should safety evaluation become a pretext for intrusive audits of model weights, training data or core engineering parameters.

Second, cooperation should also have boundaries. The purpose of guardrails is to prevent risks from spiraling out of control, not to create new technology barriers. The two countries can discuss high-risk issues such as cyberattacks, AI-enabled fraud, loss of control in autonomous systems, critical-infrastructure protection and AI-related red lines in nuclear command. They can also explore mechanisms for incident reporting, crisis communication and early warning. But AI security should not become an all-purpose justification for securitizing civilian AI, open-source models, cloud services, scientific exchange or talent mobility. If governance is over-securitized, the space for cooperation will shrink and global AI development will become artificially fragmented.

Third, governance can remain open. Global AI governance cannot become a closed club of a few technological powers. The United Nations, the International Telecommunication Union, the International Organization for Standardization, BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and some Global South platforms all have roles to play. Countries in the Global South should not be mere rule-takers; they should be participants in, and beneficiaries of, AI governance. The US, China and other major AI-capable actors should work together to help developing countries close the gaps in computing power, data, talent and infrastructure. Through open-source tools, low-cost deployment, training programs, compliance templates and applications that serve basic development needs, they can help ensure that AI truly serves development and creates replicable public goods in areas such as agriculture, healthcare, education, disaster warning and edge AI.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

In the age of AI, China and the US cannot return to a world without competition, nor can they accept competition without guardrails. Both countries can build a consensus on the basis of reciprocity, prevent risks from spiraling out of control within clear boundaries, and expand cooperation through open governance, thereby providing a more stable and secure foundation for global AI development.

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Tourists enjoy a "dragon-of-boats" tour on the Salt Lake in Yuncheng city in southeastern Shanxi.
LAN LIQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Host of beauty spots and historical sites teems with visitors from across the country



Tourists visit the famed Guanque Tower — or Stork Tower — in Yongji city on May 3. CHENG YONGREN / FOR CHINA DAILY



Peony flowers bloom at Yongzuo Temple — or Twin Pagodas Park — in Taiyuan during the May Day holiday.
ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY

TOURISM BOOMS IN SHANXI DURING MAY DAY HOLIDAY

By YUAN SHENGGAO

During the May Day holiday, spanning from May 1 to 5, the North China province of Shanxi again welcomed a great number of tourists.

Tourists to Shanxi were offered impressive experiences thanks to local practices that integrate natural wonders with cultural and historical assets, as well as enriched offerings such as camping, cycling, boating and other sports and cultural activities.

Nanzhai Park in the provincial capital of Taiyuan, for instance, has a dedicated camping site for tourists from both Shanxi and the rest of the country.

Wang Youpeng, a resident in Taiyuan, arrived at the campsite before 9 am on May 2. With the help of his family members, a tent was set up in the leafy shade, with a hammock strung between two willow trees nearby.

"We are pleased with this site," Wang said. "There is free parking, drinking water and toilets — the services and facilities are complete."

"My child loved this place very much," he said. "As it is located along a flowing stream, he could feed ducks and geese here." Wang said his family planned to stay in the park for a whole day. "This is a perfect place for my child to get close to nature."

Prior to the May Day holiday, Taiyuan's tourism authorities recommended nine traveling options for tourists and camping was one of them. These camping sites also include the Xishan Ecological Park and the scenic area along the Fenhe River.



Visitors attend a pop music show at Taiyuan's Bell Tower Street during the May Day holiday. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tourists can take a boating tour of the lake in Taiyuan's Jinci Park.
LIU TONG / FOR CHINA DAILY



An open-air market is held in the county of Quwo during the May Day holiday. YAN RUIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Cycling tours

Cycling tours were also popular among not only local tourists in Taiyuan but travelers from the rest of the country because shared bicycles are easily available.

In mid-April, Wang Wenbin, China's ambassador to Cambodia, recommended Taiyuan's cycling trails on his overseas social media account.

A short video showed people cycling along two trails by the Fenhe River. "The cycling trails are just like two silk ribbons in the sea of trees and flowers," he wrote.

The two trails, with a total length of 88 kilometers, connect 16 Fenhe River bridges and 11 riverside viewpoints, and were opened to the public on May 1, 2021.

"We made a cycling tour along the trails again because of Ambassador Wang's recommendation," said a Taiyuan resident surnamed Zhang. "In the past, we were proud of such Taiyuan landmarks as Jinci Temple and Tianlongshan Grottoes. Now we are pleased to see the addition of the Fenhe River cycling trails, which are a grand showcase of the ecological improvements of the river and the city."

The cycling trails are part of the Fenhe River scenic area, which was developed over several decades.

The Fenhe River, the second-longest river in Shanxi, flows through Taiyuan for 188 km. For thousands of years, the river has irrigated the land and nurtured the people of Taiyuan.

With enhanced governance and ecological restoration, the water quality of the Fenhe River has improved significantly, restoring much of its former beauty.

Hundreds of types of trees and flowers have been planted in the Fenhe River scenic area along the riverbanks, and dozens of cultural attractions have been laid out. The area offers a habitat for hundreds of bird species and has become a destination for tourists and a place for locals to relax.

Yuncheng Salt Lake

During the May Day holiday, various water sports and entertainment activities throughout Shanxi also attracted a great number of tourists.

In the southeastern Shanxi city of Yuncheng, for instance, many tourists were offered an opportunity to take part in a "dragon-of-boats" tour on the famed Yuncheng Salt Lake.

When evening approached, dozens of tourists boarded several illuminated boats, which were connected in a chain to form a "dragon". While those on board had an impressive view of the lake and the city, the boats, with their lights reflected on the water, presented a spectacular sight for people on the shore.

Zhang Lei, an executive at the Yuncheng Salt Lake Scenic Area, said the boat tour is a highlight of the city's tourism industry. "With this new option, we aim for tourists to have a new experience of the beauty of the lake."

Covering an area of 132 square kilometers, Yuncheng Salt Lake is one of the three famed inland lakes with sodium sulfate in the world.

Serving as a salt production base for about 4,600 years, the lake has become a tourist destination in Shanxi province over the past few decades.

The local tourism industry highlights both the historical tradition of salt mining and innovative scenarios, meeting the taste of modern tourists.

In summer, experiencing floating on the surface of this lake, known as the Chinese version of the Dead Sea, is an unforgettable experience that one cannot find elsewhere in the country.

In recent years, the lake has again become a hit on social media because of eye-catching aerial photos of its colorful surface. As temperatures begin to rise in early summer, the multicolored lake becomes a busy attraction for tourists and photographers.

The lake is also a habitat for birds and other wildlife species. More than 200 bird species have been recorded in recent years, including such rare varieties as flamingo, swan, pied avocet and great bustard, according to local environmental officials.



Tourists watch a folk dance in the ancient city of Shuozhou on May 1. LI XIAOLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Historical assets revived

In Shanxi, a great number of historical and cultural assets — especially ancient buildings and relics — are at the top of every tourist's agenda.

During this year's May Day holiday, tourists' expectations to explore these places were better met with the use of various shows and high-tech means.

In Taiyuan's Yongzuo Temple, which is known for two landmark pagodas built during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), the 2026 Taiyuan Twin Pagodas Peony Cultural Month opened on April 25 and will last for about four weeks.

During the holiday, tourists were offered an opportunity to see the 8,000-plus peony plants blooming at the temple. Among them are seven rare peony trees named Zixiaxian. Each of them is more than 400 years old, dating back to the period when the pagodas were built.

Surrounding the Zixiaxian trees, a variety of shows including a *hanfu* show, traditional dances, poem recitals and an intangible cultural heritage fair were staged.

The show of *hanfu*, or ancient Chinese garments, attracted the attention of many tourists. Donning ancient *hanfu*, performers danced to the melodies of a concert of Chinese musical instruments including *guzheng*, *guqin* and *pipa*, helping tourists see what rituals looked like more than 400 years ago.

Yungang Grottoes, a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage Site in the northern Shanxi city of Datong, again welcomed a peak tourist flow during the May Day holiday.

After a tight day's schedule touring Yungang and the ancient city of Datong, a tourist surnamed Chen, who was from Shanghai, joined a crowd of people in a square near the eastern city wall. They were waiting for the opening of a light-rendered sculpture show titled The Light of Yungang Grottoes.

In the evening, the show started with images of Buddha statues, musical instrument-playing figurines and lotus patterns commonly seen in the grottoes projected onto the city wall. These were accompanied with words explaining the details of the artistic works and stories about the history. "The show offered us a perfect review of what we saw in the day," Chen said.

Yungang Grottoes, with construction starting in the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), represents the highest level of Buddhist cave art, along with such famed sites as Mogao in Dunhuang, Gansu province, and Longmen in Luoyang, Henan province. It was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2001.

"This show, leveraging modern digital technologies and a novel narrative style, presented vivid stories about what makes Yungang a cultural landmark and Datong an enticing tourist attraction," Chen said.

New options

During the May Day holiday, while presenting its ancient cultural legacy, Shanxi had other options on offer to meet the modern tastes of tourists.

On May 3, for instance, a singing show featuring Chinese singer Joker Xue was held at Taiyuan Sports Center. It attracted tens of thousands of people from across the country.

According to an official at the Taiyuan culture and tourism bureau, the "performance economy" is an emerging engine driving the growth of local tourism and consumption.

The bureau's latest information shows that it has issued licenses for 27 large-scale performing shows for 2026, with the number of audience members expected to surpass 700,000.

It anticipated that there will be more than 40 such shows this year, which are expected to draw about 1.2 million visitors in total.

In addition to large-scale, licensed performances, smaller-scale shows were held at various locations in Shanxi during the holiday.

On May 5, the last day of the public holiday, Bell Tower Street in Taiyuan welcomed flocks of visitors. They were there to hear an open-air concert featuring traditional Chinese musical instruments. The event was held in a more informal manner — people stood on the street or moved among food stalls, tasting some local snacks while listening to the music.

Bell Tower Street is a site in Taiyuan where people can experience both local culture and life, while exploring history.

Also known as Zhonglou Street, it is named after a bell tower built during the Ming Dynasty. It has been a commercial market for more than a century.

Bell Tower Street has a lot of historical buildings, including the Dazhong Temple and Kaihua Temple, both of which were originally built during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). Local authorities have been making efforts to restore and protect important historical buildings and relics along the street.

The street was renovated in 2017 and reopened to the public in 2021 with a new look. It features many cultural relics, ancient buildings and time-honored brands.

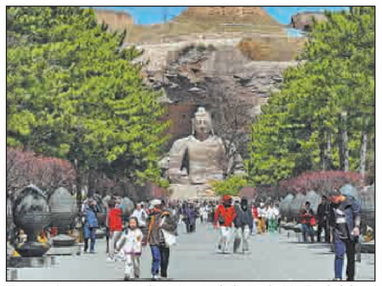
After its renovation, this 700-meter-long street saw many new stores retaining their ancient architecture. What's more, many modern leisure spots, such as restaurants, bars, exhibition areas and tourist facilities were created, lending the area a sense of dynamism.

Many local specialties and handicrafts can be found on the street, like dough carvings, mature vinegar, paper-cuttings and more. Visitors can watch craftsmen create various paste figurines with their bare hands. Meanwhile, local mature vinegar, which is one of the famous Chinese varieties and a perfect match for noodles and dumplings, is something that foodies cannot afford to miss.

As a landmark, the upgraded Bell Tower Street boasts a perfect combination of ancient and modern elements, showcasing local history and culture. Its unique charm and relaxing vibe attract many visitors every year to explore the area.

Local statistics show that the street received about 152,000 visits on May 2, a record number.

Zhang Qi contributed to this story.



Yungang Grottoes attract peak tourist crowds during the May Day holiday.
LI PEIJING / FOR CHINA DAILY



People camp at Nanzhai Park in Taiyuan on May 4. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY



A poster of *A Date with Taiyuan*, a series of plays featuring Taiyuan's tourist attractions as backdrops. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ADVERTORIAL

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COMMENT

Editorials

New vision for constructive relationship of strategic stability should guide Sino-US ties

The meeting between President Xi Jinping and his US counterpart Donald Trump in Beijing this week will help the two sides jointly answer the defining questions facing China-US relations — questions posed by history, by the world and by the peoples of both countries.

The new vision for building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability agreed by the two leaders shows how the two nations can answer the questions of whether China and the United States can overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations.

As Xi stressed, the "constructive strategic stability" should be a positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, a sound stability with moderate competition, a constant stability with manageable differences, and an enduring stability with promises of peace.

That vision will provide strategic guidance for bilateral relations over the next three years and beyond, and should be welcomed by the people of both countries as well as the international community, as Xi said.

The China-US relationship involves multiple dimensions, including politics, economy, trade, security and people-to-people exchanges. The new vision for relations is pertinent to the practical needs of the development of Sino-US relations in the new era.

The building of a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability should not be a mere slogan, but concrete action taken by both sides toward the same goal.

The vision can help the two sides explore more practical frameworks to implement the consensus reached in the head-of-state diplomacy, transforming initiatives and agreements into actions and results. This would enable them to more effectively build common ground, expand areas of converging interests and manage differences.

China stands ready to work with the US to turn the new vision for their relations into concrete, joint actions, and to jointly foster stable, healthy, and sustainable development in bilateral ties, as a spokesman for the Chinese Foreign Ministry stressed at a news conference on Thursday.

History has shown that China-US economic ties are mutually beneficial and win-win in nature. Differences should not be allowed to define the overall relationship. Given the size of the two economies, their different stages of development and differing national conditions, disagreements and frictions are natural. What matters is that the two sides address them through equal-footed consultation, the only correct path toward resolving differences and maintaining stable bilateral relations.

That the economic and trade teams of the two countries produced generally balanced and positive outcomes in the latest round of bilateral trade talks in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday is a testament to this, and the two sides should strive to sustain the good momentum they have worked hard to create.

China's pursuit of high-quality development, its commitment to high-standard opening-up and the vast potential of its economy and market help explain the willingness of US businesses to deepen cooperation with China. This underscores a broader reality: mutually beneficial cooperation remains the shared aspiration on both sides.

The productive exchanges between the US business delegation led by Trump and the Chinese side during the visit demonstrate that both countries possess not only the capacity, but also the sincerity, to translate China-US economic and trade cooperation into more tangible benefits for their two peoples.

Yet realizing the new vision will require both countries to fully respect each other's core concerns and legitimate interests. In particular, the US side should exercise due prudence, and refrain from crossing the red line on the Taiwan question.

As Xi emphasized, the Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations, and if it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy.

Safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait constitutes the greatest common denominator between China and the US. If the US side truly seeks peace across the Strait, it should stop sending wrong signals to the "Taiwan independence" separatist forces on the Chinese island, as "Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are fundamentally irreconcilable.

Whether 2026 can become a historic and landmark year for the world's most consequential bilateral relationship will depend on whether the US is prepared to meet China halfway and work toward shared objectives. The world's two largest economies have far more common interests than differences. They should be partners that help each other succeed and prosper together.

EU must heed Beijing's stern warning

China regards the European Union as a key partner willing to uphold multilateralism and free trade. However, this perspective is now facing challenges due to the European Commission's multiple unilateral restrictive policies, bills and sanctions that mainly target China.

A recent strongly-worded statement from a Chinese diplomat in Madrid cautioned that the EU's planned investment restrictions might compel China to "close its doors" to EU companies. The recent EU protectionist actions have prompted China to review its economic relations with the bloc.

Speaking in an unusually straightforward tone, Qu Xun, a diplomat at China's embassy in Spain, said that the "controls, limitations, and sanctions" introduced by the European Commission toward China in the past three months have pushed China into a corner, leaving it with no option but to close the door if it persists with its protectionism.

To a large extent, the catalyst for this blunt message was the EU's proposed Industrial Accelerator Act and the revision of its Cybersecurity Act. The IAA seeks to impose onerous restrictions on foreign investment in strategic sectors with the goal of reducing dependence on so-called "subsidized" imports from China.

Likewise, the EU's plan to revise its Cybersecurity Act also targets China by proposing to enforce strict controls on EU ownership in critical industries and limit "high-risk" cybersecurity suppliers, identified as primarily Chinese by the European Commission. These actions indicate that the EU's restrictive measures have shifted from targeting specific Chinese companies to broad legal and regulatory barriers targeting Chinese companies and investments.

In the past few months, China's Ministry of Commerce has repeatedly expressed its opposition to the EU's politicization and over-securitization of trade and economic issues and its discriminatory treatment of Chinese enterprises.

Aside from that, Beijing has been remarkably patient. It has urged settling differences through dialogue and negotiation. However, its patience is wearing thin. The rare warning of the Chinese diplomat that it will "close the door" is a signal that if the EU proceeds with this discriminatory legislation, Beijing will have no choice but to fight back.

The European Commission's approach contradicts its commitment to openness and the genuine needs of the bloc. As an open economy, the EU should offer a nondiscriminatory business environment. However, its executive arm's actions have erected barriers, which undermine this goal and will ultimately harm the EU's own interests. Weakening economic ties with the Chinese market is detrimental to the currently sluggish EU economy and the bloc's long-term competitiveness.

The EU's anxiety over its competitiveness has prompted calls for "de-risking" based on the misguided perception that China is a "rival".

But the market tells a different story. In the face of a complex geopolitical environment, European companies have embraced the "in China, for China" strategy, expanding their investments and deepening technological innovation collaborations with Chinese enterprises. This partnership has not only enhanced the global competitiveness of European and Chinese companies but also revived and upgraded European manufacturing, creating a win-win scenario for both sides.

The European Commission can continue along the protectionist path it is taking under the illusion that it can isolate the EU from Chinese competition while retaining Chinese cooperation. Or it can listen to the concerns of both China and the EU's own pragmatic member states and business community, drop the stigmatizing "high-risk" label it is pinning on Chinese enterprises and investments, and engage with China on the basis of mutual respect and nondiscrimination.

It is hoped that the EU will approach economic competition and exchanges with China in an objective and rational manner, acknowledging the necessity and significance of maintaining stable economic and trade relations.

The stern warning issued by the Chinese side should be taken seriously.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Consumption, production data reflect rise up the value chain

China's April inflation data tell two stories. The first is that consumer prices are again rising modestly, and factory-gate prices have returned to positive territory. The second, more important, story is structural: China is shifting from an export-and-investment growth model toward one driven by domestic demand, technological upgrading and industrial resilience, all while navigating a very harsh global environment.

That makes April's consumer price index and producer price index figures more significant than they might first appear.

According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, China's CPI rose 1.2 percent year-on-year in April, while the PPI climbed 2.8 percent, marking the strongest factory-gate price hike in nearly four years.

Viewed from China's perspective, April's data reflect a positive change, as the composition of the numbers matters.

Consumer inflation remains relatively subdued and manageable. Food prices continued to decline, while core inflation stayed stable. The more remarkable movement came from producer prices, driven partly by rising global energy and commodity costs, but also by stronger demand in advanced manufacturing sectors such as nonferrous metals, high-end equipment and computing-power-related industries.

That distinction is crucial because it reveals how China's economy is evolving. The growth impulses are increasingly concentrated in sectors of strategic importance: artificial intelligence infrastructure, green technology, advanced manufacturing and industrial upgrading.

Overseas, China's industrial policy is often portrayed as merely a supply-side story. But Beijing's longer-term strategy is not simply about producing more goods. It is about climbing the value chain while simultaneously building a larger and more resilient domestic consumer market.

Recent policy discussions in China increasingly emphasize the creation of a "new balance" between supply and demand. The old model relied heavily on property investment, local government borrowing and low-cost exports. The new one aims to strengthen household consumption, technological self-sufficiency and middle-income purchasing power.

That transition is crucial.

In the short term, China still needs to boost confidence in parts of the private sector, and ease lingering pressure in real estate and external uncertainty stemming from geopolitical tensions and trade frictions. Some of April's producer-price rebound was clearly imported through higher global energy costs linked to instability in the Middle East. But focusing only on those pressures misses the broader transformation underway.

Chinese policymakers are now more focused on improving the quality of growth rather than merely maximizing headline expansion.

This helps explain why the official discourse has increasingly stressed high-quality development, technological upgrading and domestic demand. The goal is to create a more internally sustainable economic system that is less vulnerable to external shocks, sanctions and geopolitical fragmentation.

There is also a larger global implication here. As the country moves into higher-end production and cleaner energy systems, it may become an exporter of industrial upgrades and technological advancements.

That shift might unsettle some Western economies already struggling with deindustrialization and stagnant productivity. Yet it also reflects a deeper reality: the age of hyper-globalization built on cheap Chinese labor, land, raw materials and environmental factors is ending. China is no longer merely the world's factory floor. It is trying to become something much more complex — a technologically advanced continental economy with its own consumer base, industrial ecosystem and strategic autonomy.

This transition will not be easy. Structural problems remain obvious, and global demand conditions are fragile. However, the April figures suggest that China's economy is gradually moving away from the deflationary psychology that has worried some policymakers for much of the past two years.

In an era when much of the world economy feels trapped between inflation, stagnation and geopolitical fragmentation, that alone is worth paying attention to.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Knowledge-intensive services key growth driver

Editor's note: *The service sector in China is a key pillar of high-quality economic development. Li Jun, deputy secretary-general of the China Association of Trade in Services, spoke to the 21st Century Business Herald on why China is focusing on its service sector. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The service sector, especially producer services and knowledge-intensive services, has become a key driver of high-quality development.

As the middle-income group expands, the demand for high-quality services such as education, healthcare, culture, elderly care, tourism and sports is rapidly growing. Efforts to expand the capacity and improve the quality of services are essentially aimed at restructuring domestic supply and making consumption a genuine driver of economic growth.

Global value chains are being reshaped. Trade in services has emerged as a competitive international arena. Developed economies in Europe and North America have long dominated these global value chains due to their strengths in the service sector.

China, however, has a large deficit in trade in services, which represents both a weakness and an opportunity for growth. The country needs to strengthen its service sector to foster a new development pattern and boost its competitiveness.

Currently, a core theme of China's industrial policies is integrating advanced manufacturing with modern services. A challenge is that the two sectors have long been governed by different policies, statistical methods and regulatory frameworks, creating barriers to integration.

To overcome these barriers, efforts are required to utilize the industrial internet to connect data silos. It is necessary to accelerate the cloud migration of manufacturers' data on production, equipment and orders and attract service companies to develop services tailored to specific needs based on such data.

Statistical standards also need to be improved. Currently, service departments of manufacturing companies, such as R&D, design and logistics, are still classified under the manufacturing sector. This underestimates the scale of the service sector and limits its ability to benefit from favorable policies.

Additionally, manufacturing companies should be given more support to transition from merely providing products to also offering services and solutions. The global service industry is undergoing an important change, with artificial intelligence and the green economy driving trade in services. This presents a strategic opportunity for China to boost its trade in services.

The green transition has led to the emergence of a range of new businesses. Global market demand for services such as carbon verification, carbon asset management and environmental, social and governance consulting is expanding rapidly. China can leverage its experience in new energy, energy storage and green building by exporting green services.

Artificial intelligence is transforming trade in services by reducing the marginal cost of knowledge-intensive services, and making it easier for companies to offer services that used to be highly demanding for providers. This transition has empowered small and medium-sized Chinese companies to export their services globally.

More importantly, China is exporting AI technology, such as large AI models and intelligent applications. These goods will be key growth drivers of knowledge-intensive service exports during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

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BUSINESS

A shares seen as promising despite pullback

Thursday mkt adjustments not altering mid-term upward trend, experts say

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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While the A-share market underwent some adjustments on Thursday, experts are still upbeat on the A-share market performance in the following months, which is supported by China's continued industrial restructuring and economic recovery.

The benchmark Shanghai Composite Index shed 1.52 percent to close at 4177.92 points on Thursday, while the Shenzhen Component Index dropped 2.14 percent. Trading remained active, with total trading value of the three major exchanges topping 3 trillion yuan ($442 billion) for the seventh consecutive trading day.

Experts from China International Capital Corp Ltd said they are firmly confident of an upward trend in the A-share market in the mid-term, though fluctuations may be unavoidable. The country's stability amid global uncertainties and China's industrial innovation will serve as the core drivers, they said.

Xia Fanjie, a strategist at China Securities, said that a slow bull market driven by structural opportunities will typify A-share market performance in the second half.

Rising demand for computing power will be a major theme, as it is still too early to declare a bubble in the sector. Investors are recommended to look for opportunities in sectors of optical modules, printed circuit boards, advanced packaging, memory chips, liquid cooling and heat dissipation, data center power supply, computer power leasing and cloud services, Xia said.

Economic recovery is another major reason for a positive outlook on the A-share market in the coming months. The producer price index is expected to recover on a quarterly basis, while external demand will remain strong. In such a context, resource companies specializing in oil and gas production, coal, chemicals and nonferrous metals are the most likely to see their profitability improve. Opportunities can also be found among new energy manufacturers with global competitiveness, he said.

Morgan Stanley analysts said in a recent report that A-share company earnings will improve moderately in the following months.

Their optimism is supported by China's stronger exports amid an accelerating artificial intelligence and energy capex cycle, near-term reflation signs, Chinese currency appreciation against the US dollar, and a cooling down in large-cap platform companies' price competition amid strict government regulations.

The investment bank continues to prefer the A-share market over offshore alternatives mainly because of the higher concentration of high-end upstream manufacturing and hard-core tech companies in China. There is a high likelihood that A-share initial public offerings will trigger greater domestic investor participation, according to the report.

"We do believe that the sheer size of opportunities in China's equity market at the single stock and thematic level — fueled by solid fundamentals and promising themes such as tech localization and high-end manufacturing — should allow investors to construct a targeted Chinese portfolio that outperforms other peers," said Laura Wang, the investment bank's chief China equity strategist.

The tech-heavy ChiNext board in Shenzhen topped the 4000-point level on Wednesday to reach a record high. This has shown the market's recognition of China's ongoing industrial restructuring and upgrading, said Guo Yiming, head of investment advisory at Jufeng Investment.

Companies specializing in power equipment, communications, electronics, pharmaceuticals, biotech and computers — which make up most of the ChiNext's constituents — have fueled the recent rally. This is in line with the structural opportunities in the current A-share market, which is supported by the continued rising demand for AI computing power and the development of new energy industries, Guo said.

Amid ample market liquidity and continued policy support for emerging industries, the ChiNext is expected to receive a relatively high level of attention, he added.

But it should be noted that a structurally diverged performance is implied in ChiNext's recent bull. The index has been mainly propelled by the market leaders, as the index's top 10 heavyweights now take up 57 percent of the board's entire market cap.

Therefore, individual investors should avoid being overly affected by market sentiment, but rather focus on the prosperity and profitability of the companies they have chosen, said Guo.



A display shows Chinese stock indices in Shanghai on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



A one-person company owner works at an industrial park designated for OPC businesses in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, on March 25. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

AI drives boom in one-person companies nationwide

By **LI JIAYING**
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As artificial intelligence tools become cheaper, smarter and easier to use, they are helping more Chinese entrepreneurs turn personal expertise and online followings into one-person companies (OPCs), building lean businesses powered by digital platforms and AI-driven productivity.

For Wang Yao, founder of an OPC built around her online personal channel "Wiley", the appeal lies not in scale, but in flexibility and low risk.

Through social media content sharing personal growth, life abroad and cost-effective ways to improve productivity, Wang's channel has attracted over 100,000 followers on Chinese social media platform Xiaohongshu, and has built a business centered on consulting services and brand partnerships.

"The company operates in a very healthy way because it has zero debt, low costs and high flexibility," Wang said, describing her business model as the monetization of "trust-based traffic".

> "The growing abundance, accessibility and usability of AI tools are key to one person becoming a team."
>
> **He Xia,** a former chief engineer at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology

Wang said more people are beginning to realize that entrepreneurship no longer necessarily requires large teams, venture capital or corporate backing.

"People are gradually discovering that you don't have to join a major company or pursue fundraising and IPOs," she said. "One person can still build a decent business through their own skills and influence."

The content creator added that the rapid development of AI tools has become a major factor behind that shift.

"I do not need to hire copywriters, designers or video editors. AI has taken on these roles. That keeps the marginal cost of running my OPC extremely low and allows me to test new content directions or business models with very low risk," she said.

"The growing abundance, accessibility and usability of AI tools are key to one person becoming a team," said He Xia, a former chief engineer at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology.

Current AI tools can cover functions from software development and daily searches to image generation and audio-video production, and AI agents such as OpenClaw are also lowering the coding threshold and bringing opportunities for entrepreneurs with little technical background, said He.

The trend is now reshaping China's entrepreneurial landscape. According to the China OPC development trends report (2025-30) released by the Zhongguancun Talent Association in February, the number of OPCs nationwide had exceeded 16 million by June 2025, accounting for 27.4 percent of all enterprises in China.

In the first half of 2025 alone, China registered 2.86 million new OPCs, up 47 percent year-on-year and accounting for nearly a quarter of all newly registered businesses.

Still, analysts also cautioned that AI alone cannot guarantee long-term business success.

"Many people focus only on AI's impact on productivity while overlooking that in the 'human plus AI' model, the human remains the core competitive factor," said Zhou Guangsu, a professor at Renmin University of China's school of labor and human resources.

Zhou said that while AI can help entrepreneurs rapidly build products and applications, commercialization still depends heavily on business judgment, market insight and resilience under pressure.

Pan Helin, a member of the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology's Expert Committee for Information and Communication Economy, said OPCs should not become a purely symbolic trend.

"What matters is substance over form," Pan said, adding that lowering transaction costs, improving the business environment and strengthening talent-support policies will be key to the sector's sustainable development.

EU cybersecurity law revision seen as loss-making move

By **WANG KEJU**
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Excluding Chinese suppliers under the European Union's proposed revision of the Cybersecurity Act will not deliver the security gains Brussels desires, but could instead weaken the bloc's digital competitiveness and crowd out innovation investment, experts have warned.

The warning comes as the EU reviews its draft legislation, which would identify "countries posing cybersecurity concerns" and "high-risk suppliers" and exclude them from 18 sectors, including energy, transport, and information and communications technology.

Earlier this month, the bloc restricted funding for renewable energy projects using inverters from suppliers in its list of "high-risk countries" such as China, in an attempt to tackle its so-called cybersecurity threats.

According to a joint report released last week by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU (CCCEU) and global advisory firm KPMG, the EU could face an estimated loss of as much as 367.8 billion euros ($430.54 billion) over the next five years if Brussels excludes Chinese suppliers.

The cumulative economic losses for EU member states would be "equivalent to nearly two full years of the EU's annual budget", the report said, noting that Germany would bear the largest burden, with estimated losses of 170.8 billion euros, followed by France and Italy.

"The criteria for identifying so-called 'high-risk suppliers' appear to be politically targeted," said CCCEU Chairman Liu Jiandong. "This approach politicizes commercial decision-making and runs counter to the EU's own principles of equality and non-discrimination."

According to the report, there has been no substantiated evidence so far of "technical backdoors" or violations of EU cybersecurity rules by Chinese companies operating in the bloc, and the origin-based screening measures could violate WTO rules, breach bilateral investment treaties and trigger compensation claims.

He Yongqian, a spokeswoman for the Ministry of Commerce, said in late April that formal comments were submitted to the European Commission, the EU's executive arm, voicing serious concerns over relevant provisions in the draft.

"We hope the EU will attach great importance to and seriously consider the comments and proposed revisions submitted by the Chinese side," said He.

The spokeswoman stressed that should Chinese companies face discriminatory treatment as a result of the revision, China may take measures to safeguard its legitimate rights and interests.

China believes that dialogue and cooperation are the right approach to resolving issues facing both sides, and is willing to work with the EU to properly handle differences through consultations and jointly safeguard the stability and smooth operation of global industrial and supply chains, added He.

The report stresses that mandatory replacement of Chinese suppliers is "unlikely to achieve meaningful security gains". Instead, it warns of systemic negative effects: innovation budgets could be crowded out, fiscal burdens on member states increased and household incomes eroded.

Losing the European market would be a blow to Chinese companies, but many of them have already pivoted their focus toward the domestic market and the Global South, where demand for digital infrastructure remains strong, said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"Worse still, the EU could lose its strategic autonomy in the ongoing restructuring of global industrial chains," Zhou said, adding that such efforts will only bring limited benefits to the EU.

Envision bags wind energy project in Canada

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Envision Group, a leading Chinese green technology firm, has signed a strategic cooperation agreement with Cape Breton China Corp (CBCC) to develop a 300-megawatt integrated wind and energy storage project in Nova Scotia, Canada.

The deal, finalized in Shanghai earlier this week, represents a milestone in the global expansion of China's "wind-storage integration" model.

Beyond mere hardware exports, the partnership underscores a shift toward providing holistic zero-carbon solutions that combine cutting-edge artificial intelligence-driven energy systems with local capacity building, according to the Shanghai-based green technology giant.

The project, designed as a zero-carbon demonstration site, integrates 300 MW of wind power with an advanced battery energy storage system. It aims to enhance the flexibility and stability of the local power grid, supporting the province's transition toward a cleaner, digital-driven energy architecture, it said.

"By leveraging Envision's leading AI-driven storage and smart wind solutions, alongside CBCC's strong local resources and development capabilities, we will build a more robust renewable energy ecosystem," said Zhu Yi, senior business director of Envision Energy Canada. "Starting from Nova Scotia, we aim to expand our footprint across the North American market."

Envision's overseas expansion is indicative of a broader momentum among Chinese green technology enterprises, which are rapidly scaling up their global deployments to meet surging international demand for integrated renewable solutions.

Global battery energy storage capacity is on track for monumental growth, with projections from the China Energy Storage Alliance (CNESA) indicating an eight- to 17-fold increase between 2024 and 2035.

However, the sector — currently spearheaded by China, the United States and Europe — is moving away from its initial explosive boom and entering a stabilizing, transitional phase, said Chen Haisheng, chairman of the CNESA and director of the Institute of Engineering Thermophysics at the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Between 2026 and 2030, the industry's compound annual growth rate is forecast to reach 20.7 percent under conservative estimates, with the potential to hit 25.5 percent in a best-case scenario, Chen said.

Amid this industry shift, Envision's competitive edge lies in its long-term commitment to localization and research and development. Since 2010, the company has built a comprehensive international ecosystem, including the largest R&D center established by a Chinese firm in Denmark, as well as battery cell factories in Japan, the United Kingdom, France and Spain.

In addition, there has been a rapid acceleration of Chinese energy storage enterprises globally.

In the first quarter, China's energy storage battery shipments reached 209 gigawatt-hours, a 115 percent year-on-year increase, with major players like Envision and Contemporary Amperex Technology remaining the preferred partners for GWh-scale projects across Europe, North America and the Middle East.

The global push is fueled by the plummeting cost of renewable energy. A recent report from the International Renewable Energy Agency indicates that in resource-rich regions, the cost of solar-plus-storage has dropped to between $54 and $82 per MWh — significantly lower than the $100+ per MWh required for new gas-fired power plants.

Francesco La Camera, director-general of the International Renewable Energy Agency, recently emphasized that the argument regarding the "unreliability" of renewables no longer holds water.

"The ability to provide 24/7 renewable power is now cost-competitive with fossil fuels," he said.

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CHINA

China builds fastest quantum computer

Speed of Jiuzhang 4.0 prototype is a result of use and control of photons

By **LI MENGHAN** and **ZHU LIXIN**



A partial view of Jiuzhang 4.0. ZHOU MU / XINHUA

A team of Chinese scientists has developed the world's fastest quantum computer prototype, named Jiuzhang 4.0, capable of solving complex mathematical problems in less than the blink of an eye — tasks that even for the world's most powerful supercomputer would take longer than the age of the entire universe to crack.

The findings, published in the journal Nature on Wednesday, push the quantum advantage in computing to an unprecedented level, demonstrating China's leading position in the field.

A quantum computer operates on the laws of quantum mechanics. Its basic building blocks, called quantum bits or qubits, can exist in a superposition of both 0 and 1 simultaneously — unlike conventional bits, which are either 0 or 1.

This allows quantum computers to explore many computational paths in parallel, providing exponential speedup for certain tasks, such as solving some mathematical problems and simulating quantum systems.

Current mainstream quantum computing technological routes include superconducting, ion trap, photonic, and neutral atom systems. The Jiuzhang series, photonic quantum computers, encodes information in particles of light, and its speed depends on the ability to manipulate and control these photons.

However, in the development of large-scale photonic quantum processors, inevitable photon loss — a major source of computational error — has long been a serious constraint. As the optical network grows larger and more complex, photons can easily get "lost" in the maze, significantly degrading computational power.

To address the problem, the research team, led by the University of Science and Technology of China, developed a high-efficiency optical parametric oscillator light source and a spatiotemporally hybrid-coded interferometer, laying the groundwork for building a fault-tolerant photonic quantum processor.

They integrated 1,024 high-efficiency squeezed-state optical fields into a spatiotemporally hybrid-coded circuit with 8,176 modes, achieving a source efficiency of 92 percent and an overall system efficiency of 51 percent.

These represent major breakthroughs in low-loss photonic quantum information processing.

Moreover, the spatiotemporally hybrid-coded architecture allows photons to interact across both time and space dimensions, greatly improving the connectivity of the entire network while keeping the physical device scale under control.

Based on these advancements, the team achieved the manipulation and detection of up to 3,050 photons — a significant leap from the 255 photons achieved with the previous Jiuzhang 3.0, as published in 2023.

Experiments showed that the most complex data sample generated by Jiuzhang 4.0 takes only 25 microseconds to produce — where a microsecond is one-millionth of a second.

In contrast, the world's most powerful supercomputer, El Capitan, developed by the United States, would require more than 10 to the power of 42 years to calculate the same result.

In 2020, scientists from the University of Science and Technology of China successfully developed the Jiuzhang photonic quantum computing prototype with 76 photons, making China the second country in the world to achieve the quantum computational advantage, and the first to achieve it in an optical system.

Quantum technology is emphasized in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) as both a future industry and a strategic frontier that requires sustained reinforcement.

The plan stresses the need to advance basic theories and foundational technologies while accelerating their industrial application, with goals set for the development of fault-tolerant universal quantum computers and scalable, special-purpose quantum computers.

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Voices build bridges



International students perform Chinese songs at the Nigerian booth during an international youth cultural festival at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing on Thursday. Featuring booths from countries around the world, the event brought together students as "cultural ambassadors" showcasing traditional costumes, handicrafts and cuisine. WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY

Experts focus on Austronesian history

By **LIU BOQIAN** and **HU MEIDONG**

Discussions in Pingtan, Fujian province, have renewed attention on Austronesian history and cross-Strait cultural ties, as experts, scholars and representatives of Taiwan's indigenous communities called for broader recognition of what they described as shared heritage.

"We should face the historical fact that today's Austronesian speakers trace their origins to the Chinese mainland, though many people are still unaware of this," said Xu Guirong, vice-president of the Pingtan International Institute of Austronesian Research, during a roundtable held as part of the 2026 Cross-Strait Marine Cultural Exchange Platform recently.

Austronesian-speaking communities span a vast area from Southeast Asia to the Pacific islands, including many of Taiwan's indigenous groups.

Xu cited a 2020 study published in the journal Science by researchers from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, which said early Austronesian-speaking populations emerged in Fujian and nearby areas of southern China about 8,400 years ago.

He also called for greater inclusion of Austronesian history in school curricula and stronger efforts to challenge what he described as distorted historical narratives.

One roundtable examined cultural origins and heritage, with participants discussing Austronesian traditions, the preservation of indigenous customs and historical links.

"The Chinese nation has long been shaped by cultural integration," said Liao Shih-chieh, a representative of Taiwan's Pingpu people and an advocate of intangible cultural heritage preservation.

"For people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to live peacefully on this beautiful and united land and build a prosperous and harmonious China together is a blessing for both sides," he said.

Kimi Sibal, a historian based in Hualien, compared tattooing traditions among indigenous groups in Taiwan with those of ethnic communities on the Chinese mainland, including the Li people in Hainan province, saying they shared similarities in creation myths and cultural practices.

An exhibition on maritime civilization opened on Tuesday alongside the forum, featuring archaeological displays, indigenous artifacts and immersive audio exhibits that highlighted shared maritime cultural heritage across the Strait.

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Building compliant digital bridges across the Pacific

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**



A group photo of GOIP. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



From left: Luo Sean, CEO of Eton InfoComm Technology. Leung Chi-yuen, chairman of GOIP. Lok Lian, general manager of Eton InfoComm Technology.

Securing cross-border data flows has become a strategic priority for enterprises expanding between China and the United States, where differing regulatory frameworks create complex operational challenges, according to Leung Chi-yuen, chairman of GOIP.

Founded in 2012, GOIP is an international telecommunications and managed service provider, serving as a critical link between the Asia-Pacific region and North America. The company facilitates secure and compliant data transit across the Pacific, acting as a managed digital bridge for businesses.

"Our role is to build the infrastructure and governance frameworks that allow enterprises to focus on their core business rather than regulatory complexities," Leung said.

Two-way growth

GOIP's services encompass the full spectrum of needs for enterprises establishing operations in new markets, from initial planning through ongoing management. The company's "one-stop" service model aims to simplify global IT management by providing coordinated solutions across network infrastructure, security compliance and operational support.

For Chinese companies expanding in the US, GOIP provides local support for infrastructure, compliance and operations. Similarly, for US businesses entering China, the company addresses connectivity, security and regulatory needs including compliance with the Personal Information Protection Law.

"Many providers are purely virtual; when a router fails or a cable is cut in a US data center, they open a ticket and wait. GOIP is different," Leung said.

"We have local offices and a professional team in the US, complemented by our long-term partner Eton InfoComm Technology. This partnership allows us to offer implementation excellence. If a Chinese client opens a new branch in the US, our local engineers are there to manage the rack and stack, the cabling and the configuration."

Unified protection

At the core of GOIP's value proposition is an integrated approach to network security and management. The company provides a unified platform encompassing network infrastructure, security protocols and operational monitoring. This integration allows for coordinated management of different system components, potentially improving responsiveness and reducing compatibility issues that can arise when using multiple service providers. The company's software-defined wide area network solutions are specifically engineered for trans-Pacific connectivity, addressing latency and reliability challenges that commonly affect cross-border communications.



> "Our role is to build the infrastructure and governance frameworks that allow enterprises to focus on their core business rather than regulatory complexities."
>
> **Leung Chi-yuen,** chairman of GOIP

The company's service model includes continuous monitoring through its proprietary network operations center capabilities. This approach aims to identify and address potential issues before they affect operations, providing enterprises with additional oversight of their cross-border digital infrastructure. Through 24/7 monitoring and response capabilities, GOIP seeks to minimize downtime and performance degradation for mission-critical applications such as enterprise resource planning and customer relationship management systems.

"Traditionally, companies hire one vendor for their network and a separate vendor for security. This creates 'blind spots,'" Leung noted. "GOIP manages VAPT (vulnerability assessment and penetration testing) and SIEM (security information and event management) directly, meaning our security protocols are built into the fabric of the network, not bolted on as an afterthought. Our VAPT is performed by our in-house experts who know the network's architecture intimately. Once we harden the perimeter, our SIEM provides 24/7 surveillance. Because GOIP manages the entire stack, if a threat is detected by our SIEM, our NOC (network operations center) can act instantly to mitigate it within the network."

Navigating rules

With governments worldwide implementing new data protection regulations and cross-border data flow requirements, enterprises face an increasingly complex compliance environment. GOIP's services include advisory support to help companies navigate these regulatory requirements while maintaining efficient operations. The company positions itself as a strategic adviser, assisting clients in developing data governance frameworks that address multiple jurisdictional requirements. This advisory function extends beyond technical implementation to include strategic planning for data localization, cross-border transfer mechanisms and compliance documentation.

Recent developments in regional cooperation frameworks, such as the memorandum of understanding on facilitating cross-boundary data flow within the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, have created new opportunities for service providers specializing in cross-border data solutions. These frameworks aim to facilitate data flows while maintaining appropriate protections, requiring specialized expertise for effective implementation.

GOIP has developed specific service offerings tailored to leverage these regulatory developments, helping clients optimize their data management strategies within approved frameworks.

"The traditional model of hiring local IT teams in every city is inefficient and costly. GOIP solves this through our integrated ITSM (IT service management) and NMS (network management system) ecosystem," Leung said. "Because we have our own proprietary network operations center team and in-house engineers, we act as the client's extended department. We handle the 24/7 monitoring, incident response and performance tuning. Our AI-empowered NOC automates the analysis of network logs and performance data, which significantly increases operational efficiency and reduces human error and risk. This, in turn, allows clients to streamline their on-site IT manpower requirements. Our NMS identifies bottlenecks before they cause downtime, and our ITSM framework ensures every request is handled with professional precision. This 'Lean IT' model provides a smooth, fast and low-cost operation."

GOIP's integrated solutions are built upon a foundation of internationally and nationally recognized credentials. The company's information security management is certified to the ISO 27001 standard, while its security services hold the China Cybersecurity Review Technology and Certification Center's Information Security Service Qualification. Its operational capabilities are validated by Singapore's Cybersecurity Services Regulation Office, its accredited Penetration Testing Service, its System and Organization Controls certification, and its authority to operate as a facilities-based carrier in the US under Federal Communications Commission Section 214 & 499. Service delivery is guided by Information Technology Infrastructure Library 4 Foundation's best practices, and its strategic advisory team includes professionals with a Certified Information Systems Security Professional certification.

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WORLD



Members of Iran's national soccer team attend a farewell ceremony in Tehran on Wednesday ahead of their departure for the 2026 FIFA World Cup. ATTA KENARE / AFP

UAE rejects Israeli visit claim

Dispute deepens diplomatic strain as ceasefire faces mounting pressure

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

The United Arab Emirates has flatly rejected an Israeli claim of a "secret visit" by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu during the war with Iran, labeling it as "baseless".

This development adds complexity to the already strained diplomatic efforts aimed at preventing the collapse of the tenuous ceasefire between Washington and Tehran.

In a statement released on Wednesday night via state news agency WAM, the UAE said its relations with Israel "are public and conducted within the framework of the well-known and officially declared Abraham Accords, and are not based on nontransparent or unofficial arrangements".

The statement also denied receiving any Israeli military delegation.

The reaction came hours after Netanyahu's office announced the visit on social media and branded the meeting a "historic breakthrough".

The Times of Israel, citing an informed source, said on Thursday that the visit took place in the city of Al Ain near the Omani border on March 26 and lasted several hours.

The UAE and Israel normalized relations under the US-brokered Abraham Accords signed in September 2020.

Palestinian leaders have long condemned the deal as a "stab in the back". Iran has also criticized the agreement and for years alleged that Israel has maintained a military and intelligence presence in the UAE.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on social media that Israel "publicly revealed" what was already known by the Iranian security services, warning that "collusion" with Israel is "unforgivable".

The UAE and other Arab countries were targeted by Iranian missile and drone attacks after the US and Israel launched airstrikes against Iran in late February. A fragile ceasefire involving Iran, the US and Israel has been in place since April 8.

According to WAM's reports earlier this month, UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan received calls from several regional leaders after Iranian attacks on the country on May 5, including from Netanyahu.

US Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee also revealed this week that Israel had sent Iron Dome air-defense weapons, along with personnel to operate them, to the UAE.

Political solutions

However, Anwar Gargash, an adviser to the UAE's president, said on Wednesday that the Gulf nation remained committed to political solutions and diplomacy amid regional tensions, while stressing the country's right to defend its sovereignty.

Relations between Arab states and Iran should not be defined by confrontation, he added.

Meanwhile, US Vice-President JD Vance said on Wednesday that he believes progress is being made in negotiations with Iran to end hostilities, after US President Donald Trump rejected Tehran's latest proposal as unacceptable.

"The red line is very simple," Vance said. "He (the president) needs to feel confident that we have put a number of protections in place such that Iran will never have a nuclear weapon."

Nevertheless, an Iranian Army spokesman said the armed forces are maintaining "the highest level of readiness", warning that "there is no room for retreat" as tensions with the US persist.

Iranian First Vice-President Mohammad Reza Aref said the country's "right to the Strait of Hormuz is established, and the matter is closed".

Iran's ISNA news agency quoted him as saying that Iran's plans "were tailored to the sanctions and pressures of our enemies, but now we must plan for the security and well-being of our country and the region".

Even amid simmering tensions, Iran held a send-off ceremony on Wednesday for the national soccer team ahead of the 2026 World Cup, cohosted by the US, Mexico and Canada.

At a square in central Tehran, people waved flags, chanted slogans and some held placards honoring the late supreme leader Ali Khamenei, who was killed during the war.

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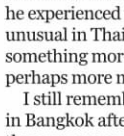
Thailand's embrace of its youngest treasures

FIRST PERSON VIEW



Yang Wanli
Reporter's log

While foreigners often praise Thailand for its hospitality, I've come to believe children may be the group the country cherishes most. Few countries devote an entire national celebration so wholeheartedly for children — not as a commercial occasion, but as a deeply rooted social value.

Rather than observing the International Children's Day on June 1, Thailand celebrates Wan Dek, or National Children's Day, on the second Saturday of January each year. Across the country, the message is unmistakable: children are the nation's most precious resource.

The celebrations begin even before the holiday arrives. Schools organize performances, games and community events, with children receiving gifts from teachers.

On Children's Day, youngsters are showered with affection by family members and strangers alike. Shopping malls host concerts, while public attractions lower ticket prices or open free of charge to families. Streets fill with children clutching balloons and snacks, walking with a rare sense of collective joy.

Yet, what struck me most was not the festivities themselves, but the seriousness with which Thai society treats childhood.

On the day, children are invited to the Government House, where they can sit in the prime minister's office — a symbolic gesture affirming that they matter.

Prime Minister Anutin Charnvirakul introduced this year's slogan "Love Thailand, Care for the World", emphasizing civic responsibility, environmental awareness and global citizenship.

The Royal Thai Air Force opens its bases to the public for large-scale celebrations featuring aircraft displays, military demonstrations, interactive games and live performances.

Last year, I took my son to one of the events, and it felt less like a military showcase than a nationwide carnival. Tens of thousands attended. Children climbed onto aircraft cockpits as smiling air force personnel lifted them up for photos.

Shuttle buses moved between parking areas and the venue. Volunteers distributed free bottled water. Temporary stalls sold food and toys at modest prices. The atmosphere was orderly yet warm — a public celebration designed not only for children, but also for the people around them.

My son talked about the event for weeks afterward. But the kindness he experienced that day was not unusual in Thailand. It reflected something more ordinary — and perhaps more meaningful.

I still remember our initial weeks in Bangkok after we moved there three years ago. Our son was only 4, and every morning we walked him to the kindergarten. Along a route of barely 10 minutes, four or five strangers would smile, wave or greet him warmly — security guards, fruit vendors, lottery sellers, people we had never met before.

That openness is evident in daily life. Market vendors often slip extra fruit into his hands. Staff at the shopping malls and play centers offer him snacks or candy. On Bangkok's elevated Skytrain, passengers routinely offer him a seat, even now, at 7, when he's perfectly capable of standing.

Over time, I have watched my once shy and sensitive child change. Thailand has rewarded his attempts to engage with the world rather than discouraging them. When he speaks to restaurant staff, people praise him. When he helps carry luggage at the airport, fellow passengers compliment his manners. Encouragement comes easily and naturally from strangers.

Perhaps, most revealing is the patience that Thai society shows toward children when they are not at their best.

Young children cry. Six-year-olds can be loud, restless and impulsive. Parents sometimes lose their cool. These are universal realities. Yet, I've rarely seen adults glaring at misbehaving children with rage, scolding them or humiliating the parents struggling to calm them down.

There's a familiar saying in China that children are the flowers of the motherland, reflecting a long-standing belief that the younger generation embodies the nation's future.

In many ways, China has made extraordinary progress in caring for children, with the health of children continuing to improve in recent years. Official data showed that the net enrollment rate for primary school-aged children remained at 99.9 percent, covering around 160 million students nationwide.

With the rise in social media platforms such as Douyin — China's TikTok — and Xiaohongshu, or RedNote, parenting bloggers have attracted huge audiences. Videos capturing children's innocence, humor and candid remarks have won the hearts of countless adults.

For many, children offer a rare sense of purity and wonder amid the pressures of modern life. Yet, online debates over "wild children" — those seen as disruptive or badly behaved — also emerge from time to time.

While people continue to adore these lovable children, such conversations have also prompted deeper reflection on how parents and society should guide the next generation — so that the kindness, sincerity and innocence of childhood can continue into adulthood.

My observations are deeply personal. Still, I wonder whether Thailand offers a small but meaningful answer.

The core value of Children's Day in Thailand underscores a simple social philosophy: parents should lead by example, while children should grow up with gratitude, respect and emotional security. The idea is straightforward — the way society treats children shapes how those children eventually treat the world.

To be raised with love means far more than hearing the words "I love you". It means growing up feeling emotionally safe, accepted without constant judgment, listened to rather than being dismissed, and disciplined with patience rather than humiliation.

Children raised with respect often learn to respect others. Those treated with kindness tend to pass on that kindness. Perhaps, that is the quiet wisdom behind Thailand's affection for children: a society that makes space for its youngest members ultimately produces gentler adults too.

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UN agency hails China's green development

By **SHARON NAKOLA** in Nairobi, Kenya
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Developing countries facing rapid urbanization and rising housing demand can draw on China's experience with green construction and low-carbon development, United Nations officials say.

Speaking at a media briefing on Wednesday ahead of the 13th session of the World Urban Forum, to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan, between May 17 and 22, UN Environment Programme officials warned that rapid urban growth, particularly in Africa and Asia, is piling pressure on countries to expand housing and infrastructure while also cutting emissions and improving climate resilience.

Martin Krause, director of Climate Change Division at UNEP, said many developing countries are confronting a "dual challenge" of expanding infrastructure while reducing emissions, particularly in regions where housing shortages and inadequate living conditions remain widespread.

He highlighted China's large-scale urban development over recent decades as an example worth studying.

"The work that China has done in this particular sector is certainly impressive," Krause said, adding that African countries facing growing housing and infrastructure needs could learn from such experiences through international platforms that share best practices on sustainable construction and climate action.

Krause said buildings are increasingly becoming central to the climate crisis because they sit at the intersection of emissions, affordability and resilience.

Inefficient buildings lock in high energy demand and increase household costs, while climate-smart buildings can reduce energy bills, strengthen energy security and provide protection against rising temperatures and extreme weather, he said.

Energy efficiency

China's urban expansion demonstrated how countries can pursue large-scale infrastructure development while improving building practices and energy efficiency, lessons that the UNEP said are becoming increasingly relevant as urban populations continue to grow worldwide.

Over the past decades, China has invested significant resources in its transition to an inclusive green economy, and it has proved that the shift would be beneficial for economic growth, climate change mitigation, job creation and improving people's living standards, according to a previous UNEP report.

The nation has been a major innovator and producer of renewable energy, producing the world's largest amount of solar panels and wind turbines, which have been extensively adopted in urban development nationwide.

The UNEP officials also presented the findings of the Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction 2025/2026, to be released next week. The report provides a comprehensive assessment of how the sector can reduce emissions, manage climate risks and maintain affordability while expanding rapidly to meet growing global demand for housing and infrastructure.

Oliver Rapf, executive director of the Buildings Performance Institute Europe, said global building floor space continues to expand rapidly, but efforts to decarbonize the sector remain far behind what is needed to meet international climate goals.

Operational emissions from buildings have increased by 6.5 percent since 2015, even though emissions would need to decline by more than 30 percent to stay aligned with the Paris Agreement pathway, Rapf said. "The world is building fast, falling short as climate risks rise and cities grow."

Hanane Hafraoui, program management officer at the Global Alliance for Buildings and Construction, said governments must move from climate pledges to implementation by making low-carbon and resilient buildings central to national climate plans.

"The task now is to move from pilots to scale, from commitments to implementation, and from climate ambitions to having better homes and better lives for people," she said.

"We cannot solve the climate crisis without making homes more affordable, more climate resilient, and energy efficient."

Paralyzed by rain



Vehicles move through waterlogged streets in front of a market in Dhaka, Bangladesh, on Wednesday, as relentless rains cause severe flooding and traffic congestion in the area. SONY RAMANI VIA GETTY IMAGES

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A dialogue with the Americas

Exhibition dives deep into Latin civilizations in its largest showcase worldwide, with nearly 3,000 artifacts, many of which are making their China debut, **Zhang Kun** reports.

The Shanghai Museum announced the opening of ticket sales for its upcoming exhibition on May 8, *On Top of the World Tree: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas*, which will be the world's largest showcase of ancient American civilizations.

The museum launched sales of 200,000 early-bird tickets through its official WeChat platform and the travel service Trip.com on the same day. More than 10,000 tickets were sold in 40 minutes, breaking the presale record for the massively successful Egyptian exhibition hosted by the museum last year.

Scheduled to run at the Shanghai Museum on People's Square from July 9 to Nov 14, 2027, the *Americas* exhibition will display nearly 3,000 artifacts from Mexico and Peru. According to Chu Xiaobo, director of the Shanghai Museum, it will be one of "the world's largest, most authoritative, most comprehensively narrated, and latest presentations of ancient American civilizations".

At the global launch on May 8, Chu, wearing a shirt specially designed for the exhibition featuring signature plants and animals of the Americas, described it as "a once-in-a-lifetime experience".

The exhibition is the sixth installment of the Shanghai Museum's A Dialogue with the World Exhibition series. Last year, the fifth event, *On Top of the Pyramid: The Civilization of Ancient Egypt,* attracted more than 2.77 million visitors and generated over 30 billion online views, setting a new record for the highest attendance at a single paid exhibition in museums worldwide.

More than 70 percent of the visitors were from overseas and other parts of China outside Shanghai. The exhibition generated revenue of more than 760 million yuan ($111.9 million).

Following the great success of the Egyptian exhibition, the Shanghai Museum has collaborated with leading archaeological institutions in Mexico and Peru, as well as top Chinese scholars, to create a panoramic presentation of ancient American civilizations, including the Olmec, Maya, Aztec, and Inca.

Shanghai officials and diplomats from Peru and Mexico on May 8 launch *On Top of the World Tree: Ancient Civilizations of the Americas*, one of the museum's flagship exhibitions of the year. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

The museum will dedicate all its galleries at its People's Square venue to the exhibition. Spanning over 7,000 square meters, the exhibition will be designed in two parts.

Galleries on the first and second floors will be jointly presented by the Shanghai Museum, and the Instituto Nacional de Antropologia e Historia and the Museo Nacional de Antropologia in Mexico. Showcasing more than 2,600 cultural relics from 13 Mexican institutions, this part will highlight the distinct pantheon system and power structures of major Mesoamerican civilizations, focusing on their complex spiritual beliefs and material achievements.

The third-floor, jointly organized with Peru's Larco Museum and NEON Group, which specializes in experimental and large-scale immersive experiences, will feature 325 treasured artifacts from Peru, 116 of which will make their overseas debut. This will be the largest showcase of the Andean civilization in China and one of the most extensive international displays of Andean gold and silver artifacts ever presented by Peru.

One of the largest exhibits will be the *Olmec Colossal Stone Head 4* from the Museo de Antropologia de Xalapa, Mexico. Weighing approximately 4.5 tons, it symbolizes the power of the Olmecs, one of the earliest known civilizations of the Americas.

The tallest exhibit will be *Calakmul Stela 51* from the Museo Nacional de Antropologia. One of the most outstanding portrait works of Mayan art, it depicts Yuknoom Took' K'awiil, the great ruler of the Kaan kingdom based in Calakmul. Due to its 4-meter height, the Shanghai Museum will construct a specially designed, climate-controlled glass case and display it outdoors on People's Square.

To ensure the safe and timely transportation of these artifacts, the Shanghai Museum will charter two large cargo aircraft from China Eastern Airlines. The planes, adorned with motifs inspired by the patterns of ancient Mexican ruins and depicting the *Feathered Serpent*, will travel nearly 30,000 kilometers round-trip to deliver the cultural relics to Shanghai.

Beyond common labels of "mysterious" and "primitive", the Americas possess a complete and profound civilizational system, Chu says. Moreover, there are deep archaeological and cultural connections between it and Asia. To highlight these links, the museum will also display selected Chinese cultural relics on loan from domestic institutions from seven provinces.

According to David Gamarra, consul general of Peru in Shanghai, most of the cultural relics in the exhibition are making their China debut. These artifacts vividly illustrate the artistic style and spiritual life of Andean civilizations, reflecting the exquisite artistry and highly developed culture of ancient Peru.

Gamarra says the exhibition will further strengthen cultural exchange between Peru and China; and hopes it will attract more Chinese tourists to visit the country.

Rodrigo Topete Maza, acting consul general of Mexico in Shanghai, notes the profound friendship and long histories shared by China and Mexico. He hopes that through the exhibition, visitors will sense the deep connections between the two nations and the shared spiritual core of their civilizations.

Zhong Xiaomin, director of the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, said at the global launch: "We want to take this exhibition as an opportunity to further build a platform for cultural exchange between China and Latin America and introduce more high-quality Latin American cultural resources to China."

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Selected artifacts from Shanghai Museum's new exhibition on the civilizations of the Americas, many of which are being shown overseas for the first time. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Online Scan the code to watch the video.

Fused with ballet, Muqam carries Uygur heritage forward

By **ZHANG KUN**

The Shanghai Ballet premiered its latest production, *The Heartbeat of Muqam*, with two performances at the Shanghai International Dance Center on Saturday and Sunday. Inspired by the folk music and dance of the Uygur ethnic group from northwestern China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the work represents a creative exploration of intangible cultural heritage through dance.

Muqam, recognized by UNESCO as an intangible cultural heritage of humanity, is a traditional performing art that combines the singing, music and dance of the Uygur ethnic group. "Muqam carries the imprint of cultural exchange and integration along the Silk Road, embodying the shared memories and deep emotions of the Chinese nation," says Ji Pingping, director of the Shanghai Ballet.

Founded in 1979, the Shanghai Ballet has long been committed to presenting Chinese culture through the international language of ballet. "We have discovered many connections between ballet and Xinjiang songs and dances," Ji notes.





Scenes from Shanghai Ballet's latest production *The Heartbeat of Muqam*. Inspired by the folk music and dance from Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, the work represents a creative exploration of intangible cultural heritage through ballet. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The Heartbeat of Muqam not only marks an innovative breakthrough for the Shanghai Ballet but it also represents the use of dance in telling Chinese stories, she adds.

Creating the ballet spanned three years and involved six research trips to Xinjiang. During their visits, the dancers observed that "Muqam lives in the melodies, rhythms and movements of the local people. It is a natural part of their lives and an intuitive expression of emotion," shares principal dancer Qi Bingxue, who plays the protagonist in the production.

The ballet tells the story of a young musician of the Uygur ethnic group who returns to her hometown to retrace childhood memories and cultural roots, and rediscovers the contemporary vitality of Muqam.

In the dance-theater piece, the heroine livestreams a Xinjiang wedding via mobile devices, sharing the charm of Muqam with a global audience. "It reflects the real-life setting of today's Xinjiang, where Muqam resonates with the people rather than being confined to ancient books," Qi explains.

Ding Wei, former director of the China Song & Dance Ensemble, praises the production for its "outstanding integration of classical ballet and China's intangible cultural heritage".

"The stage design is beautiful, and the dancers deliver top-tier performances," he says, describing the work as "representing the highest level of dance art in Shanghai, and also in China".

He notes that Xinjiang folk dance is improvisational, quite distinct from ballet's structured vocabulary. "I saw a remarkable fusion of the two styles in this production, and the director has done an excellent job," he says.

Director Wang Ge emphasizes the fusion's organic nature: "You can't simply stitch together ballet footwork and folk dance's upper-body movements. It's important to maintain a fine line that keeps it authentically ballet rather than turning into a folk dance show."

Playwright Luo Huaizhen notes that this unprecedented blend significantly enriches the vocabulary of classical ballet and will make a meaningful contribution to the dance world.

A Xinjiang native surnamed Lu, who attended the opening night, recalled her childhood experiences with her friends of Uygur ethnic group: "We would sing and dance whenever people gathered. The pot-bellied character reminded me of uncles back home, and I recognized those dance moves, too!" she says in excitement.

She also commends the presentation of Xinjiang's cultural heritage through ballet. "There are many ways to introduce Muqam to the public. While folk dance is accessible to many, ballet conveys it more vividly to international audiences. We need more efforts like this to share Xinjiang with the world."

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LIFE







From left: Produced with the joint contributions of over 60,000 experts and scholars, the print and online editions of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)* have become important vehicles for showcasing Chinese culture. As part of the event, the *Encyclopedia of Emergency Safety for Chinese Schools* was launched. A band performs during the "Night of the Encyclopedia". PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Encyclopedia of China enters AI era

Scholars and publishers gather in Beijing to examine how emerging technologies are transforming public access to trusted information, **Yang Yang** reports.





Above: The *Encyclopedia of Chinese and Italian Culture: Art* was highlighted at the conference as a key achievement. The book introduces the representative accomplishments in the fields of art from both China and Italy. **Left:** The conference also features an exhibition of outstanding popular science books.

The inaugural China Encyclopedia Conference, hosted by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, took place in Beijing from April 23 to 24, as part of the activities for the country's first National Reading Week after the State Council regulation to promote reading among the public took effect on Feb 1.

The *Encyclopedia of China* is the country's first and most authoritative comprehensive modern encyclopedia. Launched in 1978 and published by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House under the China Publishing Group, it stands as a landmark national cultural project.

The latest edition, the third one, pioneered a new approach by prioritizing the online version while creating a concise print edition, establishing a knowledge system with professional, thematic, and general sections. By the end of 2025, the online version had 519,000 entries, and the print version was published in 43 volumes, marking significant progress, according to Yang Muzhi, chief editor of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)*.

"Thanks to the efforts of more than 60,000 experts and scholars, the print and online versions of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)* have become significant platforms for showcasing Chinese culture and confidence," said Mao Yuansheng, general manager and deputy secretary of the Party Committee of the China Publishing Group, in his speech at the main forum of the conference on April 23.

The China Encyclopedia Conference, themed "Empowering Thousands of Industries, Reaching Thousands of Households", attracted over 600 guests from various sectors. It offered a rich array of activities, including a main conference, forums, a science popularization exhibition, and a music-sharing session, creating a grand celebration of knowledge for the public.

The theme of the conference reflects the trend of digital integration, making authoritative knowledge more accessible, said Mao.

The rapid development of technologies such as AI and big data is profoundly changing the paradigm of knowledge production and dissemination.

Encyclopedias should embrace technology by forming a "human-machine collaboration" model that combines experts, AI, and platforms to solve the challenges of traditional compilation, while steadfastly upholding the spirit of science and the essence of humanity, thereby strengthening the foundation of the national knowledge system, said Bai Chunli, vice-chairman of the editorial board of the third edition of the *Encyclopedia of China* and editor-in-chief of the chemistry section.

Li Yang, a member of the editorial board of the encyclopedia's third edition and editor-in-chief of the economics section, emphasized the critical importance of philosophy and social sciences. In the AI era, cultivating talent requires philosophical thinking and social science literacy. "The encyclopedia must undertake the important task of 'clarifying the source' by providing accurate, systematic, and authoritative knowledge", he said.

However, while new technologies like AI unleash innovative potential, they also pose challenges to copyright protection.

Zhou Huilin, president of the China Copyright Association, pointed out that copyright protection is crucial for promoting the dissemination of encyclopedic knowledge. As a high-quality source of authoritative knowledge, the copyright protection of encyclopedias is particularly important. He proposed three initiatives: adhering to the original source of knowledge, improving institutional safeguards, and deepening cross-disciplinary collaboration.

Gao Shiyi, president of the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House, highlighted that, as a major national cultural project, the encyclopedia focuses on five key areas: digitalization, platform development, intelligence, branding, and systemization to make encyclopedic knowledge accessible to every household. Future efforts will emphasize content quality and collaboration with research institutions, the education sector, and tech companies to build a reliable and engaging knowledge ecosystem, empowering various industries, he said.

Wang Wei, an editorial board member of the third edition of the encyclopedia and editor-in-chief of the archaeology section, said that the archaeology volume is based on Chinese practices and breaks through the constraints of the Western "three elements of civilization" comprising writing systems, urban settlements and metallurgy, proposing new definitions for civilization.

Currently, there is a need to integrate encyclopedic resources with digital technology to support innovation in industries such as cultural tourism and manufacturing, bringing knowledge to life and contributing Chinese wisdom to human civilization, he added.

As a core component of the conference, the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House unveiled and introduced several significant achievements.

Among these, the print version of the *Encyclopedia of China (Third Edition)* and the China Encyclopedia Online represent not just the digitization of books, but also the networking and dynamic upgrading of the national authoritative knowledge system, serving as the "knowledge foundation of the digital age".

The Encyclopedia of Basic Education Network is aimed at the education sector, building a student-centered, technology-supported integrated education ecosystem based on the concept of "borderless learning and comprehensive resource education", striving to provide strong support for teaching and learning in schools.

The Digital-Intelligence Integration Achievement Matrix includes the *China Through Time and Space* digital exhibition, VR youth digital classrooms, and XR science popularization films allowing users to learn and acquire knowledge in an immersive, interactive way, making the learning process enjoyable.

The unveiling of the *Encyclopedia of Chinese and Italian Culture: Art* introduces representative achievements in the field of art from both China and Italy. It aims to deepen exchange and interaction in art and culture between the two countries, which are jointly committed to the protection of cultural heritage and the better promotion of cultural development. It is compiled by the Encyclopedia of China Publishing House and the Italian Institute of the Encyclopedia (Treccani Institute).

On the afternoons of April 23 and 24, six parallel forums were held. The forums included the Encyclopedia Future Path Seminar, Encyclopedia Education Forum, Brand and Cultural Development Forum, Home and School Emergency Safety Development Forum, the launch of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei Science Reading Activity, and the release of the List of Outstanding Chinese Popular Science Books along with the New Era Popular Science Publishing and Nationwide Reading Promotion Forum. Each forum aimed to create a "knowledge service solution" for a specific field.

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Ancient porcelain city embraces global openness and creative innovation





Left: Spanish potter Jaume Ribalta (left) and his friends display porcelain at a fair in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province. XINHUA **Right:** A foreign artist looks at ceramics at a carnival held on the sidelines of the 2025 China Jingdezhen International Ceramic Expo in Jingdezhen on Oct 17 last year. ZHOU MI / XINHUA

NANCHANG — With a 3D printer nozzle rotating as it smoothly extrudes clay, a delicate ceramic work is gradually taking shape — a scene that would once have been unimaginable to earlier generations of artisans in Jingdezhen.

It is happening in a studio in the ancient Chinese porcelain capital, a city in East China's Jiangxi province with a porcelain-making history of more than 1,700 years.

The studio's owner, Michael May, a 38-year-old ceramic artist from the United States, believes this new way of "printing" ceramics can greatly expand both the possibilities and efficiency of ceramic production.

"I originally thought that Jingdezhen would reject new technologies, but I didn't expect that there would be 3D printing factories everywhere. The equipment can be rented even in a village," he says.

May adds that the ancient city's openness and inclusiveness led him to stay, continue his experiments and creations, and offer courses to share his techniques and ideas.

Since the Song Dynasty (960-1279), ceramics crafted in Jingdezhen have been exported to Central Asia, West Asia, Europe and Africa. Today, the city still retains its global appeal, drawing more than 5,000 ceramic enthusiasts like May from around the world at peak times.

"Jingdezhen is like an unfolding world map of ceramic culture, and every person who loves ceramics can find a place of their own," says Qurat ul Ain from Pakistan, who is pursuing a doctoral degree at Jingdezhen Ceramic University.

She says she once struggled to decide on a research direction. "Pakistan also has an ancient history of pottery-making, but there are no local doctoral programs related to ceramics, nor much systematic research in the field.

"It was my mentor who encouraged me to focus on the research of ceramic culture in my country," she says. "Jingdezhen not only has a profound history but also an open international exchange program."

As early as 2015, the Taoxichuan cultural and creative district in Jingdezhen launched the Migratory Bird Program, an international artist residency initiative. The program has sent invitations to art institutions in more than 50 countries and regions, attracting 3,600 artists from around the world.

The district holds fairs of various sizes regularly. About 28,600 craftspeople have set up stalls there, with an average age of just 28.

Matt Watterson, a 31-year-old American ceramic artist, enjoys strolling through the city's fairs, where he often finds old ceramic fragments to incorporate into his own creations.

"I can turn my creativity into works by collaborating with the locals here, which is very fulfilling," he says. In his view, the locals' openness and friendliness represent the vibe of this city.

Jingdezhen, with a population of more than 1.6 million, has recorded a net population inflow of 136,000 over the past decade. Among those who have started long-term businesses in the city, more than half come from outside Jiangxi province or even from overseas.

Thanks to increasingly convenient visa-free policies, Jaume Ribalta, a Spanish potter born in the 1990s, was able to invite his parents from his hometown in Spain to Jingdezhen.

"This is the farthest journey my parents have traveled so far. I entertained them in my rural studio in Xianghu village," he says. "I also took them to decorate their own ceramic works and helped them understand the culture of the millennia-old porcelain capital."

After traveling to 20 countries, May finally chose Jingdezhen as the place to realize his ideas. Recently, he has been working to expand his studio.

"I sold all my belongings and came to this city," he says. "I never thought that this place was so inclusive before I came here."

XINHUA

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SPORTS

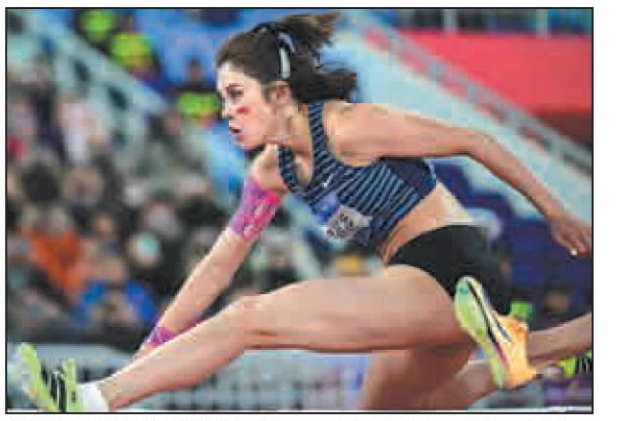


China's Chen Yujie will take on Jamaica's Shericka Jackson and Sha'Carri Richardson of the US in front of her home crowd. XINHUA

ATHLETICS

SET FOR A SPARKLING CONTEST

Chinese talent ready to challenge global elites at Diamond League doubleheader



China's star hurdler Wu Yanni has promised to try and close the gap with the international pack at the Diamond League opener. XINHUA

By SUN XIAOCHEN
sunxiaochen@chinadaily.com.cn

With talented young Chinese athletes all laced up and ready to pit themselves against a stacked field of elite champions, the world's premier track and field series has guaranteed fans a thrilling season opener in China.

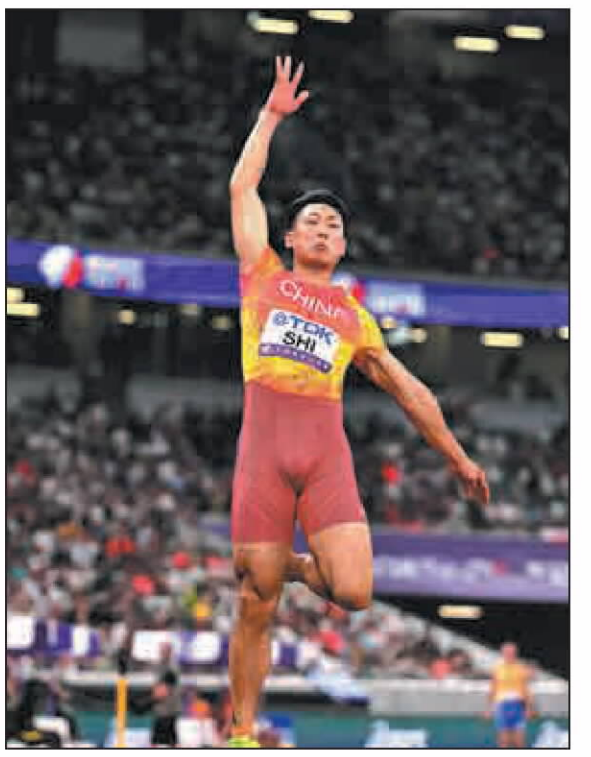
The World Athletics Diamond League's 2026 curtain-raiser, to be held in Keqiao of Shaoxing city, Zhejiang province, on Saturday, promises to deliver a spectacular showpiece, with China's best sprinters, jumpers and throwers raring to challenge the world's top stars — more than 20 Olympic and world champions, including as many as six world record holders — in front of a home crowd.

And, offering just enough time for pulses to return to normal, a week later in Xiamen, Fujiang province, on May 23, they do it all again, capping off the season's tone-setting doubleheader.

Leading the star-studded international cast confirmed for the Shaoxing leg are Sweden's two-time pole vault Olympic champion Armand "Mondo" Duplantis, men's 400m hurdles world record holder Karsten Warholm of Norway and the fastest women's 100m hurdler in history Tobi Amusan of Nigeria.

A highly popular overseas star among Chinese fans, Duplantis, who just set his 15th and latest world record of 6.31m at an indoor meet in southeastern Swedish city Uppsala in March, will open his outdoor season in a loaded men's field that also includes Greece's Emmanouil Karalis, who moved to second on the athletes' world ranking in February with a 6.17m clearance in Athens, and two-time world champion Sam Kendricks of the United States.





World record pole vaulter Armand "Mondo" Duplantis of Sweden (left) will look to produce another memorable performance in front of the Chinese fans, while defending long jump champion Shi Yuhao is hoping to land on the top of the podium again. XINHUA

Having triumphant memories of China, including his then-world-record-setting feat of 6.24m at last year's Xiamen leg, Duplantis, who has stayed unbeaten since 2023, will be keen to extend his winning streak and maybe just give fans another unforgettable moment this weekend.

Warholm will also kick-start his season hoping to carry on the momentum from his last visit to Shaoxing, when he clocked a 2025 world-leading 47.28 to win the 400m hurdles. This year though, he will be competing in the series-special 300m format, which was added to the league program last season and has replaced the traditional 400m in Shaoxing this year. He will be up against 2022 world champion Alison dos Santos of Brazil and world bronze medalist Trevor Bassitt of United States.

"I am so excited to return to Keqiao again this year," said the 30-year-old Norwegian, who set the 400m world mark of 45.94 with his golden finish at Tokyo 2020. "Winning here for the first time in my career last year was such a great feeling. I look forward to a great battle."

Women's track is expected to provide even greater intrigue, with local favorites ambitious to make their presence felt against their mighty international counterparts in both the 200m sprint and 100m hurdles.

Loaded with star power from Jamaica's two-time world champion Shericka Jackson and 2023 world 100m champion Sha'Carri Richardson of the US, the 200m race in Shaoxing is a dream stage for China's teen prodigy Chen Yujie, a Zhejiang native, to measure her meteoric rise against the world's fastest in front of her home crowd.

Chen, a 17-year-old high school student born and developed in Ningbo, shot to fame by winning both the 100m and 200m finals at the 2025 Chinese National Games, becoming the youngest ever to win both sprint titles in the domestic Games' history.

With a personal best of 22.97, and setting a new Asian U18 record at a South Korean meet in May last year, Chen is the only Asian athlete currently ranked in the 200m top 50.

The 100m hurdles will feature an even stronger lineup, bringing together winners of the past three outdoor worlds – Ditaji Kambundji, Danielle Williams and Amusan – along with reigning Olympic champion Masai Russell.

Nigerian great Amusan leads the field with her world record dash of 12.12, set in 2022 in Eugene, Oregon, yet faces an unpredictable test in Shaoxing with the starting blocks stacked with talent.

China's own star hurdler Wu Yanni, a celebrity among the sport's community domestically, is determined to at least try to keep up with the pack.

"I won't set any limit for myself, despite the gap between myself and the world's best," said Wu, who set her PB of 12.74 at the 2024 national championships.

"I will give my best for sure."

Shaoxing will also host a thrilling men's 100m sprint, where reigning 200m Olympic champion Letsile Tebogo of Botswana, South Africa's Akani Simbine and the US trio of Christian Coleman, Kenny Bednarek and Trayvon Bromell are pushing the bar high enough for an Olympic-caliber showdown.

In men's long jump, the Chinese combo of Shi Yuhao, the meet's defending champion, and Zhang Mingkun, who had to withdraw last year due to injury, are both expected to leap onto the podium on home soil.

After the Chinese doubleheader, the Diamond League will travel to another 12 cities across four continents en route to the series finale in Brussels in September.

SOCCER

How Paris Saint-Germain won its record-extending 14th Ligue 1 title

PARIS — Paris Saint-Germain ended up with the title again, but at least it had a rival for most of the season this time.

The defending champion secured its fifth straight French league crown — and record-extending 14th overall — by beating its closest chaser Lens 2-0 on Wednesday.

It finally ended the resistance of Lens, which held its own until the penultimate round, despite having a much smaller squad and budget than PSG, one of the world's most valuable clubs.

"It's the first time in my three seasons here that there's been a genuine rival," PSG boss Luis Enrique said, praising Lens and its coach Pierre Sage. "It has been motivating, they have shown their level."

Last season saw PSG wrapping up the title with six games to spare — and the only two league defeats of that campaign came after the title was sealed. PSG finished 19 points clear of second-place Marseille and scored a whopping 92 goals.

It was not so easy this time.

PSG has lost five league games so far and is nine points ahead of one-time champion Lens heading into Sunday's final round.

Sage's far smaller squad was hit by fatigue and the team — however willing — could not realistically sustain the challenge over 34 matches. It was PSG's fifth straight league title since Lille's championship victory in 2021.

Here's a closer look at how it was won.

Sharing the goals

PSG relied heavily on the scoring of Ousmane Dembele last season, when he netted 21 league goals.

This season, no PSG player was near the top of the scoring charts and the goals have been spread around.

Dembele and winger Bradley Barcola have netted 10 each, with Khvicha Kvaratskhelia (8), Desire Doue (7) and Goncalo Ramos (6) all contributing at key moments.

Kvaratskhelia's impact

In years to come, Kvaratskhelia may eventually be seen as the best signing in the club's history. The Georgia winger has been inspirational for PSG all season.

Not only does he provide incredible speed, finishing and dribbling from the left wing — even though he can play with almost equal efficiency on the right — his tireless running and relentless tracking back marks him out as a brilliant defender.

No wonder Enrique was delighted to sign him from Napoli in January last year, having failed in a previous bid.

Although he paid a large transfer fee of 70 million euros (then $72 million), it is starting to look like a bargain.

Ruthless selections

Enrique showed a ruthless streak by dropping goalkeeper Lucas Chevalier — a summer signing to replace Gianluigi Donnarumma — and swapping him out for Matvey Safonov, who made several saves against Lens on Wednesday.

Enrique sent a clear message to his players that status and reputation do not offer them any guarantees of first-team soccer.

He did the same last season when he dropped Dembele for a crucial Champions League game on disciplinary grounds, and the season before, when he sold Neymar and Marco Verratti in order to rebuild the side in his own way.

In an era of increasing player power, Enrique showed that his authority could not be eroded.

He also maintained a close bond with the fans, constantly praising them — and even singing one of the club anthems with them following the Champions League semifinals when PSG overcame German juggernaut Bayern Munich.

He also managed the fatigue levels of his players well in a season that began with recurring injuries.

While he regularly rested captain Marquinhos and Dembele in Ligue 1, he kept midfielders Vitinha and Warren Zaire-Emery in the side as near ever-presents.

"We always look for what's best for each player individually. If you play less or more, it doesn't mean you're weak or strong, but that you have different needs," Enrique explained. "I always aim to get the three points, but also to protect the players' health."

He was also magnanimous in a rare defeat — namely when Sage won the award for the French league's coach of the year.

"He deserves to win this trophy, Enrique said. "Because what he's done with Lens is incredible."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Jingzhou Intermediate People's Court of Hubei Province

Announcement

(2026) E 10 P No. 1

The Court, upon the application of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd., ruled on April 2, 2026 to accept the case of bankruptcy reorganization of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd., and on April 30, 2026, appointed Beijing Dacheng Law Offices, LLP (Wuhan) as the administrator of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as the "Administrator").

Creditors of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. shall file their claims with the Administrator (mailing address: No. 17 Philips Road, Xinjiangkou Town, Songzi City, Hubei Province; postal code: 434200; contact person: Fu Sailun; tel.: +86 1857-2830-083; email: sailun.fu@dentons.cn) by 24:00 (Beijing time) on July 15, 2026, providing a written statement of the amount of the claim, whether the claim is secured, and whether it is a joint and several claim, along with relevant supporting documents. Specific document requirements and filing methods are subject to the Notice on Filing of Claims published by the Administrator on the National Enterprise Bankruptcy Information Disclosure Platform (https://pccz.court.gov.cn).

Creditors who fail to file their claims within the aforementioned period may make supplementary filings before the draft reorganization plan is submitted to the creditors' meeting for discussion, provided that they shall bear the costs incurred for reviewing and verifying such supplementary filed claims. Creditors who fail to file their claims in accordance with the law shall not exercise their rights during the implementation of the reorganization plan. After the implementation of the reorganization plan is completed, they may exercise their rights in accordance with the repayment conditions for similar claims as stipulated in the reorganization plan. Debtors or property holders of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. shall promptly settle debts or deliver property to the Administrator.

The Court has scheduled to hold the first creditors' meeting of Ultinon Motion Technology (Hubei) Co., Ltd. at 10:00 (Beijing time) on July 30, 2026, via the National Enterprise Bankruptcy Information Disclosure Platform (https://pccz.court.gov.cn). Creditors who file their claims in accordance with the law have the right to attend the creditors' meeting. If an attending creditor is a legal person or any other organization, the documents evidencing its legal person status shall be submitted; if an attending creditor is a natural person, the individual identification documents shall be submitted; if an agent is appointed to attend the meeting, a power of attorney shall be submitted. The identification documents and powers of attorney submitted by a creditor that has no domicile within the territory of the People's Republic of China shall be notarized by a notarial institution in the country where the documents are issued and authenticated by the embassy or consulate of the People's Republic of China in that country, or shall undergo the certification procedures stipulated in the relevant treaties concluded between the People's Republic of China and that country.

It is hereby announced.

Jingzhou Intermediate People's Court of Hubei Province
May 12, 2026

湖北省荆州市中级人民法院

公 告

（2026）鄂 10 破 1 号

本院根据奥途科技（湖北）有限公司的申请于 2026 年 4 月 2 日裁定受理奥途科技（湖北）有限公司破产重整一案，并于 2026 年 4 月 30 日指定北京大成（武汉）律师事务所担任奥途科技（湖北）有限公司管理人（以下简称管理人）。

奥途科技（湖北）有限公司的债权人应在 2026 年 7 月 15 日 24 时（北京时间）之前，向管理人（通讯地址：湖北省松滋市新江口镇飞利浦路 17 号；邮政编码：434200；联系人：傅律师，联系电话：+86-1857 2830 083，电子邮箱：sailun.fu@dentons.cn）申报债权，书面说明债权数额、有无财产担保及是否属于连带债权，并提供相关证据文件，具体申报文件要求及申报方式以管理人在全国企业破产重整案件信息网（https://pccz.court.gov.cn）发布的《债权申报通知》为准。

未能在上述期限内申报债权的债权人，可以在重整计划草案提交债权人会议讨论前补充申报，但要承担为审查和确认补充申报债权所产生的费用。未依法申报债权的，在重整计划执行期间不得行使权利，在重整计划执行完毕后可以按照重整计划规定的同类债权的清偿条件行使权利。奥途科技（湖北）有限公司的债务人或者财产持有人应尽快向管理人清偿债务或交付财产。

本院定于 2026 年 7 月 30 日 10 时（北京时间）通过全国企业破产重整案件信息网（https://pccz.court.gov.cn）召开奥途科技（湖北）有限公司第一次债权人会议。依法申报债权的债权人有权参加债权人会议，出席会议的债权人系法人或其他组织的，应提交企业主体资格证明文件；债权人系自然人的，应提交个人身份证明文件；如委托代理人出席会议的，应提交授权委托文件。在中华人民共和国领域内没有住所的债权人提交的身份证明文件及授权委托文件，应当经所在国公证机关公证，并经中华人民共和国驻该国使领馆认证，或者履行中华人民共和国与该所在国订立的有关条约中规定的证明手续。

特此公告。

湖北省荆州市中级人民法院
二〇二六年五月十二日

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Winning brew

American turns passion for Chinese tea into profit

LIFE, PAGE 14



Guideline helps protect growth of gig economy

POLICY REVIEW, PAGE 12



Star dilemma

Neymar's chances of spot in Brazilian team hang in balance

SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日報 FRIDAY, MAY 15, 2026

WORLD WATCH
By Tom Watkins

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Visit comes at pivotal juncture

United States President Donald Trump started his three-day state visit to China on Wednesday.

Here we are again, yet another pivotal moment as the world revolves around US-China relations.

Once again, we have arrived at a point where action or inaction will shape the direction of trade, technology, global security, the economy and geopolitical stability of the US, China and the rest of the world.

Peace and prosperity should be our goal.

The last thing either side and the world need now is greater instability. The world cannot afford a new Cold War, or worse, and wise choices must be made to ensure a peaceful and prosperous future for all of humanity.

We collectively need to seek "win-win" solutions rather than treat this vital relationship as a zero-sum game where one party's success requires the other's failure.

Perhaps at no other time in the modern US-China engagement has it been as imperative that we avoid unnecessary confrontation and conflict by keeping dialogue open and engaging in constructive, government and nongovernmental exchanges at the highest levels, as well as rebuilding and strengthening people-to-people, educational and cultural exchanges that have waned in recent years, particularly student exchanges, which are a foundation for long-term understanding between our two peoples.

Dialogue between US and Chinese leaders must have a "trickle-down" effect that improves the overall relationship, reduces distrust and produces positive, tangible results for average citizens on both sides of the Pacific.

Change is inevitable. Progress should not be optional when it comes to US-China geopolitical relations.

Going forward, all major world issues will intersect at the corner of Beijing and Washington, DC. Are we going to swing for the win or strike out?

Both nations have work to do at home to better serve our respective peoples.

See ***Visit,*** *page 3*



INSIDE
From AI visibility to developmental leadership
Global Views, page 8

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President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony on Thursday morning outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing for United States President Donald Trump, who is on a state visit to China. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi: China, US should be partners

Success in one is opportunity for the other, stable bilateral relationship good for world

By CAO DESHENG
caodesheng@chinadaily.com.cn

China and the United States should find the right way for major countries to get along well with each other in the new era, President Xi Jinping said on Thursday.

Xi made the remarks during his talks with visiting US President Donald Trump at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Xi stressed that the two countries have more common interests than differences, success in one is an opportunity for the other, and a stable bilateral relationship is good for the world.

He expressed the hope that 2026 will be a "historic, landmark year" that opens up a new chapter in China-US relations.

"China and the United States both stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. We should be partners, not rivals. We should help each other succeed and prosper together," he said.

Noting that transformation not seen in a century is accelerating across the globe and the international situation is fluid and turbulent, Xi said that the world has come to another crossroad.

"Can China and the United States overcome the Thucydides Trap and create a new paradigm of major-country relations? Can we meet global challenges together and provide greater stability for the world? Can we build a bright future together for our bilateral relations in the interests of the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity? These are the questions vital to history, to the world, and to the people. They are the questions of our times that the leaders of major countries need to answer together," Xi said.

Xi stressed that the Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations. If it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy, he said.

"Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are as irreconcilable as fire and water, he said, adding that safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is the biggest common denominator between China and the US.

On China-US economic and trade relations, Xi said that they are mutually beneficial and win-win in nature, and trade wars have no winner.

He said that where disagreements and frictions exist, consultation conducted on an equal footing is the only right choice.

Xi noted that the talks between economic and trade teams of the two countries, held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday, produced generally balanced and positive outcomes, adding this is good news for the people of the two countries and the world. The two sides should jointly sustain the good momentum that they have worked hard to create, he said.

In his speech, Trump hailed his "fantastic" relationship with Xi, saying Xi is "a great leader".

He said that the relationship between the US and China is going to be better than ever before.

Before the talks, Xi held a welcoming ceremony for Trump outside the Great Hall of the People.

Beijing rolls out red carpet for Trump

By MO JINGXI
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Beijing rolled out the red carpet to welcome US President Donald Trump for a much-anticipated summit with President Xi Jinping, as the world looks to the two largest economies for greater stability.

Inside

• Editorial, **page 7**
• See more, **pages 2-5**

Xi held a welcoming ceremony for Trump on Thursday morning outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, before they held talks.

Trump arrived in the Chinese capital on Wednesday evening, beginning his three-day state visit to China. Vice-President Han Zheng greeted him at the airport.

The trip marks the first state visit to China by a sitting president of the United States in nearly nine years and follows Xi and Trump's meeting in Busan, Republic of Korea, last October, which helped to set the tone for efforts to stabilize and improve China-US relations.

The Xi-Trump summit is seen as another important moment in head-of-state diplomacy, which has played a strategic guiding role in China-US relations.

Over the years, Xi has repeatedly stressed that the China-US relationship is among the most important bilateral relationships in the world, and that the two countries must find the right way to get along.

His message has been consistent: While China-US cooperation can enable the two countries to achieve major undertakings serving their own interests and those of the world, confrontation would spell disaster for both countries and the wider world.

Analysts said the high-level engagement between Xi and Trump will be closely watched as to whether the two sides can keep the "giant ship" of China-US relations on a steady course, manage differences through dialogue, and expand practical cooperation, thereby injecting greater certainty into a turbulent world.

For a relationship as significant and complex as that between China and the US, direction matters as much as momentum.

During the meeting with Trump in Busan, Xi said, "You and I are at the helm of China-US relations. In the face of winds, waves and challenges, we should stay the right course, navigate through the complex landscape, and ensure the steady sailing forward of the giant ship of China-US relations."

In their phone conversation last year, Xi said that recalibrating the direction of the giant ship of China-US relations requires the two sides to take the helm and set the right course, adding that it is particularly important to steer clear of various disturbances and disruptions.

Zhiqun Zhu, a professor of political science and international relations and director of the China Institute at US-based Bucknell University, said the "giant ship" metaphor highlights both the complexity of the relationship and the importance of guiding it in the right direction.

"It's a top-down approach, with leaders on both sides playing a pivotal role," Zhu said. "Only when the general direction is set can the relationship move forward."

Zhu said that maintaining the momentum of high-level engagement is crucial for the stability and predictability of China-US relations. Leaders on both sides, he said, should be commended for overcoming difficulties, lowering tensions and moving the relationship forward.

But setting the course also requires a clear understanding of the nature of the relationship.

At a welcome dinner in San Francisco in November 2023, Xi said that he had long been thinking about "how to steer the giant ship of China-US relations clear of hidden rocks and shoals, navigate it through storms and waves without getting disoriented, losing speed or even having a collision".

"In this respect, the number one question for us is: Are we adversaries, or partners? This is the fundamental and overarching issue. The logic is quite simple. If one sees the other side as a primary competitor, the most consequential geopolitical challenge and a pacing threat, it will only lead to misinformed policymaking, misguided actions and unwanted results," Xi told participants from across American society.



People wave Chinese and United States flags to welcome US President Donald Trump, as he arrives in Beijing on Wednesday. Trump is on a three-day state visit to China. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Sun Chenghao, a fellow at Tsinghua University's Center for International Security and Strategy, said the "giant ship" metaphor speaks to the extraordinary weight of the relationship.

"China-US relations are too large and too consequential to be allowed to drift off course, or even capsize due to temporary storms," Sun said.

China and the US are the world's two largest economies and permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, and both play major roles in regional and global affairs.

Despite the twists and turns in bilateral ties, China-US economic relations remain deeply intertwined. Chinese customs data showed that bilateral trade in goods reached 4.01 trillion yuan ($590 billion) in 2025, accounting for 8.8 percent of China's total foreign trade.

"China's view that the relationship concerns not only the well-being of the two peoples but also the future of humanity is not merely diplomatic rhetoric," Sun said. "Rather, it is a judgment based on real interests and the stability of the international system."

That judgment has run through Xi's remarks on China-US relations over the years.

When meeting with Trump during his first term as US president in 2017 at the latter's Florida resort, Xi said there are a thousand reasons to make China-US relations a success, and not a single reason to break them.

See ***Summit,*** *page 3*

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Nations' friendship still bouncing along

From Ping-Pong Diplomacy to sports and youth exchanges, China and US continue building bridges

By ZHANG YUNBI
zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

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Young people from China and the United States take a group photo during an event to commemorate the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy in Beijing on April 10. ZHAO WENYU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Deliah Autry, 30, is a member of the United States Women's National Flag Football Team, a three-time world champion, and a doctor of physical therapy specializing in pediatrics.

Last August, she made her first trip to China, attending the 12th World Games hosted by Chengdu in Sichuan province. The souvenirs that impressed her most included a Labubu doll and the games' medals, she said.

"The medal itself is so intricate and detailed, and has a little necklace. It is something that I would love to show my kids one day," she said.

The cultural events also impressed her. At the athletes' village, Chinese college students helped them try immersive cultural activities.

"We got to do arts and crafts, learn how to write our names in Mandarin. We got to try on traditional Chinese clothing, so it was just an awesome way for us to learn from them ... a great experience and a way for us all to connect," Autry said.

She made her second trip to China last month. In Beijing, she took part in the commemoration to mark the 55th anniversary of China-US Ping-Pong Diplomacy and the launch ceremony of the China-US Youth Sports Exchange Events, which received a congratulatory message from President Xi Jinping.

Autry said she now has a better and deeper connection to and understanding of Chinese culture.

"I am impressed by the people, how genuine and kind-hearted everybody is, and I think it is something that I have personally attached to you (China) because you see the true humanity and love, especially for sports," she said.

In Beijing, she watched a high school flag football team from Tacoma, Washington state, playing against a Chinese student team.

Autry said flag football is a great avenue to continue making connections between the cultures, despite language barriers and differences in cultures and politics.

"There were a lot of handshakes, high-fives, and smiles, and I think that just brings the positivity forward ... It was just an awesome display of how sports bring everybody together," she added.

"There is a mutual understanding and respect for these athletes, and we all know that we are playing with the same passion and love for the game," she said.

Autry said sporting events and exchanges are a great way to show young people how cultural differences and language barriers are just small things and "what the true purpose is in life, which is to find a deeper connection with other humans across the world".



Members of the Whiffenpoofs a cappella choir from Yale University learn to play the *pipa* (a traditional lute) of the Dong ethnic group in Liping county, Guizhou province, on March 23. YANG WENBIN / XINHUA



Students from Muscatine High School in Iowa practice Chinese calligraphy at Shijiazhuang Foreign Language School in Hebei province on March 18. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Last year, Autry met a lot of the players from the Chinese women's national team at flag football tournaments.

"I follow a lot of them on social media, and we are able to connect. And there have been times throughout the year where we have seen each other outside in other tournaments and it is just really awesome to build that connection," she said.

Reaching out

Justin O'Jack, chief representative of the University of Virginia's Pacific Asia Office, encourages young Americans to engage in more trips outside the US.

"These kinds of trips, where students can travel abroad and spend time in a country like China, really have a transformative impact on a young person's life," he said in an interview with China Daily, "... if their only impression of China is through the media that they consume, of course it's going to be different than experiencing it as a person here in China," he added.

O'Jack studied abroad when he was a college student, first in India and then in China.

"That experience as a student studying abroad in China definitely has influenced me in many ways, one of which is in the career that I chose — first running study abroad programs in Shanghai for American students and now representing an American university."

He said Chinese students represent the majority of international students applying to his university's undergraduate program for the current class graduating in 2030.

"Chinese students by far make up the majority of applications we received — I would say, (there are) over 10,000 applications from around the world. Over 40 percent of those were from students here in China," he said.

"The interest in studying abroad in the US continues to be very strong, especially among the undergraduate student population," he added.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, there was a hiatus in the number of American students from his university studying in China, and now "we are seeing that start to grow and rebound", O'Jack said.

"We are not at the pre-pandemic levels yet, but we are still working and heading in the right direction," he said.

Sharing ideas

In 2023, President Xi proposed an initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study programs over a five-year span.

O'Jack noted that the program has largely focused on high school and younger groups of students, and "that is important because the youth are our future".

Anders Ibsen, 40, who was sworn in as mayor of Tacoma in January, hosted a Chinese ping-pong delegation at Lincoln High School in the city, a school that Xi visited in 2015.

Ibsen said it is very important to "give young people an understanding about what it means to have greater partnerships, especially with our growing global economy".

"That's the basis of shared prosperity as well as peace ... in someone's life. If they can understand that it's a big world and that there are a lot of other different ideas out there, then we're all better off," he added.

Last month, Ibsen traveled to China with Tacoma high school students, his second visit to the country. "I first visited here in 2018. I visited Fuzhou (in Fujian province), which is one of Tacoma's four sister cities."

"To give you some reference, the city of Tacoma is a major port city on the west coast ... About half of our total trade comes from China. As a result, we very strongly value the partnership," he said.

Chinese trade will continue to be very important to the port of Tacoma, as well as the investments it has seen in the local economy, Ibsen said.

During the trip, Ibsen said the group was also able to learn more about innovative programs the government is working on. "There's always something to learn. We should always continue being students," he said.

When asked about what impressed him most in China, he said it was "the people".

"In the case of the city of Tacoma, my primary concern is keeping my residents safe and prosperous ... and by having these cultural exchanges, we can focus on the results, we can dispense with noise, we can dispense with politics," he said.

"We can just focus on what makes things better for people, what makes for a happier, more peaceful world. And that is the strength of cooperation. That's why we're here," he added.

Lasting impact

The first US table tennis delegation arrived in China in April 1971, for the icebreaking visit that helped boost the launch of bilateral diplomatic ties.

At that moment, Jan Berris had been in her position at the US consulate in Hong Kong for just two years "as a very junior consular official working on cultural affairs". However, she said she knew that "the event would have repercussions on the US and China as well as the rest of the world".

"But I had no idea that it would have such a huge impact on my own life," said Berris, who is now vice-president of the National Committee on US-China Relations, a nonprofit organization and advisory body founded in 1966 to encourage understanding and cooperation between the two nations.

When she returned to the US the month after the historic visit, two of her former professors at the University of Michigan asked if she would consider working at the committee based in New York.

The committee was then preparing to co-host with the US Table Tennis Association the visit of the Chinese ping-pong team to the US.

"My professors were on the board of the national committee and they felt that my diplomatic experience, brief as it was, would be helpful," Berris said.

She said she was not quite sure that she really wanted to live in a big city as "it was formidable".

"Actually, my undecided state was resolved by another major announcement that was made just a few months later, when President Richard Nixon went on national television and announced that Dr Henry Kissinger had made a secret visit to China," she explained.

One of the results of that visit was the Chinese ping-pong team's visit to the US in April of 1972.

"That helped me make my decision," Berris said. The next day, she asked the US State Department if she could work on the planning for the Chinese team's visit.

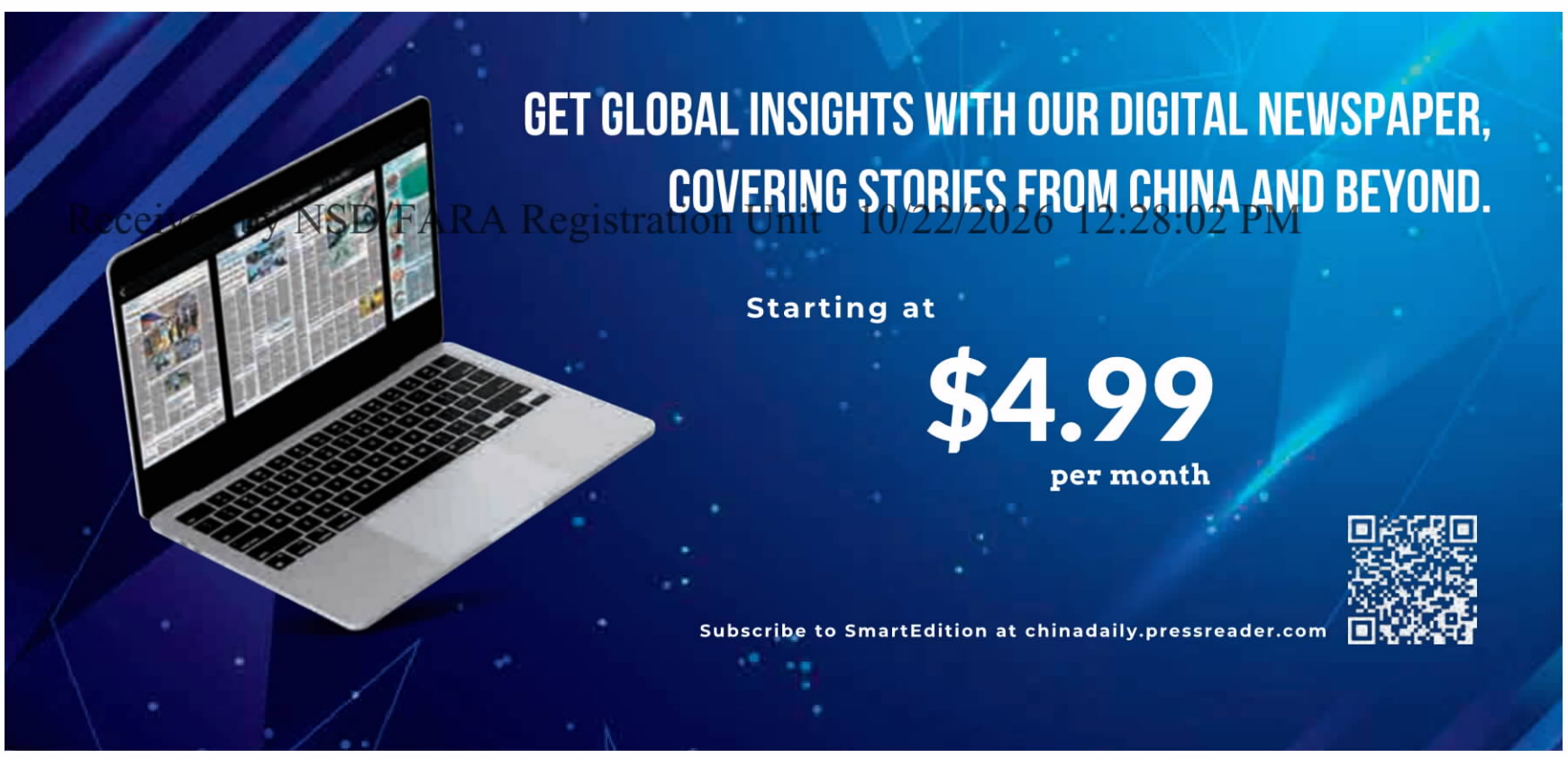
What began with a small ping-pong ball — slowly at first, and then in leaps and bounds — grew into a "broad and eventually very deep" network of relations between the two countries in every profession, and every field imaginable that brought all levels in the two societies together, she said.

"Now, a lot of people ask me how I can work in the same job for 55 years. But for me it has been easy, because I love my job," she said.

The first exchanges and the visits of the two ping-pong teams, with the hundreds and thousands of exchanges that followed, "serve to help people from both countries humanize the other" side, she said.



US youngsters experience traditional Chinese opera culture at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts in Beijing on July 14, as part of the Bond with Kuliang: 2025 China-US Youth Choir Festival. WANG ZIRU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



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SINO-US SUMMIT



Visitors taste wine from California at the food and agriculture pavilion of the United States on Nov 8 during the 8th China International Import Expo in Shanghai. The pavilion covered 350 square meters and featured 19 exhibitors, both record highs for the event. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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CEOs upbeat on China market

Presence of business leaders shows nation remains highly important for US companies

By **WANG KEJU, JIANG XUEQING, MA SI** and **ZHONG NAN**

Business leaders from the United States have voiced their confidence in the Chinese market and pledged to expand investments in what they consider as one of the world's most significant engines of future growth, given the market's vast scale, ability to innovate rapidly and resilient supply chains.

A high-profile business delegation comprising top US executives from sectors including technology, finance, aviation and agriculture arrived in Beijing on Wednesday as part of US President Donald Trump's entourage. The delegation's presence signals that commercial ties binding the two economies remain too deep to sever, economists and business executives said.

Among the top business leaders and CEOs visiting with Trump are Jensen Huang of Nvidia, Tim Cook of Apple, Elon Musk of Tesla and SpaceX, Cristiano Amon of Qualcomm, Larry Fink of BlackRock and Kelly Ortberg of Boeing, according to a Truth Social post by Trump. Also on the list are executives from GE Aerospace, Goldman Sachs, Citi, Mastercard, Visa, Blackstone, Cargill and more.

Speaking to China Daily, Mastercard CEO Michael Miebach said: "China is one of the world's most dynamic economies, and Mastercard is committed to the market for the long term.

"Since we began processing domestic transactions in May 2024, we've made strong progress — expanding acceptance, deepening local partnerships and bringing simple, secure 'tap and go' experiences to everyday life."

Looking ahead, he added, "We will continue to invest in China and bring more products and services that support both businesses and consumers."

According to experts, the lineup of CEOs from some of the US' most influential companies sends a clear signal that despite years of tariff impositions, export controls and heated talks of decoupling, China remains a highly significant market for US businesses.

"The economic gravity between the two countries remains immense," said Chen Wenling, a senior researcher at the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies. "Even as trade tensions and geopolitical risks cast a shadow, the fundamental forces of China-US complementarity have not disappeared."

Chen noted that the US leads in financial markets and retains significant high-tech advantages, while China's edge in market scale, supply chain depth and rapid innovation is equally real.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said: "If you just say they're the two largest economies, you're missing the most important part. They're also the two most dynamic and most innovative economies."

"It is when you add the innovation and dynamism pieces that you truly recognize the need for the two countries to find ways to work together more effectively," Stein said.

Data released in November by the Chinese embassy in the US showed that more than 80,000 US companies have invested in China, while 7,000 Chinese firms operate in the US.

On Wednesday, a spokesperson for the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade said that the council welcomes representatives from the US business community to visit China, adding that there is plenty of scope for, and tremendous potential in, practical cooperation between Beijing and Washington.

"We look forward to the business communities of both countries further deepening exchanges and cooperation, and making new contributions to the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations," said the spokesperson.

In addition to the companies in the delegation, US businesses across industries continue to demonstrate their confidence in the Chinese market through tangible action.

Henry Ding, president of 3M China, said: "In recent years, 3M has continued to expand its domestic manufacturing footprint, strengthen local R&D innovation capabilities, and accelerate the localization of its full value chain in China, spanning R&D, testing and manufacturing."

He added that today, more than 50 percent of the products 3M sells in China are manufactured locally.

Ding said that 3M China will continue to increase its local R&D investment this year and plans to achieve more than 30 percent growth in new product launches compared with 2025, significantly outpacing other global markets.

Ian Shih, president of Rockwell Automation China, said that China's vast market, complete industrial ecosystem and continued high-level opening-up provide strong support for companies seeking long-term growth and diversified application opportunities.

At the 8th China International Import Expo held in Shanghai last November, US companies claimed the largest exhibition area, with their pavilions collectively covering more than 50,000 square meters, marking the seventh consecutive year that US companies have led all foreign participants.

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Collaboration in energy sector expected to expand

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Expanding energy ties between China and the United States will contribute to broader bilateral economic cooperation amid shifting global market dynamics, industry experts said.

Liu Jia, chief expert at the Economics & Technology Research Institute, a think tank of China National Petroleum Corp, or CNPC, said that the world's two largest economies share a complementary dynamic, with the US' energy export growth aligning with China's substantial market demand.

The push for closer cooperation comes as the US rapidly expands its liquefied natural gas infrastructure, with export capacity projected to reach 150 million metric tons per year by 2028, according to the research institute.

Liu said that this expansion creates a structural necessity for partnerships, as new US liquefaction projects require the security of long-term buyers to obtain necessary financing and make final investment decisions. "China offers the world's most predictable demand growth, providing the scale needed to anchor these US infrastructure investments," he said.

According to figures released by the institute, China imported 68.43 million tons of LNG in 2025 and is expected to maintain its position as the world's top LNG importer this year.

This synergy has already been evident in the market for years, with major Chinese State-owned enterprises such as China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, or Sinopec, and CNPC signing long-term purchase agreements with leading US exporters, including Cheniere Energy and Venture Global LNG.

According to the institute, energy has always been an important component of the broader trade balance between the two nations, highlighting the sector's role in addressing trade disparities.

In addition to direct trade, the two countries have also established investment links.

US oil major ExxonMobil began operating its mega ethylene project in Huizhou, Guangdong province, last year. It is one of the largest foreign investment projects in China, and the first major petrochemical project constructed in China solely by a US company.

According to Liu, US and Chinese companies have jointly invested nearly $200 billion in third-party oil and gas projects across the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa.

To maintain this momentum, Liu suggested that both sides should expand cooperation into emerging fields such as energy storage and power grid technology.

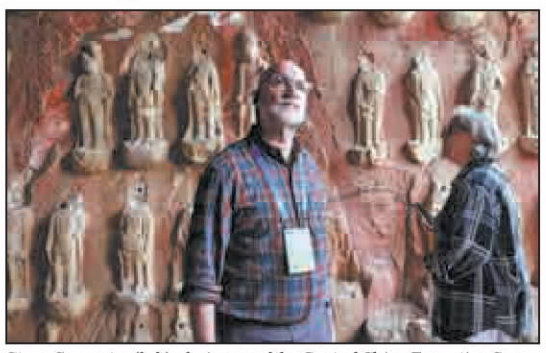
Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University, said that stable and predictable energy trade has provided an important area of mutual benefit.

As China's demand is predictable and the US supply is expanding, energy can serve as a bridge through which both sides can achieve tactical gains, Lin said.

Experts also recommended strengthening ties in traditional industrial sectors, including the supply of chemical feedstocks such as ethane and propane, as well as uranium mining.

"Establishing regular dialogue mechanisms between think tanks and industry bodies in both countries will be essential for stabilizing market expectations and deepening mutual consensus," said Liu from the Economics & Technology Research Institute. "This framework is necessary to ensure that energy cooperation remains a robust cornerstone of the bilateral relationship, even amid broader geopolitical shifts and profound changes in the global landscape," he added.

Heritage tour



Steve Carpenter (left), chairman of the Central China Executive Committee of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, admires carvings at the Thousand Buddha Cliff in Guangyuan, Sichuan province, on March 25. More than 30 scholars and business representatives from China and the United States explored this largest grotto complex in Sichuan, which boasts over 7,000 Buddhist statues. The work started in the late Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) and flourished during the Tang Dynasty (618-907). WANG LEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Visit: Both sides should be beacons for building bridges

From page 1

I have advocated, over decades, that the best way for the US to compete with China is to invest in our own people, infrastructure, technology and education, rather than trying to "knock China down". Pushing a strategy to hold China back will be as effective as starting to build a chain-link fence as a tsunami is coming ashore.

Worldwide, people are closely watching the development of the US-China interaction, hoping that agreements would be reached to promote a more stable world order.

China-US economic and trade cooperation has brought benefits and challenges to both countries for over half a century.

We are at an inflection point. A miscalculation or mistake will have a devastating global impact.

While we need to continue to work toward building sensible economic, cultural and military ties, it is vital that China and the US continue to follow a seven Cs framework to help manage this delicate bilateral relationship, which is critical to the world:

Worldwide, people are closely watching the development of the US-China interaction, hoping that agreements would be reached to promote a more stable world order.

- Communication (Open, high-level and subnational channels)
- Collaboration (On global issues like health and climate)
- Cooperation (To seek win-win solutions)
- Coordination (On regional and global issues)
- Competition (Managed and constructive)
- Contextual Understanding (Grasping the history and perspectives of both nations)
- Avoiding confrontation, conflict and casualties

As the 21st century unfolds, both the US and China should be the beacons for building bridges.

It is imperative that we find ways to develop a shared vision and common agenda in areas that are in our collective national interests while we have open dialogue on topics where we disagree.

Chinese and US activists, not just governments, should work to create and endow a robust international exchange, a people-to-people organization that connects students, artists, writers, athletes, tourists, educators, health and behavioral healthcare professionals, poets, sub-national government officials and NGOs between our two countries to listen, to understand and build bridges that will help sustain peace and prosperity for all.

These kinds of global connections lay the groundwork for meaningful dialogues, thoughtful synergy, mutual respect, joint prosperity and peaceful collaboration.

We need to get along and jointly prosper peacefully.

The author was deputy chief of staff to former Michigan governor James Blanchard, president and CEO of the economic council of Palm Beach County, Florida. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Summit: Cooperation is a realistic choice

From page 1

In March 2024, when meeting in Beijing with representatives from the US business, strategic and academic communities, Xi said that whether the two countries can find the right way to get along bears on the well-being of the two peoples and the future of humanity.

Sun said the most immediate benefit of a stable and predictable China-US relationship is that it reduces uncertainty for both sides.

"If tensions continue to rise, those affected first are often not abstract strategic interests, but ordinary businesses, farmers, consumers, international students and researchers," Sun said.

He added that trade barriers would push up costs, technology restrictions would narrow the space for innovation cooperation, and fewer people-to-people exchanges would weaken mutual understanding between the two societies.

Beyond the bilateral level, China-US cooperation is also closely watched in terms of its implications for global governance at a time when the world faces sluggish growth, geopolitical tensions and mounting challenges requiring international coordination.

In Busan last year, Xi told Trump: "The world today is confronted with many tough problems. China and the US can jointly shoulder our responsibility as major countries, and work together to accomplish more great and concrete things for the good of our two countries and the whole world."

According to Sun, many global challenges — from climate change and artificial intelligence to public health, financial stability and regional security — cannot be effectively addressed without sustained communication between the two countries.

Zhu, of Bucknell University, echoed that view, saying that if the two most powerful nations cannot get along well, the global economy will suffer and international cooperation on critical issues such as climate change and AI governance will become difficult.

The resilience of the relationship also depends on whether the two societies can maintain direct contact and mutual understanding.

David Chong, founder and president of the US-China Youth and Student Exchange Association, said that he has become increasingly aware that keeping the giant ship of China-US relations moving steadily requires joint efforts from both countries at all levels.

Since 2015, Chong's association has helped bring more than 2,000 young Americans to China for exchange programs. Through activities ranging from cultural and sports exchanges to experiencing cutting-edge technologies such as artificial intelligence, young Americans have been able to see, hear and experience China firsthand in concrete and everyday settings.

"People-to-people organizations may not be in the 'cockpit' of the giant ship," Chong said, "but they can serve as 'connectors' and 'road builders' by strengthening the cultural and social foundation for the steady development of China-US relations".

Sun, the researcher, said that cooperation remains the most realistic and responsible choice.

"The reason is simple: Competition cannot erase interdependence, and differences cannot eliminate shared risks," Sun said. "China and the US cannot expect a voyage without winds and waves, but they must not allow the storms to decide the course."

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SINO-US SUMMIT

Summit to chart path for Sino-US ties

Head-of-state diplomacy essential for restoring trade stability: Experts

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By **BELINDA ROBINSON** in New York and **RENA LI** in Los Angeles

As the heads of state of the world's two largest economies start their meetings in Beijing this week, trade experts and economists said they expected the summit to chart the course for the future of bilateral ties and help restore stability to global trade.

Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump will meet in Beijing, as Trump arrived on Wednesday for a three-day state visit to China.

China said on Monday that it was ready to work with the United States to expand cooperation, manage differences and inject more stability and certainty into a turbulent and changing world.

During a Port of Los Angeles media briefing on Monday, former US trade representative Katherine Tai described the meeting as "a really important moment for the US-China trade relationship".

Responding to a China Daily question on what is most needed to help reduce global uncertainty surrounding tariffs, supply chains and broader trade relations — including lower tariffs, clearer rules, or greater predictability — Tai, who served as the principal trade adviser and negotiator on US trade policy during the administration of former president Joe Biden, emphasized the importance of policy clarity and long-term planning.

"I think that what we need most — and I say 'we' in the real collective sense, because this relationship impacts everybody around the world — is some clarity around the principles that the United States wants to put out there and to enforce in the relationship with China," Tai said.

She said uncertainty in recent trade policies and market expectations has affected governments, businesses and global supply chains, adding that clearer communication and more consistent policy direction would help support long-term economic planning and cooperation.

Tai further noted that strategic pressure alone cannot sustain a functional trade relationship despite the fact that both nations have the capability to "choke" each other in strategic sectors.

"Once you have each other's attention, then you actually need to have an agenda and a plan in place for the short term, the medium term and the long term, for making this very important, complicated and challenged trade relationship work," Tai said.

Jerry Nickelsburg, director & senior economist at the UCLA Anderson Forecast, said the meeting between Chinese and US leaders could help provide a more stable environment even as longer-term shifts continue.

Despite recent adjustments in global trade flows, the interdependence of the two markets remains significant. China continues to serve as the third-largest export market for the United States, following Canada and Mexico, according to US trade figures.

"There seems to be an interest in preserving the stability of the current situation in US-China economic relations on both sides," Nickelsburg said.

Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, said that Chinese factories and exporters continue to operate steadily despite ongoing trade tensions.

Mitigating uncertainty

During recent visits to Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, Seroka noted that order volumes remained stable, even as China expanded its exports to other global trading partners to mitigate uncertainty.

Jim Sutter, CEO of the US Soybean Export Council, expressed hope that the meeting would reaffirm China's purchase of US agricultural goods, including soybeans, calling soybeans an "important indicator" of the strengthening ties between the two nations.

US industry leaders and local officials have echoed the call for cooperation.

Jeffery Jones, chairman of the Council for Trade and Investment Promotion in New Jersey, said that trade and business development should remain a priority.

"I'm a former mayor. On the political side of things, I don't have to go to the presidential level to say that from one town to another, municipal level, if we don't work together, nothing good happens," he added.

Daniel Mabey, Asia Region President for the United Natural Products Alliance, noted that because China is a major supply chain partner for numerous industries, it is essential that "dialogue continues and continues to move forward" to get the relationship back on a productive track.

"Most of the US-China relationship is based on trade and China is a big supply chain partner for a lot of industries, not just our industry," Mabey said.

"I used to live in Beijing for a long time ... I have had lots of industry dialogue. We need to get the tracks straightened again and work together."

Contact the writers at belindarobinson@chinadailyusa.com.

A visitor interacts with a robot from the Chinese robotics company Fourier during the 2026 Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, the United States, on Jan 8. The 2026 CES, the world's premier technology event, attracted thousands of exhibitors from more than 155 countries and regions, according to the US Consumer Technology Association, the organizer of CES. ZENG HUI / XINHUA

Eye on the ball



Enthusiasts from the US visit a pickleball production company in Shangyou county in Jiangxi province, on Sunday. The county has launched a comprehensive three-year plan for 2024 to 2026 that includes 13 million yuan ($1.8 million) in subsidies to support the sport and a special fund for hosting tournaments. ZHU HAIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Leaders' interactions offer 'irreplaceable strategic guidance' for US-China ties

By **ZHAO HUANXIN** in New York
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Beijing's top envoy in Washington has said that interactions between the heads of state provide "irreplaceable strategic guidance" for China-US ties, expressing hope that this week's summit will be a "successful one" that will chart the "right course" for future relations.

At the invitation of Chinese President Xi Jinping, US President Donald Trump is visiting China from Wednesday to Friday.

In an interview with Newsweek published on Tuesday, Ambassador Xie Feng said that with the joint efforts of both sides, the summit will hopefully see the two countries expand cooperation and properly manage differences, while exploring ways to get along in the "new era" based on mutual respect and peaceful coexistence.

"In an increasingly turbulent world, the strategic value of China-US relations becomes more prominent," Xie said. "A stable and constructive China-US relationship not only serves the fundamental interests of both our peoples, but also meets the shared expectation of the international community."

On the Taiwan question, Xie said that he believed the American people, who faced the danger of division and had a civil war in the past, can understand China's will and determination to safeguard national unity.

The Chinese side urges the US side to commit to the one-China principle, the three China-US joint communiques with concrete actions, make the right choice as early as possible, fundamentally remove the biggest obstacle to China-US relations, which is the Taiwan question — a burden that risks dragging the two countries into confrontation and conflict — and open up broader room for developing bilateral ties, Xie said.

Xie also said that history has proven once and again that a tariff war or trade war produces no winner, damages the interests of both sides, and hurts the whole world.

He noted that under the guidance of the two leaders, China and the United States have reached a series of common understandings through economic and trade consultations, and have stabilized bilateral economic and trade relations.

"This has not come easily and should be cherished. But it is still far from enough. We hope the US side will move further ahead and completely remove the unilateral tariffs and other restrictive measures," he said.

Xie said competition between the United States and China should be viewed as a "track-and-field race toward mutual excellence" rather than a "zero-sum boxing match".

"Let our two countries compete to offer more public goods to the world, to better help developing nations reduce and eliminate poverty, and to contribute more to the sustained and inclusive development of the global economy," the envoy said.

Turning to the fentanyl issue, Xie noted that the fentanyl crisis in the US was not created by China, but "out of the humanitarian spirit and for the sake of China-US friendship", China is providing assistance to combat the "common enemy of humanity".

He noted the current US administration has strengthened legislation, law enforcement and regulatory control to combat fentanyl, and the number of fentanyl-related deaths in the US has dropped by 37.5 percent, to which China also made important and positive contributions.

He urged Washington to appreciate and cherish China's goodwill, view bilateral cooperation outcomes in a just manner, stop shifting the blame for the fentanyl issue, avoid imposing alternative tariffs as substitutes for fentanyl-related tariffs, and remove China from the list of so-called "major drug source countries" as soon as possible.

On artificial intelligence, Xie said that the world does not want to see an "Iron Curtain" in AI, nor attempts at technological enclosure, let alone a Star Wars-style rivalry.

"China-US coordination on AI bears on the future of both our countries and the entire humanity. We hope the US side will work with us in the same direction, to enhance dialogue, manage competition and conduct cooperation, so that AI will become a new frontier for China-US cooperation and a new ladder for human progress," Xie said.

Chinese Americans welcome leaders' meeting

By **LIA ZHU** and **CHELSEA GE** in San Francisco

US President Donald Trump's state visit to Beijing from Wednesday to Friday, the first visit to China by a US president in nine years, has sparked enthusiasm among Chinese Americans, who view the meeting between the two heads of state as an important moment for dialogue, cooperation, and understanding between the two countries.

During the visit, Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump are expected to have in-depth discussions on major issues, including China-US relations, world peace and international development.

"I'm excited at this opportunity for President Trump to go to China and visit President Xi," Phillip Chen, a California Assembly member, told China Daily. "I believe that this world right now is a very large village, and that the relationship between China and the United States will continue to blossom."

"I personally think that as it stands right now, we've been cooperating for many, many years. We have to make sure that we work closely together to make sure that our mutual interests are served sufficiently," he said, adding that he hoped the meeting would help open up opportunities for more exchanges and cooperation.

William Zhang, a San Francisco-based community leader and an ardent advocate for peaceful cross-Strait relations, called the meeting "a long-awaited conversation between the two heads of state".

"President Trump will hopefully learn firsthand how much importance the Chinese government places on the peaceful reunification of the nation," he said, adding that Washington should uphold the one-China principle. "It is a prerequisite for the stable and healthy development of China-US relations," Zhang said.

Lei Wang, a Chinese culture advocate in Southern California, sees the leaders' meeting as an opportunity to promote and expand understanding of Chinese culture at the federal level.

"This is a good thing. There's a popular song in China right now called *Better to Meet in Person* and I believe that a meeting between the two countries' leaders will help deepen mutual understanding," he told China Daily.

Wang, also a small-business owner, said he hoped the meeting would help promote business interaction, trade activities and business investment between the two countries.

California, located on the Pacific coast, is an important gateway for Chinese goods entering the US, said Wang. "If China-US relations aren't good and trade relations don't flow smoothly, it will seriously affect California's foreign trade, imports and exports, which in turn affects many people's employment and how businesses operate."

"We need the trade to continue to support the employment and the society here in the US," Wang said. "Therefore, I really hope that both sides can deepen understanding in trade and economic relations, reach consensus, and push the relationship toward a more positive and stable direction."

Despite differences and frictions that have marked bilateral relations, Hu Lirong, CEO of CW Bearing USA, expressed confidence in dialogue between the presidents.

"These are challenges that can ultimately be worked through under the leadership of the two countries' leaders," he told China Daily.

Hu said the company has focused on localized operations, creating jobs for the community, with young employees accounting for about 30 percent of its workforce. He added that the company places strong emphasis on technical expertise and cross-cultural communication.

Chang Jun in San Francisco and Li Mingmei in New York contributed to this story.

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Observers in Europe pin hopes on dialogue

By **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Brussels
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As US President Donald Trump began his visit to China on Wednesday — his second state visit to China following his previous trip in November 2017 and his first during his second presidential term — European political and business figures are closely watching the bilateral relationship.

The meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and Trump comes at a time of heightened global uncertainty, marked by geopolitical tensions, economic fragmentation, supply chain disruptions and slowing growth across major economies. Some observers in Europe believe that stable China-US relations are increasingly seen not only as a bilateral necessity, but also as a prerequisite for global economic predictability and international stability.

Ondrej Dostal, a Czech member of the European Parliament, described Trump's visit as a recognition of China's global importance and of the limits of confrontation-based policies.

Dostal argued that unilateral pressure and economic coercion have undermined international trust and damaged global trade. The world needs stable trade, mutual respect, diplomacy, infrastructure, development, and coexistence between civilizations.

According to Dostal, the leaders' meeting may also encourage European governments to reassess their own approach toward China. "If even Washington now recognizes that it must negotiate with Beijing, then European governments should finally stop pretending that confrontation with China serves European interests," he said.

Former director-general for international affairs in the German state of Hessen Michael Borchmann said the meeting carries significance far beyond bilateral ties.

Quoting a US research institute's description of the meeting as "Managing the World's Most Important Relationship", Borchmann said the phrase "absolutely fits" the current geopolitical environment.

Enhancing communication

"At a time when the world is facing growing uncertainty and fragmentation, enhancing communication, managing differences and maintaining stable China-US relations also benefits the world," he said.

Borchmann said the meeting follows last year's temporary trade truce reached in Busan, South Korea, where both sides attempted to halt escalating tariff retaliation. He expressed hope that the meeting would deepen consensus on trade and issues including the Middle East and global development.

He also referenced Xi's long-standing emphasis on stable bilateral ties. "There are a thousand reasons to make the China-US relationship a success, but not a single reason to break it," Borchmann quoted Xi as saying.

From the European business community, Bernard Dewit, chairman of the Belgian-Chinese Chamber of Commerce, stressed the importance of constructive engagement between the world's two largest economies.

Speaking from a European perspective, Dewit described stable China-US relations as "very important" for global economic and geopolitical certainty.

He noted that many European countries are facing economic recovery challenges, inflationary pressures and security concerns, and said improved China-US ties could help reduce tensions, restore investor confidence and strengthen international cooperation.

Dewit also emphasized Europe's preference for dialogue over bloc confrontation. Europe, he said, does not want to see the world divided into opposing camps and instead supports multilateralism, predictability and strategic autonomy.

As the leaders' meeting unfolds in Beijing, many in Europe will be watching closely for signs that the two major powers can stabilize relations and provide a measure of certainty to an increasingly fragmented world.



SINO-US SUMMIT

Harley Seyedin

Strengthening bilateral ties for global stability

The relationship between the United States and China remains one of the most important bilateral relationships in the world. As US President Donald Trump is visiting Beijing, both countries have an opportunity to strengthen cooperation, stabilize economic ties and promote prosperity for their peoples and the global economy.

Despite years of trade tensions and tariffs, the two economies are deeply interconnected. Research by the Stanford Center on China's Economy and Institutions emphasizes that the two nations benefit enormously from trade, investment, innovation, and educational exchange.

US consumers and businesses benefit from affordable goods and integrated supply chains, while Chinese consumers and businesses benefit from access to US technology, agricultural products, financial services, and higher education.

Millions of jobs in both countries are linked directly or indirectly to this economic relationship.

One major development in recent years has been the significant reduction in the US-China trade deficit.

According to data from the Office of the US Trade Representative and the US Bureau of Economic Analysis, the US goods trade deficit with China fell to approximately $202.1 billion in 2025, down from $295.5 billion in 2024. This represents a 31.6 percent reduction in just one year.

The decline was due to changes in supply chains, increased domestic manufacturing in some sectors, diversification of trade partners, and evolving tariff policies. Yet even with these adjustments, bilateral trade remained enormous. Total China-US goods trade still exceeded $414 billion in 2025, demonstrating that the two economies continue to rely on each other in many areas.

Global Lens

By focusing on practical cooperation and long-term mutual benefit, the two countries can build a more positive and productive relationship that benefits not only themselves, but the entire world.

Trump's visit provides an opportunity to move beyond confrontation and toward practical cooperation.

Both nations share common interests in global economic stability, energy security, climate resilience, public health, artificial intelligence governance and financial market stability.

Cooperation between Washington and Beijing is not simply beneficial for US and Chinese citizens; it is essential for global growth and international confidence.

There are many areas where positive collaboration can expand. In agriculture, China remains an important market for US farmers exporting soybeans, corn, beef and other products. Increased agricultural purchases can help support rural communities across the US while ensuring food security and stable supplies for Chinese consumers.

In technology, both countries can cooperate on standards for AI safety, cybersecurity and advanced manufacturing. Joint research partnerships between universities and companies have historically produced breakthroughs in medicine, engineering and clean energy.

Climate and energy cooperation also present major opportunities. The US and China are the world's two largest economies and energy consumers.

By working together on renewable energy, battery storage, carbon reduction technologies, and electric vehicles, both countries can accelerate innovation while creating jobs and investment opportunities. Cooperation in these sectors could help reduce global emissions while improving energy affordability and reliability.

Educational and cultural exchanges are equally important. Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students have studied in US universities over the past two decades, contributing billions of dollars to local economies while building people-to-people ties.

Academic collaboration and tourism help reduce misunderstandings and strengthen mutual respect. Business leaders, students, scientists, and cultural organizations all benefit when relations are stable and constructive.

The global economy also benefits from open communication between the US and China. Financial markets react positively to signs of dialogue and predictability between the two powers.

Businesses on both sides want stable policies, clear regulations, and reduced uncertainty. A cooperative atmosphere encourages investment, strengthens supply chains, and supports economic growth worldwide.

While differences will remain on trade, security, and geopolitical issues, history shows that engagement produces better outcomes than isolation. Strong diplomacy and mutual respect can help manage disagreements while preserving areas of common interest. The US and China are competitors in some areas, but they are also partners in maintaining global prosperity and stability.

Trump's visit could become an important moment to reset the tone of the relationship.

Constructive discussions on trade, investment, market access and economic cooperation could create new momentum for both nations.

The US and Chinese peoples both seek economic opportunity, stable growth, innovation, and peace.

By focusing on practical cooperation and long-term mutual benefit, the two countries can build a more positive and productive relationship that benefits not only themselves, but the entire world.

The author is the president of the American Chamber of Commerce in South China, and the winner of the 2017 Oslo Business for Peace Award, which is awarded by a committee consisting of Nobel laureates in peace and economics. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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Jack Midgley

When friends far away can share daily life in real time

Young Chinese creators on Xiaohongshu post a smart study nook or a city workout routine, and peers from the United States quickly take notice.

They borrow the idea, tweak it for their own lives, and share it right back.

This digital back-and-forth links millions of young people, quietly building the trust and practical know-how that enables real innovation.

Global Lens



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

These are the new "people-to-people" exchanges. They happen daily without long flights or months of planning.

Free, effortless and constant, these digital connections are shaping an inclusive future of innovation among people in China and the United States.

Presidents Xi Jinping and Donald Trump have an important opportunity to amplify these connections when they meet in Beijing.

Together, they can help transform the grassroots energy into productive China-US ties that are already growing at the speed of digital connections.

Xiaohongshu's explosive growth brings this to life. The platform's lifestyle content routinely generates massive engagement domestically, while its cross-border search functionality has captured a multi-million-strong audience in the US.

US students respond to Chinese posts with duets and adaptations, often tagging back with comments like "Xiaohongshu changed my set-up!" as tips on lighting, storage, and focus zones flow freely.

President Xi captured the heart of this dynamic when he said that the hope of China-US relations lies in the people.

The numbers reinforce this statement. Xiaohongshu racked up around 3.7 million US downloads in early 2025 and is projected to hit double digit millions this year, while already serving over 300 million monthly users worldwide.

A vast majority of these users are young people.

TikTok connects with 170 million US users, many of them young people sharing news and ideas, while in 2026 duets between Chinese and US creators have attracted hundreds of millions of views.

These platforms keep the innovative exchanges flowing constantly and cheaply, shrugging off diplomatic ups and downs in the relationship.

Miranda Qu, Xiaohongshu's co-founder, laid the groundwork for this trend by turning community input into viral lifestyle solutions that now draw global audiences.

The platform stands out because young Chinese creators blend personal stories with actionable advice on focus-boosting study setups, apartment-friendly fitness routines, and smart daily hacks.

US youth have joined in, blending Chinese precision with their own creative twists to build sharper, more intentional habits on both sides of the Pacific.

These real people-to-people exchanges build habits of cross-cultural innovation.

TikTok's Khaby Lame adds speed to the mix with his silent takedowns of overcomplicated life hacks that resonate universally, while Xiaohongshu provides the depth that makes these exchanges truly transformative.

What makes these digital exchanges so potent is their role in providing the secret sauce of innovation: an intuitive feel for what clicks with users.

When a Chinese creator's dorm organization trick reshapes a US student's space, or Khaby's simplicity sharpens a video edit, they are co-creating that shared sense in real time.

A joint summit statement pledging support for digital youth exchanges would encourage young people both from China and the US to build on today's rapidly-growing interactions.

The benefits can go far beyond feel-good moments.

These connections humanize people on both sides of the Pacific and equip the next generation with important skills to tackle global opportunities such as climate tech, supply chains, artificial intelligence and even the exploration of space.

Above all, they demonstrate that real cooperation can hum along even when global politics does not.

Curiosity has a way of outpacing the need for total agreement every time.

The real story of China and US relations is playing out on screens everywhere.

Young creators are already linking people and cultures across the Pacific.

The summit of the two leaders is helping to endorse those bridges and ensure they grow into the enduring ties that define a bright future for the countries that young people will lead one day.

The author is principal consultant at Midgley & Company and an adjunct associate professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Zhu Feng

Only cooperation with China serves US interests

US President Donald Trump's visit to China, and expected head-of-state meetings, are drawing a lot of attention at a time when the world is seeing conflicts in Ukraine and the Strait of Hormuz. A key task for both Beijing and Washington is to sustain a stable, manageable and enduring bilateral relationship.

Although geopolitical experts often refer to the "Thucydides Trap" theory — a phenomenon whereby a rising power can cause fear in an established power, escalating to war — to interpret Sino-US relations, China has taken a different approach.

This is evident in the strategies it employed to counter the tariff war initiated by Washington last year, and its vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, which is supported by four global initiatives and guided by principles of mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

This approach has worked, producing steady, positive outcomes in bilateral interactions, while acting as a stabilizing force in a turbulent, ever-changing world.

In this context, Washington should take advantage of the opportunity for dialogue presented by the US leader's visit, to seek closer cooperation with China.

While some in the US who view China as their greatest "strategic competitor" and seek to contain it have done little to conceal their intentions, the broader trend of China-US exchanges and collaboration remains unstoppable.

This disconnect on the US side needs to be addressed with an objective understanding of Beijing.

After the US Supreme Court ruled in February that the US administration's imposition of reciprocal tariffs on trading partners under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act was illegal, the US side levied an additional 10 percent import surcharge on all trading partners under Section 122 of the Trade Act of 1974.

As the Chinese side has repeatedly emphasized, China and the US need to enable each other's success as interests converge and pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

The US also introduced a series of negative measures concerning China, including the Section 301 investigations, aimed at undermining China's production capacity advantages and reducing dependence on Chinese industry and supply chains.

However, Washington should have been aware that, given China's 35 percent share of global industrial output, a rapid and complete decoupling is unattainable.

Although the US administration is trying to keep a relatively low profile on the Taiwan question and disputes in the South China Sea, its arms sales to the Chinese island in late 2025 were the largest since 1979.

Additionally, joint military exercises with the Philippines and other external forces in the South China Sea have significantly increased in frequency.

The US should not treat softened rhetoric as a short-term, tactical measure to stabilize bilateral relations.

A US-led rare earths supply alliance designed to reduce dependence on China's rare earths is closely tied to technological innovation and access to critical resources. The same is true of Washington's ambition to revitalize and expand its manufacturing sector.

However, the path to "make America great again" is not necessarily contradictory to China's great rejuvenation. China's significant growth potential, as revealed in its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), can offer US enterprises many opportunities to cooperate with their Chinese counterparts.

For China-US relations to continue providing mutual economic benefits, fostering exchanges across various social sectors, and enhancing complementary security through normal engagement and cooperation, the US side needs to foster a correct perception of China within its broader strategic framework.

Despite some challenges, Sino-US relations have remained generally stable, thanks to head-of-state diplomacy, with the two leaders maintaining frequent communication and dialogue, and recalibrating the direction of ties at critical junctures.

As the Chinese side has repeatedly emphasized, China and the US need to enable each other's success as interests converge, and to pursue mutually beneficial cooperation.

Both China and the US should make mutual respect the cornerstone, peaceful coexistence the principle and win-win cooperation the goal.

This approach will help the two countries explore the appropriate way to interact, jointly contributing to global peace and stability.

China will never follow the obsolete model of a country seeking hegemony when growing stronger. It will instead remain committed to peaceful development.

Beijing hopes that Washington can respect China's core interests and work together to properly manage differences.

In a world facing increasing turmoil, a stable China-US relationship not only serves the fundamental interests of both nations but also aligns with the widespread expectations of the international community.

The author is the dean and a professor of the School of International Studies, Nanjing University. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Star power



From left: New Zealand filmmaker Peter Jackson, United States actor Elijah Wood, Chinese actress Gong Li, US actress Jane Fonda and South Korean director Park Chan-wook wave during the opening ceremony and premiere screening of *The Electric Kiss* at the 79th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, France, on Tuesday. SAMEER AL-DOUMY / AFP

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Iran hardens stance on strait

Tehran moves to draft new regulations for key waterway as oil flows dwindle

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

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said on Tuesday that Tehran is currently in consultations to develop regulations governing arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz based on international law.

Araghchi made the remark during a meeting in Tehran with Norway's Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik, formalizing what senior officials have been signaling in recent weeks — that Iran intends to establish a new legal order for the waterway.

Last month, International Maritime Organization Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez said that countries have no right to blockade international straits or impede the freedom of navigation through straits used for international transit.

Iran's arrangements for the Strait of Hormuz could face setbacks as a United Nations Security Council draft resolution calling for freedom of navigation in the strait is gaining traction with 112 cosponsors, Al Jazeera reported on Wednesday.

Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Kuwait have joined Bahrain and the United States as principal sponsors, according to the report. India, Japan, South Korea, Kenya, Argentina and most European Union member states have also signed on, it added.

More than one month after a tenuous ceasefire took effect, US and Iranian demands to end the war remain far apart.

Washington has called for Tehran to scrap its nuclear program and lift its chokehold on the strait, while Iran has demanded compensation for war damage, an end to the US blockade and a halt to fighting on all fronts, including in Lebanon.

The Lebanese Health Ministry said Israeli drones struck three vehicles on the main highway south of Beirut on Wednesday, killing eight people, including a woman and her two children.

Iran has urged the United States and Israel to accept its rights and demands, warning that any new aggression would be met with a swift and regretful response.

Iranian Brigadier General Reza Talaei-Nik told reporters that the US and Israel would have to submit to Iran's legitimate and definitive rights, either on the battlefield or at the diplomatic table.

"If the enemy does not yield to Iran's rightful demands in diplomacy, it should expect a repeat of its past defeats on the military field," Talaei-Nik said, the Mehr News Agency reported.

The conflict is weighing heavily on global energy markets. Global oil supply will fall by around 3.9 million barrels per day across 2026 and undershoot demand because of disruptions caused by the crisis, the International Energy Agency said on Wednesday, with more than 1 billion barrels of Middle East supply already lost.

Brent crude futures edged down slightly to around $107 per barrel, after a three-day rally driven by the Hormuz deadlock.

Energy deals

Meanwhile, Iraq and Pakistan have cut deals with Iran to ship oil and liquefied natural gas from the Gulf, according to five sources with knowledge of the matter, Reuters reported.

In a deal between Baghdad and Tehran that has not been previously reported, Iraq secured safe passage for two very large crude carriers, each carrying about 2 million barrels of crude, that passed through the strait on Sunday.

Iraq is working to secure Iran's approval for more transits, an Iraqi oil ministry official familiar with the initial deal and current talks told Reuters, as the government seeks to safeguard the oil revenues that make up 95 percent of its budget.

A second ministry official and a shipping industry source also confirmed the talks with Tehran. All of the sources requested anonymity as they were not authorized to speak on the matter.

Similarly, two tankers loaded with Qatari liquefied natural gas are headed to Pakistan following a separate bilateral agreement between Islamabad and Tehran, two industry sources with knowledge of the matter told Reuters, also asking not to be named as they were not permitted to speak with media.

In another development, the Arab League urged Iran on Tuesday to cease all hostile acts against Arab states and condemned the alleged infiltration of the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps into Kuwait's Bubiyan Island, which resulted in the injury of one of the Kuwait Armed Forces' personnel.

Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit said the armed infiltration of Kuwaiti territory "constitutes a dangerous precedent that cannot be tolerated and represents a serious escalation".

Iran's Foreign Ministry rejected the claims as "baseless", saying four Iranian officers had entered Kuwait's territorial waters because of a navigation system disruption during a routine maritime patrol mission and called on Kuwaiti authorities to resolve the issue through official channels.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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US Senate approves Warsh to Federal Reserve board

NEW YORK — The United States Senate on Tuesday confirmed Kevin Warsh to a 14-year term as a Federal Reserve governor, marking a pivotal step toward his expected ascension as the next leader of the central bank.

The confirmation passed with a 51-45 vote. In a notable break from party lines, Senator John Fetterman of Pennsylvania was the sole Democrat to join the Republican majority in supporting the appointment. Warsh will succeed Stephen Miran on the board, with his term retroactively beginning on Feb 1.

Following the vote, the Senate immediately initiated the confirmation process for Warsh's concurrent four-year term as Fed chair. The transition comes as the term of incumbent Jerome Powell is set to expire on Friday.

Warsh, 56, is a lawyer and financier who previously served as a Federal Reserve governor from 2006 to 2011, playing a key role in navigating the global financial crisis during that time. His return to the board comes amid heightened scrutiny of the central bank's political independence.

Powell has announced he intends to remain on the board as a governor after his chairmanship ends, saying he plans to keep a low profile.



Kevin Warsh testifies on Capitol Hill in Washington on April 21 during his nomination hearing to be a member and chairman of the Federal Reserve Board of Governors. JOSE LUIS MAGANA / AP

For his part, Warsh signaled a shift in direction for the Fed, calling for "regime change". His proposed strategy includes tighter coordination with the Treasury Department and the administration on nonmonetary policies.

However, the economic landscape remains challenging. A surge in global oil prices since the outbreak of the US-Israeli war against Iran has fueled domestic inflation, significantly dampening investor expectations for rate cuts this year.

Financial markets are currently pricing in a one-in-three chance of a rate hike by December. The Fed's current target range for short-term borrowing costs stands at 3.5 percent to 3.75 percent.

The Federal Open Market Committee is scheduled to hold its next policy-setting meeting on June 16-17.

Data released on Tuesday by the Bureau of Labor Statistics showed US prices for most goods and services surged in April.

The Consumer Price Index increased at a seasonally adjusted 0.6 percent month-on-month and 3.8 percent year-on-year. Stripping out food and energy, the core CPI ticked up 0.4 percent and 2.8 percent, respectively.

The year-on-year headline rate of inflation hit the highest level since May 2023.

Analysts said the war in Iran is to blame, as prices have increased because of higher oil prices stemming from the situation in the Strait of Hormuz, through which some 20 percent of the world's oil flows.

Dean Baker, cofounder of the Center for Economic and Policy Research, said the war has sent oil prices higher and "we are beginning to see ripple effects in other areas".

"Prices are now outpacing wages, meaning that workers are on average worse off than they were a year ago," he said.

XINHUA

Australia extends EV tax breaks as fuel fears grow

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Australia has extended an electric vehicle purchase incentive program as it aims to cut dependence on fossil fuels amid the Middle East crisis, a move expected to benefit Chinese automakers that have been gaining ground in the country in recent years.

The federal budget, unveiled by Treasurer Jim Chalmers on Tuesday, keeps in place current tax exemptions for EVs under the Electric Car Discount policy until March next year, before the discounts — which go back to July 2022 — are wound down starting April 2027.

The ongoing support for EVs is part of measures to strengthen "fuel resilience", as the conflict in the Middle East has been "pushing up prices, pushing down growth, and punishing Australians", Chalmers said in his budget speech.

Hussein Dia, a professor of transport technology and sustainability at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, told China Daily that "one of the clearest signals" of the budget announcement is that "Australia is moving from early EV adoption toward a broader transport system transition".

"The focus is gradually expanding beyond short-term incentives toward longer-term resilience, infrastructure, productivity and energy security," Dia said.

"The continuation, but gradual recalibration, of the Electric Car Discount suggests the government believes the EV market is now maturing. The policy has played an important role in normalizing EVs in Australia and accelerating early uptake," he said.

Recent fuel disruptions and geopolitical uncertainty in global oil markets have also reinforced the importance of reducing dependence on imported liquid fuels, he added.

"In that sense, transport policy is increasingly becoming energy policy. Electrification is now being viewed not only through an environmental lens, but also through economic resilience and national security lenses," he said.

The continuation of the EV discount comes amid record sales, with EVs accounting for 16.4 percent of all new vehicle sales in Australia in April, according to the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries.

"The Electric Car Discount has provided important stimulus to the market, and its continuation will support the growth of EVs," the chamber's chief executive, Tony Weber, said.

Chinese players' role

The purchase incentive is expected to benefit Chinese automakers, which made up four of the top 10 selling brands in April, with one of BYD's best-selling EV models alone recording 1,780 units, or an increase of 139.6 percent year-on-year, according to the chamber.

Dia said Chinese EV makers are playing an increasingly important role in the Australian market.

"Brands such as BYD have helped expand the range of more affordable EV models available to Australian consumers, particularly during a cost-of-living period where price remains one of the biggest barriers to adoption," he said.

"Increased competition is helping make EVs more mainstream and accelerating the transition away from imported fossil fuels."

Aman Gaur, head of legal, policy and advocacy at the Electric Vehicle Council, likewise referred to the growing role of Chinese carmakers in Australia, which has a "competitive automotive market with over 60 brands providing a variety of cars for all lifestyles".

"Chinese manufacturers have added more options for Australians with a great range of electric cars on offer," he said.

Labour divisions in UK overshadow King's Speech

By JULIAN SHEA in London
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United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer sought to shift the focus from personalities to policy on Wednesday as the King's Speech to Parliament set out his government's legislative agenda for the coming year.

The speech, written by the government but delivered with royal pageantry by King Charles III, outlined new initiatives on energy security, defense, immigration and education reform, but it was the internal wranglings of the governing Labour Party that continued to dominate the headlines across the UK.

Starmer, who has been in office for less than two years, has faced mounting pressure following Labour's dismal performance in last week's local elections, with his leadership being picked out as one of the main causes of voter rejection.

On Tuesday, four ministers resigned in protest against Starmer's continued leadership. The most high-profile departure was Health Secretary Wes Streeting, widely regarded as a serious contender to replace him.

Another possible candidate would be Andy Burnham, though the Greater Manchester mayor would first need to return to Parliament before mounting a leadership bid, likely requiring a sitting Labour lawmaker to vacate a seat and trigger a by-election.

On Wednesday morning, Streeting was called in to Starmer's Downing Street office for a face-to-face meeting, leaving less than 20 minutes later.

Around lunchtime, The Daily Telegraph reported that Streeting was set to quit his post, with an ally saying he was "going to go for it" after the meeting, and that a leadership contest could be triggered as soon as Thursday.

Starmer's spokesperson, meanwhile, told reporters on Wednesday that "the prime minister has full confidence in the health secretary".

The BBC's political editor, Chris Mason, quoted a Starmer loyalist as saying that Streeting lacked sufficient backing to trigger a formal leadership challenge, while Burnham "doesn't have a seat, for all this noise". "Wes has bottled it and caused massive damage and instability in the process," the ally added.

Sky News reported that more than 100 Labour lawmakers have added their names to a letter saying the party needs to focus on "working together to deliver the change the country needs … this is no time for a leadership contest", but it is believed that around 90 others have come out and called on Starmer to go.

In a further blow to his authority, 11 major trade unions affiliated with the Labour Party have issued a joint statement calling the local election results "devastating", and saying they have no confidence in Starmer's continued leadership.

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COMMENT

Editorials

China ready to work with US in spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit

While global turbulence does not always stem from shifts in major-country relations, stable and healthy ties between the world's two largest economies can help facilitate the easing of international turmoil as their intertwined economic relationship is a stabilizer for the world economy.

Under such circumstances, US President Donald Trump's state visit to China from Wednesday to Friday has naturally attracted wide attention as head-of-state diplomacy plays an irreplaceable and strategically vital role in guiding China-US ties.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Wednesday, China welcomes Trump's visit, during which the two leaders will have in-depth exchanges of views on key issues concerning bilateral ties and global peace and development.

The Sino-US economic and trade consultations held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday also serve to highlight the two sides' commitment to managing their differences through dialogue and negotiation. The candid, in-depth and constructive exchanges on economic and trade issues of mutual concern, as well as on further expanding practical cooperation, carry on the momentum of the previous six rounds of talks and show the complementarity of Sino-US economic ties.

It is precisely this pragmatism that — despite their differences — has enabled practical cooperation between China and the United States to continue demonstrating vitality and potential under the guidance of head-of-state diplomacy over the past years — even in the face of attempts by some to derail it.

The business delegation led by Trump on his visit to China, which consists of business leaders of some big-name companies in a wide range of strategic sectors, including semiconductors, finance and artificial intelligence, further illustrates the willingness of the US business community to expand mutually beneficial cooperation with China.

The two countries possess broad space for cooperation in fields such as AI, health, green development, advanced manufacturing and supply-chain stability during China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period and beyond.

Experience has proved that China and the US stand to gain from cooperation and lose from confrontation. It is imperative that they strengthen their dialogue and cooperation in strategic sectors, particularly AI governance. The initiative on AI governance Beijing has put forward reflects China's commitment to promoting international cooperation on AI governance and ensuring that the era-defining technology benefits all humanity.

China's cooperative spirit is embodied in its four global initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative.

These initiatives underpin the country's international engagement across key areas, including its major-country diplomacy with the US. The four global initiatives respond to the common aspirations of the international community for peace, development, fairness, justice and mutual respect. And they are public goods China has contributed to advance world peace and development.

China does not seek spheres of influence, ideological confrontation or cliques. It should be clear that no country can address the grave global challenges the world faces today on its own, no matter how strong it is. Still less can any country achieve security through confrontation or "decoupling", not to mention at the cost of others' security or crossing others' red lines.

China supports multilateralism and an open world economy. Such concepts are rooted not only in China's diplomatic practices, but also in the principles of the modern international order established after World War II, including sovereign equality, peaceful coexistence and multilateral cooperation.

The world does not need a new Cold War — it needs peace and development achieved through dialogue and cooperation, grounded in responsible major-country diplomacy. When China and the US work together to promote peace, development and win-win cooperation, they serve not only their shared interests but also those of the entire world. Against this backdrop, Trump's visit to China has raised expectations that, even with their differences, China and the US can still engage in candid communication, expand practical cooperation and jointly shoulder responsibilities for global peace and development.

As Guo said in reply to questions about the first visit by a US president in nine years, China stands ready to work with the US in the spirit of equality, respect and mutual benefit — expanding cooperation and managing differences — so as to bring greater stability and certainty to the world.

The more volatile the world situation becomes, the more major countries should work together to function as stabilizers. China is willing to work with all countries, including the US, to strengthen communication, properly manage differences and deepen win-win cooperation.

Country's innovation boon to the world

China's continuous efforts in scientific and technological innovation and its high-standard opening-up are having marked effects on both its economy and international cooperation.

Recent data indicate a shift in China's manufacturing industry toward high-end production. This reflects the country's transition to innovation-driven growth.

The country has made rapid progress in the development of emerging industries, with some strategic sectors, including artificial intelligence, intelligent robots, integrated circuits, advanced materials, new energy and biomedicine, growing rapidly. Future industries, including quantum technology, biomanufacturing, hydrogen and nuclear fusion energy, brain-computer interfaces, embodied intelligence and 6G, are also gaining momentum.

The technological innovation in the field of AI is transforming the Chinese economy while having a profound effect globally. China is rapidly emerging as a major force in global AI advancement. As of early this year, the country's core AI industry was projected to be worth more than 1.2 trillion yuan ($176.71 billion), with an annual growth rate nearing 30 percent. China now holds 60 percent of the world's AI patents.

Chinese scientists unveiled six major achievements at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference that concluded on Wednesday in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. Among them was a generative genomic large model named Carbon, which is being hailed as the "DeepSeek" for the life sciences field due to its nearly hundredfold improvement in computational efficiency.

The rapid development of China's AI sector is bolstered by both policies and strategic planning. In the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), AI is identified as a key driver of new quality productive forces. The government has launched a comprehensive "AI Plus" initiative. This policy framework supports AI research and accelerates its application across sectors.

Thanks to the progress made, AI and other technologies are empowering industries across the board. China has established tens of thousands of "smart factories" nationwide and accounts for more than half of the global increase in industrial robot installations. According to the World Economic Forum, China now boasts the world's highest number of "lighthouse factories", accounting for 40 percent of the world's total. These factories employ cutting-edge technologies to achieve more efficient and sustainable production processes.

China's experience in applied AI, particularly in sectors such as manufacturing and healthcare, offers a reference for global industry transformation. The improvement in China's technological innovation capabilities has led to a substantial increase in its industrial competitiveness, enabling the country to transition from "running after" to "running together" and even "leading the way" in some fields. China's intelligent computing power was second only to the United States last year.

China's competitiveness in the open-source path for algorithmic models and its position in computing hardware capabilities further solidify its status as a major force in the AI industry.

The scale and network advantages of China's digital infrastructure are equally impressive. By 2025, the country had 4.84 million 5G base stations, accounting for about 60 percent of the world's total, and a staggering 74.99 million kilometers of optical fiber cables.

Additionally, as the world's largest producer of solar and wind power, China has a reliable and low-cost supply of green energy for power-intensive computing centers, further enhancing its role in the global AI ecosystem.

By sharing its innovation and experiences with the world, China is offering a new development path that emphasizes collaboration and openness, encouraging other countries to engage with AI in a way that promotes shared growth and mutual benefit. This is a vision of a connected world, where technology serves as a bridge rather than a barrier.

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Asier Sanz



Opinion Line

Collaboration, science effective defenses against hantavirus

The recent outbreak of the Andes hantavirus aboard the cruise ship MV *Hondius* is a reminder to the international community that humanity's battle against infectious diseases is far from over.

While the World Health Organization has assessed that the overall global public health risk is low, the incident has nevertheless triggered concern because the Andes virus is currently the only known hantavirus strain capable of limited human-to-human transmission.

As of early this week, multiple confirmed and suspected cases linked to the cruise ship have been reported across several countries, and multiple deaths were recorded. Coordinated by WHO and relevant national authorities, international medical evacuations, quarantine arrangements and contact-tracing efforts are underway.

China's disease-control authorities have responded promptly. According to the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, no cases of human infection with the Andes virus have been reported in China as of early this week, nor has any natural host capable of carrying the virus been identified within the country. Wang Shiwen, deputy director of the National Institute for Viral Disease Control and Prevention under China CDC, told the media that the risk of imported transmission and large-scale outbreaks in China remains extremely low.

Experts further clarified an important scientific fact often overlooked amid sensational headlines: human-to-human transmission is not a common characteristic of hantaviruses in general. Under normal circumstances, hantavirus infection mainly occurs through contact with infected rodents or exposure to contaminated urine, feces and saliva. While the Andes virus represents a rare exception, transmission generally requires close and prolonged contact in enclosed environments. Existing evidence indicates that such transmission remains limited and controllable with proper public health measures.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the international community has learned that panic, politicization and disinformation can spread faster than the virus itself, thus undermining global prevention and control efforts.

The current hantavirus incident once again demonstrates the importance of adhering to science in the face of disease outbreaks. Yet climate factors have made it harder to respond by expanding rodent habitats and extending transmission seasons. Countries must strengthen their early warning systems, improve cross-border information sharing and enhance emergency coordination mechanisms. Infectious diseases do not respect national boundaries. The multinational response surrounding the outbreak aboard MV *Hondius* illustrates the importance of timely information sharing among governments, public health agencies and international organizations.

Equally important is the need to uphold the coordinating role of the WHO. Throughout the current outbreak, WHO has worked within the framework of the International Health Regulations to facilitate information exchange, coordinate contact tracing and provide scientific risk assessments. WHO has consistently stressed that the overall public risk remains low while urging continued vigilance and monitoring.

Professionalism and multilateral coordination are precisely what the world needs to confront future health threats. Attempts to stigmatize countries, float conspiracy theories or undermine international cooperation would only weaken the collective capacity to respond effectively.

At the same time, the outbreak underscores the importance of strengthening public health literacy. Public health experts note that ordinary preventive measures — such as avoiding contact with rodents and contaminated environments, maintaining hygiene standards and seeking timely medical treatment if symptoms arise — remain effective. WHO's hantavirus guidance also highlights the importance of rodent control, sanitation and rapid clinical management. Severely unwell patients can significantly improve their prognosis through early intensive medical care.

Humanity has paid a heavy price during past pandemics. Only through scientific response, openness, solidarity and strengthened global governance can the world better safeguard public health security. The hantavirus outbreak should serve as another reminder that international cooperation and respect for science remain humanity's strongest defenses against infectious diseases.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Experience economy will help upgrade businesses

Editor's note: *China's experience market reached 18.4 trillion yuan ($2.7 trillion) in 2025, a 22.6 percent year-on-year increase. China.org.cn spoke to Wei Xiang, a researcher in the National Academy of Economic Strategy at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, about the development of the experience economy. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The shift from buying goods to buying experiences marks a structural evolution driven by a growing demand for personalized and emotionally resonant consumption. The experience economy thrives on anticipation and the lasting memories created afterward.

Two major forces are fueling the rise of the experience economy. The first is the transformation of the broader economic structure. Demand for purely functional consumption has largely matured. What is growing now is demand for higher-level services and emotionally engaging experiences. People increasingly seek meaning, individuality and emotional resonance through consumption.

The second force is demographic change. Aging societies are reshaping consumption patterns. Older consumers tend to favor slower, more immersive forms of spending that emphasize enjoyment, health, culture and emotional fulfillment. This demographic shift also aligns with the development of experience-based industries.

The rise of the experience economy offers a broader lesson for both governments and businesses. The boundaries between production, consumption, services and experiences will increasingly blur. Future industries should create participatory experiences in which consumers themselves become part of the value-creation process.

The experience economy also generates new forms of personal value. One is cognitive value. Experiences expand people's horizons and reshape their understanding of the world. Personal growth does not result solely from meeting influential people or receiving external opportunities. Often, it is the direct experience itself that encourages individuals to improve their own perspectives and capacities.

Another is social value. Social interaction increasingly includes teamwork, openness, organizational abilities and other forms of noncognitive skills developed through shared experiences. In the future, social interaction may extend beyond human relationships to include interaction with intelligent machines and digital environments, creating entirely new forms of connection.

For the experience economy to remain sustainable, two capabilities are especially important. First, businesses must understand the relationship between functionality and emotion. Future competition will not depend solely on marketing, but also on the ability to measure, detect and respond to emotional change during production and service delivery.

Second, companies must develop stronger flexible customization capabilities. Businesses must have the ability to transform diverse emotional and experiential needs into scalable production systems.

Ultimately, the development of the experience economy will accelerate the transition toward higher-value service sectors and help drive the broader upgrading of economic structures. On the social side, it will enhance public well-being. Through thoughtfully designed experiences, individuals can enjoy a stronger sense of fulfillment, identity and emotional satisfaction. Such experiences do not necessarily need to be expensive.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

TARIQ H. MALIK

From AI visibility to developmental leadership

Turning technological strength into governance credibility and cross-border cooperation

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Artificial intelligence is often framed as a race for models, chips and market share. However, discussions at the Forum on the Development of International Science and Technology Organizations and Global Science and Technology Governance, held on March 28 during the Zhongguancun Forum in Beijing, emphasized that the more important question goes beyond technological competition. For China, the central challenge is not simply whether the country is visible in AI, but whether that visibility can be converted into stronger governance, more credible international leadership and deeper cross-border cooperation. That is where the next phase of China's AI story will be decided.



China's strength in AI should be understood through its broader development path. Its developmental narrative could be described through four qualities: an equalizer, a bricoleur, a systemizer and a socioeconomic weaver. These are more than rhetorical labels. Together, they capture a development logic that widens access, combines tools pragmatically, organizes complexity at scale and links technology to broader social and economic transformation. This helps explain how a technological field becomes embedded in the wider fabric of production, administration and modernization.

This also helps clarify what is distinctive about China's position today. Many countries can develop advanced technologies, but few can connect them to long-term developmental coordination. China's historical policy trajectory, including the cumulative discipline of the five-year plans, has given it an unusual capacity to link technological ambition with industrial scaling and organizational follow-through. Over successive five-year plans, priorities have evolved in a structured manner — from early emphasis on informatization and industrial digitization, to the integration of digital technologies with the real economy, and more recently to the elevation of AI as a strategic driver of modernization.

In that sense, China's rise in AI reflects a deeper developmental logic: the ability to move from experimentation to infrastructure, from innovation to production and from technical potential to system-wide application. The more pressing question now is what comes next. If earlier stages of development focused on catching up, scaling up and building industrial capacity, the next stage requires China to play a stronger role in shaping the governance language around AI itself.

Governance should therefore move to the center of the discussion. AI is a matter of legitimacy, rules, institutions and cooperation. The narrative alignment theory helps explain this shift. Narratives are not decorative additions to technology; they shape the categories through which technology is understood, justified and accepted. They influence whether AI is seen as a source of fear or trust, fragmentation or cooperation, exclusion or development. They also affect whose rules, organizations and standards gain authority internationally. At this stage, leadership can no longer be measured only by who builds the most advanced technology. It should also be measured by who can connect technology to legitimate and credible governance frameworks.

This has direct implications for China. The country already has substantial material strengths: scale, industrial capacity, digital ecosystems and a strong policy commitment to scientific and technological advancement. But technological strength alone does not automatically generate narrative authority. A country may be highly capable in production and application, yet still remain less influential in defining the interpretive framework through which that capability is understood globally. China now faces a strategic transition. To move from AI visibility to developmental leadership, it should present AI not only as a field of innovation, but as part of a broader story of public value.

China's next task is to institutionalize AI through clearer governance pathways. One is rule-making: contributing more actively to technical standards, ethical protocols, data governance principles and cross-border interoperability. Another is organizational leadership: embedding AI in durable, credible and cooperative institutions, including international science and technology organizations, university networks, professional associations and public-private platforms linking research, industry and policy. A third is narrative clarity: communicating AI not only as a driver of growth, but also as a contributor to order, inclusion and long-term development. This requires a language that is internationally intelligible as well as institutionally persuasive.

Global science and technology governance is increasingly shaped by legitimacy and coordination, not by technology alone. If China wants to play a more prominent role in this environment, it should build frameworks in which innovation and governance develop together. That means showing how AI can support public administration, industrial resilience, the green transition, healthcare, education and cross-regional learning. It also means engaging more deeply in international cooperation, so that China is seen not merely as a powerful producer of technology, but as a constructive participant in shaping the rules and organizational architectures through which technology serves development. The future of leadership in AI will depend not only on invention but on the ability to align innovation with legitimate governance.

There is also a deeper historical lesson here. Successful economies often decline when they become imbalanced. Why did technological spirit and innovative capacity shift from one country to another, leaving once-successful economies behind? The answer points to an imbalance. Development weakens when institutions and structures no longer align with new realities. This lesson matters for AI as well. The danger is not only technological lag; it is also the failure to balance invention with meaning, production with legitimacy and capability with trust. China's opportunity is that it can still build this balance. It can connect technological advances with governance design before deeper misalignment takes hold.

China's position between the Global North and the Global South further strengthens this possibility. It is unusually placed to act as a bridge: learning from industrialized economies while also speaking to the developmental aspirations of emerging ones. This gives China a distinctive opportunity in AI governance. It can help formulate AI not simply as a luxury of the richest economies, but as a developmental instrument that can be adapted across different institutional contexts. In that sense, China's contribution could be larger than national advancement alone. It could help widen the global conversation from technological competition to developmental inclusion.

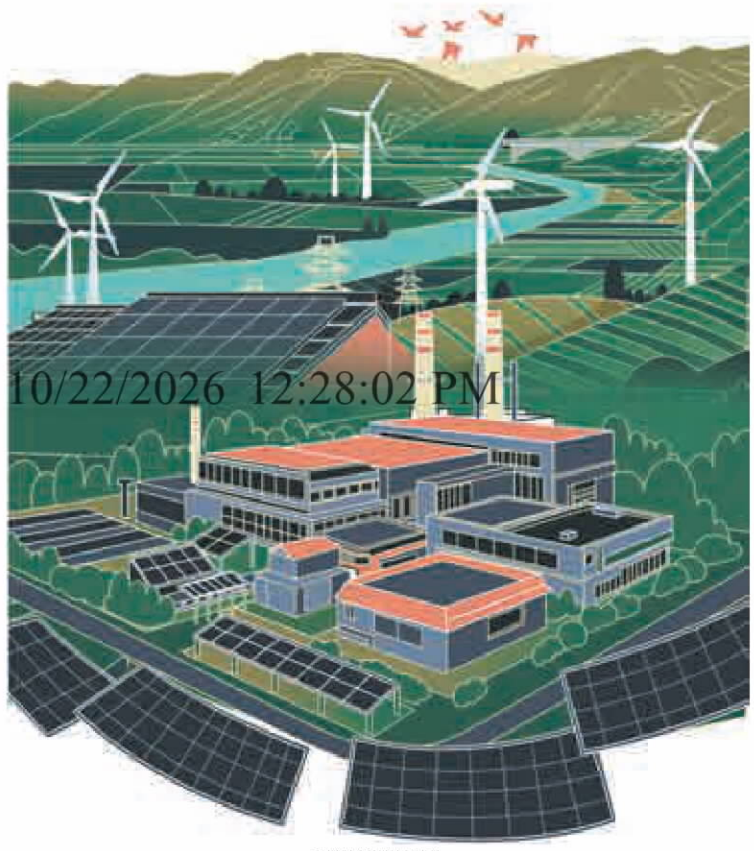
For this reason, the most important transition is conceptual as much as technical. China does not need only more AI. It needs stronger alignment between AI, governance and development, building on the basis of Beijing's series of provisional regulations over the past years and its five-year industrial projections. It must translate technological capability into governance credibility, industrial strength into institutional trust and national achievement into cross-border collaborative leadership. This is not a soft addition to hard technology. It is the condition under which technological strength gains lasting authority.

In the end, the countries that matter most in AI will not be those that simply build powerful systems. They will be the ones that embed those systems in legitimate institutions, credible rules and cooperative international relationships. China has already demonstrated considerable capacity in development and innovation of smart technologies. Its next challenge is to show that this capacity can also help shape a stable, trusted and development-oriented governance future for AI.

The author is a professor of innovation studies at Liaoning University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ZHANG FANG

Integrating smart tech and green innovation

Digital technology and systematic governance pave the way for high-quality green development

The green transition is no longer a matter of choice but a defining imperative for high-quality development in China. The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development, approved during the 2026 National People's Congress, sets a binding target of reducing carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 17 percent, while raising the share of the core digital economy industries in GDP to 12.5 percent.



In terms of industrial development, the outline introduces a new strategic direction centered on "intelligent and green development, and integrated innovation of industries and technologies". Compared with the earlier five-year plan, which emphasized "upgrading of industry and value chains, in addition to intelligent and green development", the shift toward integrated approaches signals the entry into a new stage of development that has systemic integration as its core feature, as China accelerates its green and low-carbon transition to form a new low-carbon innovation paradigm driven by artificial intelligence technologies.

The integrated innovation of industries and technologies in the 15th Five-Year Plan period can be found in the deep coupling of electricity and computing power. With the rapid advancement of AI technologies, demand for clean computing power is surging.

According to the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, electricity consumption by computing centers in China reached 150 billion kilowatt-hours in 2023, a year-on-year increase of 15.4 percent, with a projection to reach above 400 billion kWh by 2030 in the medium to high growth scenario. Against this backdrop, the 15th Five-Year Plan explicitly calls for the coordinated deployment of green electricity and computing power, while the 2026 Government Work Report has, for the first time, included "computing-power and electricity synergy" as part of the new infrastructure initiative.

Computing power and electricity synergy refers to the systemic integration of computing infrastructure with the electricity power system through digital technologies, intelligent algorithms, and information networks. On the one hand, models such as direct green power supply and integrated source-grid-load-storage systems help tap into the abundant clean energy in the western part of China, effectively reducing energy costs. On the other hand, some computing tasks are flexible, and can be interrupted and migrated by intelligent scheduling. This approach shifts the increased consumption of electricity to phases with lower electricity costs or lower network utilization through peak load shifting. It substantially transforms data centers from passive electricity consumers into active regulation units, thereby improving the utilization of renewable energy. This model addresses the curtailment of renewable energy and meets the growing green energy demand of computing power, achieving a mutually reinforcing balance between the environmental value of green electricity and the economic value of computing power.

Accurate carbon emissions accounting driven by precise data is the foundational pillar of carbon governance. The effectiveness of carbon reduction efforts depends critically on the transparency and verifiability of carbon accounting systems. China is accelerating the development of a unified national factor database of greenhouse gas emissions, while building an integrated "space-air-ground" monitoring network using satellite remote sensing, drones and ground sensors to ensure that carbon emissions and carbon sinks can be accurately measured and effectively managed.

Progress is also being made in tracing carbon emissions from electricity consumption. By establishing a provincial-level, time-of-use and location-specific factor database of electricity carbon emissions, companies can trace the sources and destinations of their carbon emissions. This technical pathway is expected to upgrade green development evaluation from traditional annual average indicators to higher-frequency, more granular metrics, providing scientific support for precise carbon reduction.

This data-driven foundation enables a broader transformation: moving beyond isolated improvements to achieve intelligent, systemic integration. The most compelling manifestation of this shift is occurring within the industrial sector, particularly in the realm of energy-saving equipment.

In March 2026, four central government departments, including the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, rolled out a three-year action plan to accelerate the high-quality development of energy-saving equipment. The core thrust of the plan is to shift from optimizing equipment-level energy efficiency to achieving energy conservation. This policy orientation reflects three significant shifts: Technological innovation extends from equipment efficiency to the full chain, and from materials to processes; operating system coordination upgrades from stand-alone operation to wide-range high efficiency and precise matching; and digital empowerment advances from passive response to active optimization, using AI to enable cluster-level intelligent scheduling of energy-consuming units.

This direction is propelling China's energy-saving equipment industry from a single focus on individual equipment efficiency to a new stage characterized by system integration, intelligent drive and cross-sectoral convergence. It signifies a transformation in value creation from equipment sales to system services and a shift in technical pathways from local optimization to global optimization.

The new paradigm for China's green and low-carbon development, with computing-power-electricity synergy as a key pathway, data-driven carbon governance as a foundational pillar, and system-level intelligent integration as its technological signature, is accelerating a profound shift from granular, isolated optimization to system-wide integration innovation. This paradigm represents not only a strategic response to intensifying global green competition, but also a distinctive contribution of Chinese wisdom to global decarbonization efforts.

The author is the vice-director of the Center for Science, Technology and Education Policy at Tsinghua University and an associate professor at the School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

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Visitors check out handcrafted acoustic guitars at a guitar industrial park in Yongzhou's Dong'an county, Central China's Hunan province, on Monday. The park boasts a complete guitar manufacturing chain, home to more than 30 musical instrument manufacturers and supporting upstream and downstream enterprises. The industrial base produces a full range of guitar products with an annual output of over 500,000 guitars in 2025 that were exported to more than 60 countries and regions worldwide. ZHAO ZHONGZHI / XINHUA

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Metis TechBio records HK's largest healthcare IPO in '26

Company's float signals maturing AI pharma with diversified biz models

By LI JING
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Chinese mainland's artificial intelligence drug-delivery developer Metis TechBio Co Ltd raised more than HK$2.1 billion ($270 million) in its Hong Kong initial public offering on Wednesday, marking the largest healthcare listing in Hong Kong so far this year and underscoring strong investor interest in how AI could reshape pharmaceutical development.

Founded six years ago, the Beijing-based biotech firm issued about 201.2 million H shares in its global offering. Chris Lai, the company's co-founder and CEO, said the listing would help accelerate the company's goal of applying AI-driven nanotechnology to enable targeted drug delivery and new therapeutic approaches.

The listing places Metis alongside two earlier Hong Kong-listed peers — XtalPi Holdings Ltd and Insilico Medicine Cayman TopCo — referred to as Hong Kong's "AI drug discovery trio", though the companies pursue different commercial strategies in the rapidly evolving sector. XtalPi is a Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based AI drug discovery company, while Insilico Medicine is a global AI-driven biotech firm with strong research roots in China.

AI has attracted billions of dollars globally as pharmaceutical companies seek to shorten drug development timelines, but the industry is still testing whether these technologies can generate sustainable revenues.

China's AI drug discovery sector is moving from laboratory experimentation toward early commercial validation, said Tian Lihui, a finance professor at Nankai University.

According to consultancy iiMedia Research, the sector's revenue expanded from about 70 million yuan ($9.7 million) in 2019 to more than 600 million yuan by 2025, reflecting rapid growth in AI-driven drug development in China.

Early financial milestones among industry peers reflect that shift. XtalPi reported its first annual profit in 2025, while Insilico — though still loss-making — has begun generating tens of millions of dollars in revenue from licensing deals and research collaborations.

"The key question for the industry is no longer whether the technology works," Tian said. "It is how to turn it into scalable profit."

Metis has taken a different route from its peers by focusing on nanotechnology-based drug delivery, a technically complex step in turning promising molecules into effective medicines.

Efficient delivery systems determine whether drugs can reach targeted tissues while minimizing side effects — a challenge highlighted during the development of mRNA vaccines and other next-generation therapies.

"Large-molecule drugs are becoming increasingly important, and effective delivery is a core bottleneck," said Liu Jing, professor of accounting and finance at Cheung Kong Graduate School of Business.

"AI gives companies like Metis an opportunity to narrow the technological gap with established Western leaders."

Metis' core platform, NanoForge, combines AI models, molecular simulation and high-throughput screening to design lipid nanoparticles and other nanomaterial drug carriers.

According to its prospectus, the platform has generated more than 10 pipeline programs, including several clinical-stage candidates. Its most advanced candidate, MTS-004, has completed Phase III clinical trials in China for pseudobulbar affect, a neurological disorder for which there are currently limited treatment options domestically, said the company.

Like many biotech startups, Metis is still in a heavy investment phase.

Revenue rose to 105 million yuan in 2025 from 1.5 million yuan a year earlier, largely due to an upfront payment tied to licensing rights for MTS-004.

The company reported a net loss of 392 million yuan in 2025, narrowing from 499 million yuan the previous year.

The company said about half of the IPO proceeds will fund expansion of its AI infrastructure and nanomaterial platform, while roughly 20 percent will fund ongoing and planned clinical trials.

Metis' listing also highlights how the AI pharma sector is diverging into several business models.

One approach, represented by XtalPi, treats AI primarily as a tech platform, providing computational research services and automated laboratory capabilities to pharmaceutical clients.

Insilico has adopted an AI-biotech strategy, using algorithms to design new drug candidates and advancing them into clinical trials before licensing them to pharmaceutical partners — a strategy with higher potential rewards but also higher financial risks.

Metis represents a more specialized strategy, applying AI specifically to the drug-delivery layer rather than the entire discovery pipeline.

"These paths reflect a broader debate between platform strategies and vertical specialization," Tian said, adding that companies capable of integrating both approaches may ultimately build stronger competitive advantages.

Despite renewed enthusiasm for AI drug development, analysts say capital markets are becoming more selective.

"Valuations are no longer driven purely by technological narratives," Tian said. "Investors are increasingly looking at clinical pipelines, partnerships with major pharmaceutical companies and tangible commercial contracts."

Metis' IPO attracted heavy demand, with the Hong Kong public tranche more than 6,900 times oversubscribed and the international placement 82 times oversubscribed, the company said.

The offering drew several cornerstone investors, including BlackRock, which subscribed about $50 million, as well as a State-backed investment fund under China Reform Holdings, which made its first investment in an AI pharma company.

Zero-tariff policy boosts Hunan-Africa biz ties

CHANGSHA — When more than 6,000 bottles of South African wine cleared customs at Changsha Huanghua International Airport in Central China's Hunan province on May 1, the importer received an immediate benefit from China's expanded tariff-free treatment for African goods, which amounted to 21,000 yuan ($3,093) in duty savings.

According to Zhang Xin, chairman of Hunan Express Wisdom Information Technology Co Ltd, South African wine was previously subject to a 14 percent tariff in China. Now that the tariff has been slashed to zero, the company anticipates an annual cost reduction of about 5 million yuan.

This shipment was among the first in Hunan to benefit after China expanded zero-tariff treatment to goods from all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations, broadening an earlier policy that covered the least-developed countries among them.

Under the upgraded policy, China has become the first major economy to offer unilateral, across-the-board zero-tariff treatment to all its African diplomatic partners and to all least-developed countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

For this inland Chinese province, one of the country's busiest regional players in terms of trade with Africa, the tariff cut is more than just a customs adjustment. Local officials and companies see it as a way to lower import costs and draw more African raw materials and consumer goods through Hunan, including some products bound for re-export.

Hunan has spent years trying to position itself as an inland gateway for China-Africa commerce, using the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo and pilot zone for in-depth China-Africa economic and trade cooperation as its main platforms. The province's trade with Africa has grown by an average of 15 percent a year to 58 billion yuan, ranking first among provinces in central and western China.

The latest move follows an earlier policy that took effect on Dec 1, 2024, when China granted zero-tariff treatment on all tariff lines to the least-developed countries with which it has diplomatic ties, including 33 African countries.

From that day to March 31, Changsha Customs processed around 26.98 million yuan in tariff reductions for Hunan imports from those least-developed African countries.

The policy has, notably, coincided with stronger import growth. Hunan's imports from Africa rose 27.2 percent year-on-year to 30.92 billion yuan in 2025. In the first four months of 2026, its total trade with Africa reached 18.16 billion yuan, up 8.8 percent from a year earlier, with imports increasing 29.4 percent to 10.41 billion yuan.

The new broader coverage could have a bigger effect because it involves several of Hunan's main African suppliers, including Kenya, South Africa, Nigeria, Morocco and Tunisia. Between January 2025 and March 2026, imports from these five countries accounted for 98.1 percent of the total tariffs collected from Hunan's imports from Africa.

Lan Shengbin, deputy head of Changsha Customs, said some Hunan manufacturers had previously paid tariffs of 7 to 10 percent on components from countries such as Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt. Removing such duties will lower production costs and help companies diversify their supply chains, he said.

Hunan is trying to turn its tariff savings into a broader trade model, using the province as a point for importing, processing and redistributing African goods, including some products re-exported overseas.

One example came in July 2024, when 400 fresh roses from Kenya were imported into Changsha and then re-exported through the Changsha Huanghua Comprehensive Bonded Zone to Uzbekistan. It was China's first re-export transaction involving African fresh flowers, according to Changsha Customs.

Hunan Xiyue Culture Media Co Ltd, the importer, now brings in flowers, fruit and ornamental fish from Africa, some of which are shipped on to overseas markets.

Huang Zinan, a company executive, said the tariff cuts would reduce import costs, improve cash flow and allow African products to be sold at more competitive prices.

Consumer goods are another target. During the May Day holiday, an African goods market in Changsha drew approximately 89,000 visitors over six days. Organizers said lower import costs for raw materials had allowed prices to be reduced on some products, including chocolate made with Ghanaian cocoa, shea-butter products from Mali and coffee from Zambia.

Hunan Yufei Industry Investment Co Ltd, which helped organize the market, said its Quality African Products brand now covers more than 400 products from 13 African countries, ranging from coffee and avocados to spices.

Hunan authorities are seeking to turn the tariff change into a wider trade push. In late April, the provincial commerce department announced seven measures covering expanded imports from Africa, overseas warehouse services, industrial capacity cooperation and more China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo activities in African countries.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY



An African goods market is pictured during the May Day holiday in Changsha, Hunan province, on May 1. DENG YILIN / XINHUA

Major PV project launched to directly power computing facilities

By ZHENG XIN
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China has officially launched its first large-scale computing-electricity synergy project with direct green power supply, marking a milestone in the nation's massive commitment to building a unified, nationwide computing network by physically linking desert renewable energy directly to digital infrastructure.

The 500,000-kilowatt photovoltaic power station located in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region began operations recently. It signifies the first time that wind and solar resources from China's vast deserts are being funneled directly into data center loads through dedicated transmission lines, bypassing the traditional detours of the national power grid.

The facility is part of a larger 2-million-kW first-phase development involving a total investment of 8.7 billion yuan ($1.28 billion), which includes 1.5 million kW of wind power scheduled for full integration by September.

China established the "East Data, West Computing" initiative in 2022, a mega data project aimed at accelerating the development of an integrated national computing network.

Once the first phase is fully operational, it will provide 2.29 billion kilowatt-hours of green electricity annually to the large computing base in Zhongwei, Ningxia.

At the heart of this project is the concept of "direct green power supply". Traditionally, renewable energy is fed into the public grid, where it mixes with coal-fired power before reaching consumers. Direct supply, however, utilizes dedicated "point-to-point" transmission lines and "dual-track" supply systems.

In the Zhongwei project, new data center loads are served via physical direct lines, while existing loads utilize bilateral market trading. This setup allows data centers to achieve a high "green power ratio" while significantly reducing transmission costs and carbon footprints.

To ensure stability, the project employs a wind-solar complementary model that sees PV power dominate during the day, while wind power takes over at night. It is supported by on-site energy storage to smooth out fluctuations.

The launch coincides with the nation's efforts to synchronize energy and digital strategies. The National Energy Administration recently said it would permit renewable energy projects to supply green electricity directly to multiple users via dedicated lines.

According to the NEA, new policies will be released in the near future to perfect these synergy frameworks, guiding the relocation of energy-intensive computing facilities to regions rich in renewable resources, such as Ningxia Hui and Inner Mongolia autonomous regions.

Experts believe the Zhongwei project provides a blueprint for the rest of the country.

"By establishing a direct physical link between the energy source and digital load, we are solving the geographical mismatch between where energy is produced and where data is processed," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University. "This not only lowers the power usage effectiveness of data centers, but also insulates the digital economy from electricity price fluctuations."

Looking ahead, the Zhongwei project plans a second phase that will bring total capacity to 4.6 million kW with a total investment of nearly 20 billion yuan.

As China continues to expand its digital infrastructure, the synergy between "bits" and "watts" is set to become the primary engine driving the nation's high-quality, low-carbon development, Lin said.



BUSINESS

New mall aims to meet evolving needs

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Site's owner takes different approach, mixing commerce, culture and community together





Above: A staff member cuts fresh fish for customers in the Ole Lifestyle supermarket at Westlake 66, the newly opened mixed-use complex in the bustling Wulin central business area in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, during the mall's soft opening on April 28.
Left: People shop at Westlake 66 in Hangzhou on April 28.
PHOTOS BY LIN YUNLONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Visitors entering Westlake 66, the newly opened mixed-use complex in the bustling Wulin central business area of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, might be surprised to find that luxury brands are not front and center.

Instead, the first floor is mainly dominated by lifestyle and experiential retailers, including collective toy companies Pop Mart and Jellycat, as well as the folding bicycle brand Brompton. The second floor features sports and outdoor labels alongside e-commerce brands founded by online influencers, reflecting a shift in consumer preferences toward experiences rather than prestige alone.

The 390,200-square-meter project, developed by Hang Lung Properties Ltd, is the company's 11th venture in the Chinese mainland. Known for managing luxury shopping malls in cities such as Shanghai and Wuxi, Jiangsu province, Hang Lung is taking a different approach in Hangzhou — integrating commerce, culture and community to establish Westlake 66 as both a commercial hub and a social destination.

"Modern consumers don't just want to shop — they seek diverse scenarios, from coffee breaks and dining experiences to social interaction," said Derek Pang, Hang Lung's senior director of Chinese mainland business operation, during an interview. "We are building a platform where locals, tourists and different community groups can interact — whether cycling from West Lake or exploring the city's newly renovated shops."

Hangzhou has long attracted young professionals and technology-driven industries. Its economic mix of finance, professional services and tech, combined with steady population growth, makes it a compelling retail and office market. "The city's consumption power is immense," Pang said.

According to Cushman & Wakefield's Hangzhou 2025 Commercial Real Estate Annual Report, three malls — Hangzhou MixC, Hangzhou Tower and Yintai in77 — each generated over 10 billion yuan ($1.47 billion) in sales in 2025. This underscores Hangzhou's position as one of China's few cities with multiple high-performing shopping centers.

Westlake 66 occupies the Wulin business area, the city's most prosperous commercial hub, which welcomed 189 million visitors last year. While Hangzhou Tower and the other two department store operators have dominated the high-end luxury segment, Westlake 66 is expected to complement existing projects, offering a fresh, lifestyle-driven alternative.

Hang Lung sees Westlake 66 as a long-term investment. Despite a development cost of 16 billion yuan, the company has focused on operational efficiency from day one. "Opening well is crucial. Only then can long-term development and subsequent expansion be realized," Pang said.

The mall does maintain a luxury presence, though it is secondary to experiential offerings. Several high-end brands have opened on the first floor, with additional openings planned for the latter half of 2026. By 2028, Hang Lung aims to expand the retail footprint, reflecting confidence in the city's consumption potential and Westlake 66's appeal as a lifestyle destination.

At its soft opening in April, Westlake 66 was home to around 250 stores, over a third of which are first-to-market in Hangzhou. Janice Cheung, director of mainland business operation at Hang Lung, said the project targets a new generation of consumers, for whom shopping and dining are experiences defined as much by social interaction as by product consumption.

"The project aims to connect people across different circles, creating more social interaction," Cheung said. The office lobby, located on the fourth floor with direct access to the mall, hotel and park, exemplifies this philosophy. "We are rethinking traditional layouts to foster engagement and a richer experience for office tenants and visitors alike," she added.

To stand out in a crowded market where tenant mixes often overlap, Westlake 66 emphasizes operational capability and innovative concepts.

Lifestyle-oriented retailers such as Ole supermarket debuted its "Ole Lifestyle" concept, while Chinese brands like Truuzen, a leather bag brand from Foshan, Guangdong province, are provided a platform to grow alongside global names.

"We are pleased that many domestic brands are making an impact nowadays. We'd love to offer platforms for them to develop sustainably," said Cheung.

Cheung also highlighted the importance of bridging online discovery with offline engagement. Pop-up stores featuring debut or exclusive products offer a rotating experience for repeat visitors. "Consumers may discover a brand online, but physical stores allow them to fully experience it and build long-term loyalty," she said, citing AmandaX, an apparel brand for women aged 30-50, as an example. AmandaX started on Taobao in 2019 and opened its first offline store in Shanghai last year.

Hang Lung executives expressed optimism about Hangzhou's consumption climate. After a slow start in early 2025, retail sales rebounded sharply in the fourth quarter, returning to double-digit growth. The company forecast that the momentum will continue in 2026, partly supported by Westlake 66's dynamic retail mix and immersive experiences.

"Westlake 66 is designed to be the new pulse of the city," said Weber Lo, CEO of Hang Lung. "By creating a community-centric hub with first-to-market brands and memorable experiences, we are confident to set a new regional benchmark while contributing to the city's broader economic ecosystem."

Looking forward, Hang Lung plans to expand the retail area by 40 percent and triple prime street frontage to over 200 meters through its partnership with Baida Group. The next phase is scheduled for 2028, reinforcing the company's commitment to long-term urban development in Hangzhou.

Leading commercial operators have reported positive signals that the country's consumption market is on an upward trend. According to Swire Properties' first quarter report, retail sales at HKRI Taikoo Hui Shanghai rose 81.5 percent, while Taikoo Li Sanlitun in Beijing grew 56.2 percent. Its commercial estates in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, and Chengdu, Sichuan province, expanded by 17.6 percent and 18.4 percent, respectively.

Cushman & Wakefield said that Shanghai's retail leasing market remained active in early 2026, with foot traffic and sales surging during the Spring Festival holiday. Lifestyle, food and beverage, and entertainment sectors performed particularly well, signaling a broad-based recovery.

390,200 square meters
floor space of Westlake 66 shopping mall in Hangzhou

Online
Unlock China's Treasures: Shop, Explore, Enjoy.

Luxury outlets drive niche consumption experiences

By WANG ZHUOQIONG

Luxury outlet retail in China is demonstrating vitality and resilience as the sector capitalizes on the growing demand for cultural, lifestyle and vacation experience-centered shopping.

Among luxury outlet retail operators, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin Luxury Design Outlet leads the way.

The flagship project of Italy's RDM Group reported a 6 percent year-on-year increase in sales and a 7 percent rise in visitor traffic in 2025, signaling sustained consumer demand despite broader market headwinds.

On May 10, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin celebrated its 15th anniversary. The shopping complex has contributed to the diversification of the country's outlet market, integrating culture, commerce, tourism, sports, and exhibitions into a unified "micro-vacation" retail experience, said the company.

The shopping complex has established a 180,000-square-meter commercial footprint, hosting more than 200 internationally renowned brands. This includes national outlet exclusive brands such as Roger Vivier, Abercrombie & Fitch, and Peak Performance, as well as North China exclusives like Acne Studios, Mulberry, Mackage and Stone Island.

Jacopo De Vena, managing director of Florentia Village & RDM Asia, said the company has pioneered a "micro-vacation" model, combining authentic Italian architecture, a holiday-style setting, and immersive experiences.

Over the years, FV has adapted to shifting consumer preferences from transactional shopping toward lifestyle-oriented and experiential shopping, said the director. Notably, the sports and outdoor category has emerged as a critical revenue pillar, increasing nearly 20 percent in contribution to the revenue from 2024 to 2025.

Recent upgrades, including expanded VIP lounges, Italian espresso bars and new landscaped pathways, reinforce the shopping complex's signature "La Dolce Vita" atmosphere.

"Consumers today increasingly prefer relaxed, lifestyle-oriented scenarios. We've adapted to the trend and have seen these categories becoming a vital pillar of our revenue structure," De Vena said.

According to Bain & Company's 2025 China Personal Luxury Goods Report, 65 percent of Chinese luxury consumption occurred in the Chinese mainland market in 2025. The report anticipates moderate growth for the Chinese personal luxury market in 2026, with the region poised to remain the cornerstone of global luxury market growth.


A gondolier glides along the canal at Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin Luxury Design Outlet in Wuqing, Tianjin, as people stroll across the Venetian-style bridge on May 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Driven by the continued expansion of the middle-income group, a rebound in consumer confidence, and supportive policy measures, further repatriation of luxury spending to the Chinese mainland is expected. However, the degree of growth will remain highly dependent on specific product categories and individual brand performance.

The China Commerce Association for General Merchandise's 2024-2025 China Outlet Industry White Paper estimates that in 2025 there were about 251 outlet projects in operation nationwide, with a total sales scale of about 239 billion yuan ($35.2 billion).

The development of China's outlet industry is undergoing a strategic shift — moving away from sheer scale expansion toward a focus on achieving extreme operational efficiency, said the report.

Against this backdrop, Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin, which is located within the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei one-hour economic circle, leverages high-speed railway and expressway access to capture intercity passenger flows.

This has allowed the outlet to convert transient visitors into a loyal customer base with high repurchase rates, said the director. Seasonal cultural and experiential programming has further boosted Florentia Village Beijing-Tianjin as a dual-city micro-vacation destination, with nearly 80 million visitors to date.

"We broke free from the traditional outlet logic of over-reliance on discounts. By connecting deeply with consumer groups from both Beijing and Tianjin, we converted regional transit passenger flow into a stable consumer group with high stickiness and high repurchase rates," he said.

De Vena added that RDM Group continues to consolidate its market leadership by focusing on six strategic dimensions: scenario creation, high-end merchandising, stock iteration, digital operations, membership deepening, and regional integration.

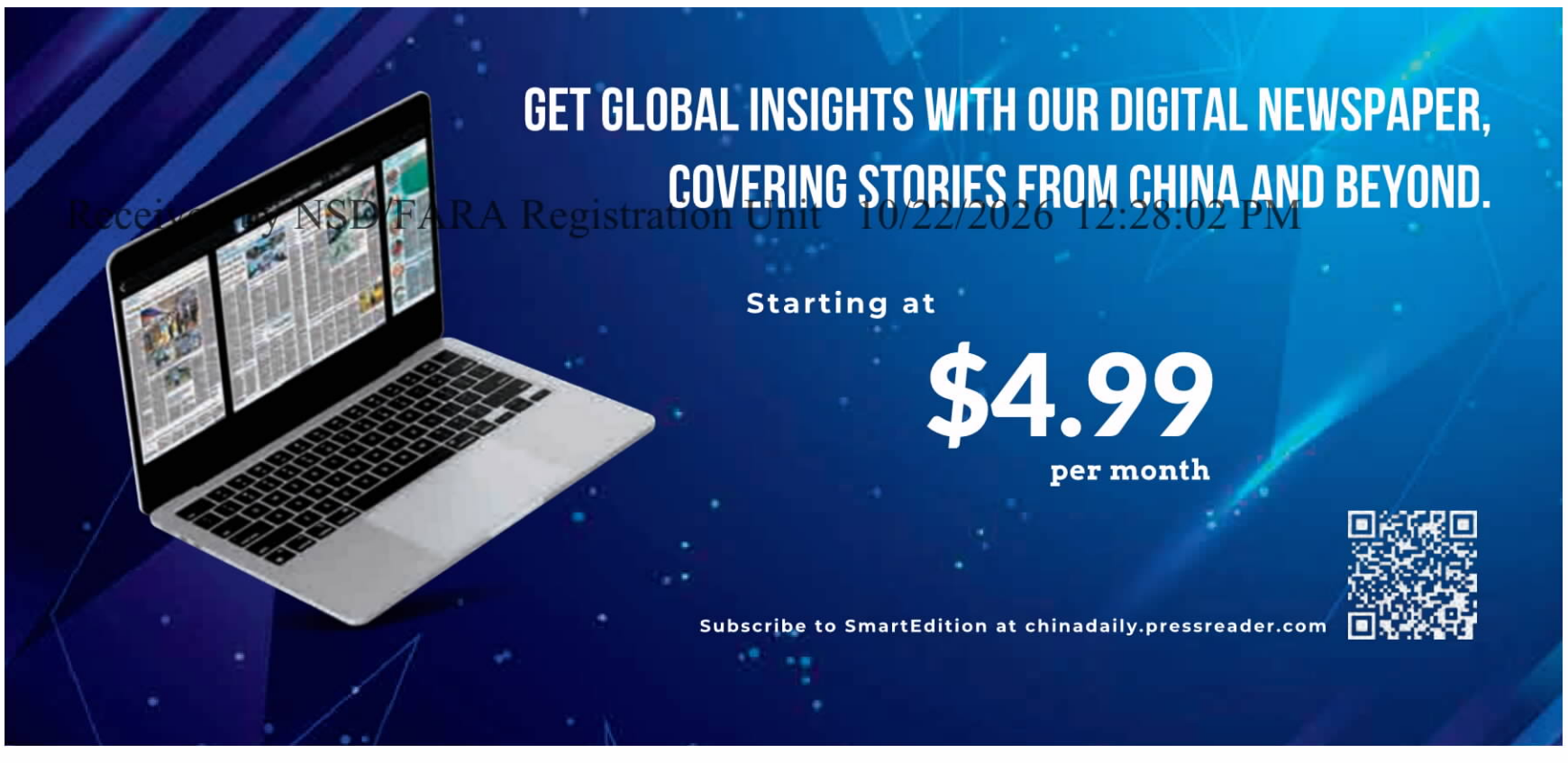
Through immersive holiday environments, exclusive brand collaborations, and a mature digital ecosystem — encompassing 7.8 million registered members nationwide — the group has built a standardized model capable of replication across all Florentia Village's projects.

Looking ahead, RDM Group is expanding its national footprint with Shanghai third phase and Chongqing second phase, aiming to transform Florentia Village into localized micro-vacation cultural landmarks.

The group emphasizes high brand completeness, cross-border consumption facilitation, and multi-dimensional upgrades to brand matrices, experiential offerings, and commercial value.

Despite increasing competition, national projects achieved an 8 percent year-on-year increase in visitor traffic and 6 percent sales growth in 2025, demonstrating strong resilience and market recognition, said the company.

"Today's outlet is not just a shopping destination; it is a lifestyle and leisure experience," said De Vena. With strategic location, differentiated offerings, and refined operations, Florentia Village continues to be optimistic about the luxury retail and experiential consumption across the country.



CHINA

Global South teachers to get digital skills training

By **ZOU SHUO** in Hangzhou
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The world's first international action plan specifically designed to improve the digital skills of teachers in developing countries has been unveiled, aiming to systematically assist Global South nations tackle common challenges in the digital transformation of education.

The action plan for enhancing digital literacy of teachers in the Global South was released during a parallel session of the 2026 World Digital Education Conference in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Tuesday.

The plan, initiated by the Africa division of the Institute of Global Teacher Development, reflects China's practical efforts to deepen South-South cooperation and participate in global education governance.

The plan identifies four interlinked structural challenges: insufficient network and device access, a shortage of high-quality and locally adapted multilingual resources, weak foundational teacher skills coupled with a lack of systematic professional development, and fragmented coordination mechanisms. It argues that piecemeal interventions are no longer sufficient.

Key measures include establishing a collaborative mechanism for digital literacy among teachers in the Global South by engaging international organizations, education authorities, universities and enterprises.

The initiative will align with authoritative platforms such as UNESCO's Global Teacher Campus to provide tiered training programs.

The plan also leverages existing overseas platforms such as Confucius Institutes and Luban Workshops to deliver localized support for teachers.

According to the plan, Zhejiang Normal University will lead implementation efforts. Over the next three years, priority flagship projects will be launched, including the establishment of collaboration mechanisms, the joint development of advanced courses and the piloting of lighthouse schools, or model schools.

The lighthouse schools will be established in two or three host Global South countries, with initial design work and resource allocation set to begin in an effort to achieve early tangible outcomes.

Liu Hongwu, director of the College of African Area and Country Studies at Zhejiang Normal University, said the action plan directly addresses key challenges in improving digital literacy among teachers in the Global South during a critical period for the global digital transformation of education.

"The plan addresses four structural challenges widely faced by Global South countries: weak infrastructure, scarce localized resources, lack of training systems and fragmented cooperation mechanisms," Liu said.

He said the plan adopts a systematic four-dimensional framework that creates a closed loop spanning coordination mechanisms, training, demonstration schools and on-the-ground support networks.

"By focusing on teachers' digital literacy, the initiative represents a strategic shift from hardware construction to human capacity building in developing countries," Liu said.

He also acknowledged implementation challenges, including complex coordination among multiple stakeholders and insufficient adaptation of resources for low-bandwidth environments in many Global South countries.

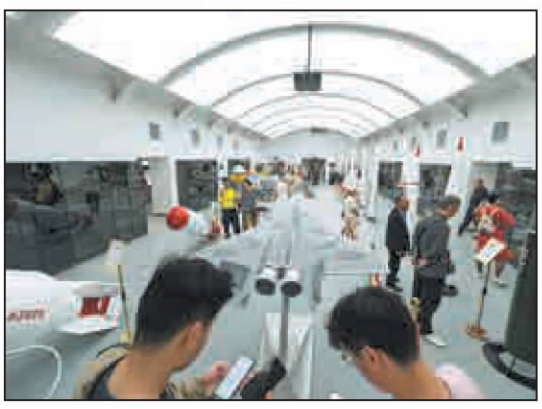
Nevertheless, Liu described the action plan as a pragmatic step that contributes Chinese wisdom and feasible solutions in bridging the global digital divide and promoting equitable education.

Meanwhile, the Hangzhou Initiative on AI and Education, which was also released on Tuesday at the conference, stresses equitable access to the benefits of artificial intelligence and calls for greater use of smart education platforms to share quality resources and intelligent tools to help bridge the global digital divide.

The initiative proposes establishing a global network for teacher training and capacity building, with special attention given to children with special needs.

It also supports UNESCO's leadership role in using digital technologies for post-crisis remedial education, especially for girls and women.

Hidden city reopens



Visitors explore a museum about Beijing's civil air defense history in Qianmen area on Wednesday. Originally built in 1969 and once known as the Beijing underground city, the former civil air defense tunnel complex reopened to the public as a museum on Tuesday, after extensive renovations. HOU YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Smart steps forward



A robotic guide leads a staff member acting as a visually impaired pedestrian during an intelligent robot application competition in Mianyang, Sichuan province, on Tuesday. Designed to assist with safe travel, the robot can identify road conditions and respond to obstacles, sounds and route changes in real time. HAO FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Yunnan to promote lifestyle businesses

Better living conditions, policy support reshape province's tourism economy

By **YAN YUJIE** and **LI YINGQING** in Kunming

Yunnan is positioning itself as a destination not only for tourism, but also for long-term living and entrepreneurship, as the southwestern Chinese province recorded sharp growth in overnight international visitors and long-stay residents in 2025, Governor Wang Yubo said on Wednesday.

Speaking at a briefing on Yunnan's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), Wang said the province is looking to attract more people to "travel, settle and start businesses" in Yunnan, as improving living environments and lifestyle appeal reshape the province's tourism economy.

Yunnan received 8.64 million inbound tourist visits in 2025, up 30 percent year-on-year, according to official data.

Among them, overnight inbound visitors rose 51.8 percent to 4.95 million, outpacing overall growth and signaling rising demand for deeper travel experiences.

The province also saw a surge in long-stay visitors, locally referred to as "sojourners".

More than 5.5 million people chose to live temporarily in Yunnan last year, up 41.4 percent year-on-year, with an average stay of 83 days.

"Many visitors came as tourists but stayed on because they fell in love with the place, becoming new residents of Yunnan," Wang said.

He attributed the trend partly to sweeping improvements in urban and rural living conditions in recent years. According to Wang, all counties, cities and districts in Yunnan now meet national sanitary standards, while all natural villages have reached the top-tier standard for rural living environments.

"With better environments and more beautiful cities and villages, tourists from across China and around the world are flocking to Yunnan," he said.

Earlier this year, Alexandra Solovey, a 46-year-old tourist from the United States, visited Kunming with her husband and daughter. She said the pleasant weather, local cuisine, friendly residents and sense of safety made Yunnan "a fantastic destination".

Among those choosing to stay longer is Zhang Boai, a 35-year-old former flight attendant from Beijing. After traveling across Lijiang, Dali, Kunming, Pu'er and Xishuangbanna in mid-2025, Zhang and her husband relocated to a village in Pu'er with their 3-year-old son later that year.

"I want my son to have a happy childhood close to nature, where he can play freely," Zhang said.

The long-stay trend is also giving rise to new business models.

In Laozhuaqing village in Pu'er, 32-year-old Ying Xixi from Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, has launched a digital nomad community, offering shared workspaces for remote workers.

Since opening in late February, the site has already hosted dozens of digital nomads.

"Yunnan has rich resources, diverse ethnic cultures and a great climate, which are all attractive to entrepreneurs like us," Ying said, adding that she hopes for more supportive policies for startup communities and lifestyle-based businesses.

Wang said the province plans to expand policy support, diversify business scenarios and cultivate more sectors suited to lifestyle entrepreneurship. Yunnan also aims to build a number of "cities of entrepreneurship" and "cities of thriving industries" to attract more innovators and business founders.

The growing sojourn economy is already bringing tangible benefits to rural communities.

Yan Di, Party branch secretary of Manhena village in Xishuangbanna, said long-stay tourism has increased significantly since 2024. Last year, the village received more than 10,000 sojourn visitors, many staying for more than 10 days at a time.

The village, home to 109 households and 486 residents, reported an average household income of 80,000 yuan ($11,780) last year, with tourism contributing more than 60 percent.

"Life is steadily getting better," Yan said.

In Lijiang's Yulong county, 57-year-old Fan Hongyan, originally from Xiangxi in Hunan province, opened a guesthouse in September after traveling to more than 50 countries.

"The first time I came here, I was deeply captivated by the scenery and environment," she said. "I knew this was where I wanted to live."

Contact the writers at yanyj@chinadaily.com.cn

Soundbites

Editor's note: *The State Council Information Office held a group interview on Wednesday featuring outstanding teachers to discuss advancing the spirit of educators and accelerating the building of China into a leading country in education.*



On Cuiying Mountain in Lanzhou, we established China's first semi-arid climate change observation station of international standards. I often take my students into the field, trekking across deserts, traversing glaciers and climbing plateaus. They are trained and tested in harsh natural environments, strengthening both their character and resilience. I like the saying along the Taklimakan Desert highway: "There is only a desolate desert, not a desolate life." I often tell my students the same: how could our research be anything but world-class, when we write our papers on the vast land of our motherland and pursue knowledge in the great deserts of the northwest?
Huang Jianping, *an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and a professor at Lanzhou University in Gansu province*



Labor education is not a decorative add-on, but a source of nourishment and energy for children's all-round development. To help children develop a love for work from an early age, we have designed a curriculum based on the 24 solar terms, encouraging them to engage in hands-on activities in tune with the seasons. Only when teachers remain curious about the world will children long to explore it. I hope our children will feel a spark of excitement at the sight of wild chrysanthemums, and pause to listen when they hear birds singing. Education, at its heart, is about nurturing the ability to perceive happiness and to create it.
Zhang Zhenle, *principal of Fuchun No 7 Primary School Education Group in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province*



I have always worked on the front line of teaching. Together with my institution, I have helped deepen the integration of industry and education, as well as school-enterprise cooperation. I hope to support companies in solving technical challenges while personally guiding students in developing practical skills. Watching them grow from novices to skilled professionals, then step out of campus and into major aviation enterprises, contributing to China's domestically developed aircraft and other critical national projects, gives me a deep sense of fulfillment.
Zhou Shuqiang, *professor at Chengdu Aeronautic Polytechnic University*



The essence of nurturing both intellect and character lies in "seeing every individual". At our school, each class is assigned a psychological counselor, and we have launched a smart mental health platform to support the well-being of both students and teachers. We focus not only on students' academic progress, but also on their emotional needs and individual differences. At the same time, we recognize the dedication of every teacher, providing practical support to help address real challenges, so that everyone on campus is seen and respected.
Xie Wei, *principal of Yinchuan No 15 Middle School, Ningxia Hui autonomous region*



We support teachers in defining clear development goals based on their individual circumstances, whether they are newly recruited or experienced backbone teachers. Taking into account teachers' years of experience and professional strengths, we design stage-specific learning content and practical opportunities, enabling them to grow steadily and continuously. We aim to ignite teachers' inner drive, helping them feel the nobility of the profession and sustain their intrinsic passion, while also strengthening their professional competence. There is only one character's difference between a "profession" and a "vocation", but it transforms teachers' mindset, energizes the entire team, and eventually benefits tens of thousands of children.
An Huixia, *principal of Xinghua Preschool Education Group in Taiyuan, Shanxi province*

ZHAO YIMENG

HK's emissions detector to aid climate research from Tiangong

By **WU KUNLING** in Hong Kong
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The world's first lightweight, high-resolution, high-precision carbon dioxide and methane point-source detector, developed by Hong Kong scientists, has arrived at the Tiangong, making it the city's first scientific payload aboard the orbiting national space station.

The project, hailed as proof of Hong Kong's ability to support the nation's space development and carbon neutrality drive, is able to detect over 99 percent of CO2 emissions from the nation's coal-burning power plants and CH4 emissions from its coal mines, providing precise and reliable data for policymakers in China and around the world, said Su Hui, co-leader of the project and chair professor of the Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, on Wednesday.

The Hong Kong-made payload, the Multi-Spectral Imaging Carbon Observatory, nicknamed "eye for space", arrived at Tiangong at 1:11 pm on Monday aboard the Tianzhou-10 cargo craft. It was part of a consignment of essential deliveries such as artificial human embryos and ultra-thin solar cells, and supplies including an extravehicular spacesuit.

The MUSICO will participate in China's first Earth observation project under its human spaceflight program.

Weighing less than 80 kilograms and smaller than a domestic washing machine, the payload is capable of accurately measuring CO2 and CH4 — two major greenhouse gases — from space, with extra-high spectral resolution and 100-meter spatial resolution, said the research team.

By analyzing intensity changes in sunlight over specific spectral bands as it passes through the atmosphere and reflects off the Earth's surface, the payload identifies gas-specific absorption features to determine gas concentrations and pinpoint individual emission sources, enabling effective monitoring of key facilities such as power plants and landfills.

Su said the detector's observation range covers latitudes from 42 degrees south to 42 degrees north — encompassing most of the world's densely populated and industrially active regions. The data it collects will be shared with government departments and research institutions in China and abroad under the nation's data management policies.

She added that recipients include the nation's Ministry of Ecology and Environment, and the United Nations Environment Programme which will add it to an open global dataset for researchers and authorities worldwide.

Zhang Limin, another co-lead of the project and head of HKUST's Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, said that while the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region has participated in many of the nation's space projects in the past, this payload is the first mission led by the SAR — a milestone.

He highlighted that the project's results will also provide a scientific basis for cross-regional climate research and emissions reduction efforts in economies involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, contributing to the global response to climate change.

HKUST President Nancy Ip Yuk-yu said the project proves that Hong Kong's research capabilities can make substantial contributions to the nation's highest-level aerospace platforms.

It also supports the nation's dual-carbon goals and provides scientific backing for the Beautiful China Initiative and global climate governance, Ip said.

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POLICY REVIEW

Guideline boosts gig worker protections

Government policy provides growing oversight over new employment types

By JI HAISHENG
jihaisheng@chinadaily.com.cn

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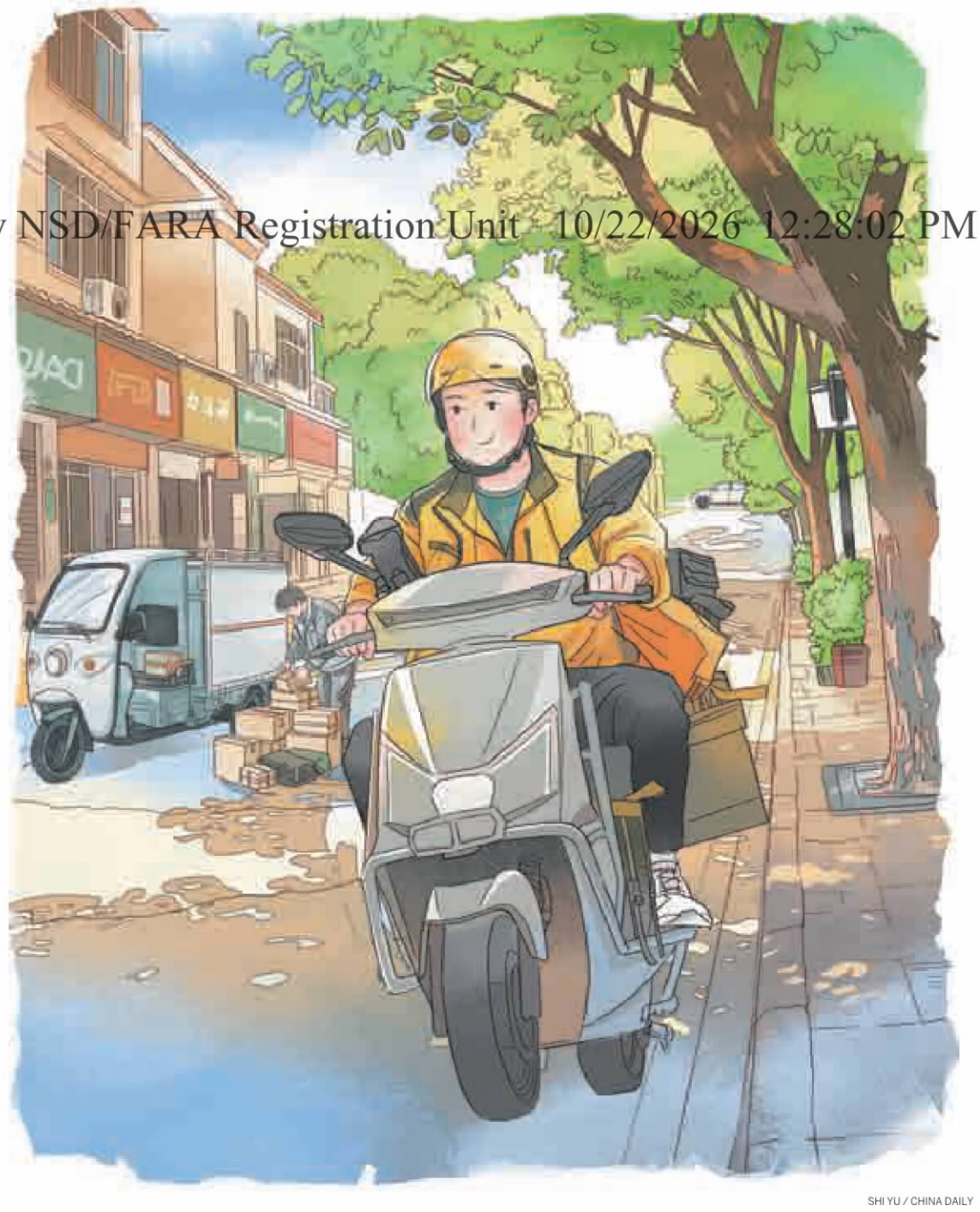

SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

During campus breaks, Xiao Tang, a university student from Hebei province, takes to Beijing's streets as a ride-hailing driver. A driving enthusiast, he has turned his time off campus into a source of income and a tangible sense of autonomy. "I enjoy it. It gives me control over my time," he said.

His experience is a snapshot of a much larger trend. "Young people across China are increasingly turning to digital platforms for work, forming the backbone of the country's expanding 'new forms of employment," said Zeng Yanbo, a researcher at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Sociology.

"New forms of employment" are distinct from traditional full-time work, referring to jobs where tasks are matched, assigned, managed and compensated via internet platforms, such as online service provider Meituan, ride-hailing platform Didi and short-video app Douyin.

More than 70 percent of such workers are aged between 18 and 35, according to Zeng. "Young people are drawn to these jobs mainly for the low entry barriers, the quick settlement of income, and the freedom to set their own schedules," she said.

As this workforce continues to grow, the country has introduced a series of policy measures designed to safeguard these workers' rights, improve services and steer the high-quality development of the sector.

In April, the general offices of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, China's Cabinet, issued a set of policy measures on strengthening service and management for new employment groups. Experts said that this marks the first central-level policy framework dedicated exclusively to platform-based workers.

They added that it signals a decisive shift for China's digital economy — from a phase of rapid expansion to a new stage of standardized development that balances innovation with labor dignity and security.

According to a survey on China's workforce in 2023, the country has approximately 84 million workers engaged in new forms of employment, accounting for 21 percent of its total workforce. Projections indicate the figure may surpass 100 million this year.

"The new employment group is an important component of China's workforce and an indispensable force for socioeconomic development. It has now become a crucial pillar of the job market," said Zhang Dandan, a professor of economics and vice-dean at Peking University's National School of Development.

Li Yan, 37, from Yuncheng in Shanxi province, has spent a decade delivering food in Beijing. For most of those years, he worked as a freelance courier on major platforms, appreciating the flexible hours but lacking any form of employment security.

A pivotal shift came in March of last year, when he joined e-commerce company JD as a full-time delivery rider.

Despite it currently being a low season for orders, Li said he still earns around 8,000 yuan ($1,180) per month. Beyond the pay, a transformative benefit has been his enrollment in a social security program, with JD covering the employer's mandatory contribution and subsidizing employees' personal contributions. For Li, this security has become a tangible foundation for his future. He said he is committed to building a long-term career with the company, with plans to stay until retirement.

While individual stories highlight the search for security, the sector's overall vitality remains robust. A recent report by Jinan University's Institute for Economic and Social Research in Guangdong province and recruitment portal Zhaopin showed job postings in new forms of employment rose 15.1 percent year-on-year in 2025, while job seekers rose 11 percent year-on-year, with over 80 percent of positions offering monthly salaries between 8,001 yuan and 15,000 yuan.

For years, the explosive growth of platform jobs, hailed for creating employment, outpaced the development of corresponding safeguards. "The core challenge lies in the mismatch between a new, flexible employment model and a social protection system designed for traditional, stable jobs," Zhang said.

The newly issued policy document provides a comprehensive, two-phase blueprint to bridge this gap. The primary goal is to standardize labor practices and ensure robust rights protection by 2027, followed by the establishment of a sound service and management system within the next three to five years.

It has urged internet platforms and express delivery companies to set reasonable wages for workers based on work tasks and labor intensity, and to ensure full and timely payment. Another pillar of the reform is bringing transparency and accountability to the algorithms that govern such work. Platforms are now required to disclose rules for order assignment, pricing, assessment and penalties, according to the document.

While the policy direction is clear, experts caution that its implementation faces deep-seated economic challenges. Zhang identified income as the primary, underlying concern. "For riders, the core issue is earnings from each delivery," she said.

Citing a widespread belief that any new cost levied on platforms — for social insurance subsidies or safety incentives — will be passed down to workers, Zhang said, "Real, sustainable security for workers must be built on a foundation of adequate earnings in the first place."

Alongside safeguards, she stressed that it is essential to introduce measures that curb cutthroat competition and strictly prevent the infringement of workers' rights and interests.

Yin Yu, a senior partner at Guangdong-based Guanghe Law Firm, urged lawmakers to expedite dedicated legislation to protect the rights of workers in new employment forms.

She told Legal Daily that the next critical step is to translate the proven measures outlined in the policy document to binding legal statutes. This legislation, she said, should systematically define the nature of employment relationships, the rights and obligations of all parties, liability divisions, and regulatory oversight responsibilities, thereby solidifying the institutional safeguards for this workforce.

Zeng emphasized the urgency of establishing comprehensive skill standards and structured promotion pathways for delivery riders and similar professions. She advocated benchmarking against the technical worker grading system, a strategic move aimed at elevating these roles from temporary positions to viable lifelong careers.

This transformation, she noted, is essential for providing workers with long-term growth opportunities and fundamentally reshaping the perception and stability of platform-based employment.

Delivery platform reforms prioritize riders' safety over speed

By JI HAISHENG

The removal of late-delivery penalties in early 2026 has marked a turning point for China's gig economy, signaling a shift from speed-first algorithms to worker safety.

For veteran riders like Li Xincang, 39, who has navigated Beijing's streets for over a decade, the shift represents the professionalization of a sector once defined by high-risk labor and social insecurity.

When Li, a native of Puyang in Central China's Henan province, arrived in the capital over two decades ago, he started working on construction sites like many other rural migrants.

"The wages were often delayed, and there were no social security benefits at all," he said.

Seeking a more predictable income, he switched to food delivery in 2014 and has worked for consumer services platform Meituan for almost nine years.

Today, the veteran leads a team of over 110 riders and earns more than 10,000 yuan ($1,470) a month. Earnings are deposited quickly, he said, explaining that part-time riders get paid the next day, while full-time team members receive weekly wages.

"Delivery work won't make you rich, but it can support a family steadily," Li said. The reliable and timely income allowed him to pay off debts of over 100,000 yuan and build a decent house back in his hometown.

Beyond the paycheck, Li cherishes the flexibility. "I can choose to work mornings, evenings, or nights, and manage my own schedule. I can even take a moment to relax if I need, or scroll through my phone during a break," he said. "This is something you hardly get on a factory floor or a construction site."

Li said that the most crucial improvement he has witnessed is the reform of the delivery algorithm, the system that organizes his daily work.

"In the past, we could get up to 12 orders at a time, with very tight deadlines. We had to rush and sometimes even risk traffic violations," he said. Now, influenced by the government and stakeholders, the system limits trips to six or seven orders with more reasonable time windows. "The algorithm now puts safety before speed," he added.

The platform reinforces this by issuing warnings or short-term account restrictions for repeated traffic violations. A pivotal relief came in early 2026 when penalties for late deliveries were removed.

"Riders no longer feel forced to risk their lives on the road," Li said. "This shift has significantly reduced the danger of accidents caused by overwork or rushed deliveries."

This growing sense of security extends from the daily grind to long-term planning. A key milestone was the introduction of a pension subsidy program late last year. Li and his teammates are now covered by the program that subsidizes their participation in basic pension insurance for gig workers.

"Compared with construction work that offers no proper social security, this job gives us a greater sense of security," Li said. "This pension scheme will protect us after we retire. Having it makes my family feel truly at ease."

Support on the ground has also been upgraded. Li praised the launch of hubs dedicated to delivery riders, which offer 24/7 shelter, charging ports and seasonal supplies. However, he is critical of commercial outlets that hang similar signs for show without providing real service and suggests resources should be directed toward stations that genuinely help workers.

For Li, the past decade traces a clear path — from chasing immediate wages to building a stable, secure life with a future to look forward to. He acknowledged his own story as part of a broader shift where the nation's policy direction and corporate initiatives are converging to provide millions with not just an income, but a growing sense of dignity.

Li said he may continue riding for a few more years, or he might return to his hometown to promote local farm produce online, leveraging a following he has built on social media.

He added that his plans remain flexible, while his next steps will ultimately depend on his family's needs.

Policy Digest

Roadmap to cultivate global textile leaders

China will cultivate no fewer than 25 leading textile and apparel brands by 2028 as part of efforts to significantly enhance the competitiveness and market influence of the sector, according to an action plan issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and four other departments that was recently publicized.

The action plan for the cultivation of excellence in textile and apparel brands (2026-28) sets out six key tasks, including the categorized cultivation of leading brands across supply chains, industrial ecosystems and consumer markets. Enterprises will be guided to focus on specialized market segments and consumer scenarios to create a group of supply-chain brands and consumer-facing brands.

The plan calls for stronger development of smart textiles, including smart wearables, intelligent home textiles, and products related to healthcare and medical applications.

To promote digital and intelligent upgrading, the plan encourages the release of innovative application scenarios for "AI plus textiles" across the entire industrial chain. It also supports the use of human-computer interaction and virtual interaction to better understand personalized consumer demand, while improving the technological level and wider application of virtual fitting, intelligent outfit recommendations and virtual anchors.

Campaign to uplift rural culture, health services

The Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and 12 other departments recently issued a notice launching the 2026 campaign to bring culture, science and health services to the countryside, aiming to deliver more high-quality resources directly to rural communities.

Under the campaign, cultural and artistic services will be brought to rural areas by mobilizing literary and artistic teams to provide cultural services. Support will also be given to mass cultural and sports activities.

Legal services will be strengthened through regular rural-themed public legal education activities, while agricultural technology services will focus on the needs of rural industrial development.

The campaign will expand science outreach in rural communities through innovative science popularization demonstration activities and high-quality public science content.

Medical resources will be sent to rural communities via free clinic weeks, visits by renowned doctors to grassroots areas, and stationed or mobile medical services at township and village levels, and public welfare services will also be expanded.

Tap water coverage in countryside hits 96%

China's rural tap water coverage reached 96 percent by the end of 2025, the Ministry of Water Resources said on Tuesday.

By the end of last year, large-scale water supply projects covered 71 percent of the rural population, while 72 percent of counties had adopted unified county-level management for rural water supply, the ministry told a press conference.

China had nearly 3.82 million rural water supply projects by the end of 2025, forming a supply network covering 850 million rural residents. The number of people relying mainly on water cellars and water storage tanks for water supply had dropped by 79 percent by the end of last year from the level at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25), areas lifted out of poverty completed 914.9 billion yuan ($133.71 billion) in water conservancy investment, including 145.5 billion yuan in key counties.

China aims to raise rural tap water coverage to 97 percent by the end of 2026, with large-scale water supply projects covering 73 percent of the rural population, according to the ministry. By 2030, the country aims to lift rural tap water coverage to 98 percent.

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CULTURE



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Pearls of perspective

Growing up in China, award-winning novelist worked throughout her life to strengthen cross-cultural understanding, **Yang Yang** reports.

In the history of Sino-US exchanges, Nobel Prize-winner Pearl S Buck, a writer from the United States also known as Sai Zhenzhu, stands prominently as "the most influential Westerner to write about China since the 13th century's Marco Polo", as described by late US historian James C Thomson Jr.

Buck's true significance lies in her approach to cross-cultural understanding, says Guo Yingjian, a specially appointed professor at Renmin University of China, one of the earliest Chinese scholars to research Buck.

"She shows us that effective cultural exchange doesn't start with labels, ideological judgments, or demonization. Instead, it begins with understanding people's lives: their suffering, dignity, and shared emotions," he says.

Through reading her popular and sympathetic novels, particularly *The Good Earth*, Americans' perceptions of China changed significantly in the 1930s and 40s.

"The majority of Chinese were seen for the first time in literature as honest, kindhearted, frugal-living, hard-working, deity-fearing farmers who are much the same as American farmers," wrote Chinese scholar Liao Kang in 1997.

Buck's empathy went beyond pity, reflecting an understanding of others' circumstances, says Guo.

She captured both the hardships and resilience of Chinese farmers, writing about not only poverty but also dignity, not only backwardness but also human complexity, he says. Consequently, the China she depicted, though not a full picture, was warm, textured, and humane, he adds.

One important reason Buck was able to represent Chinese characters with empathy and compassion lies in the fact that "she did not view China as a foreign tourist on a brief visit; rather, she lived and grew up in China, and spent a long time sharing the same world with ordinary Chinese people," says Guo.

Her writing about China did not stem from an abstract "Oriental imagination", but from everyday life, land ethics, family relationships, and basic human emotions, he notes.

A daughter of Southern Presbyterian missionaries, Buck left her hometown of Hillsboro, West Virginia, for China in 1892, when she was about four months old. In 1896, her family moved from Huai'an to Zhenjiang, Jiangsu province, where they lived for the next 18 years.

Unlike other missionaries, Buck's parents, Absalom and Caroline Sydenstricker, chose to live among Chinese people to fully immerse themselves in local culture rather than in isolated Westernized compounds.

Life in Zhenjiang greatly influenced Buck and her writing, especially the daily interactions with her nanny and tutor, says Lu Zhangping, director of the Zhenjiang Pearl S Buck Research Association.

In Zhenjiang, a local Chinese woman surnamed Wang cared for Buck for 18 years. Wang, kind and diligent, often cooked her delicious meals and snacks. Their relationship went far beyond that of servant and master. Wang treated her like her own child. Whenever Buck was punished by her mother for disobedience, Wang would quietly help her with the chores and offer guidance. From a young age, Buck had developed a deep respect and admiration for Chinese women.

Wang often told Buck tales about the famine during her own childhood, her family, and bandits; martial arts stories about standing up to the powerful; fighting injustice; and Chinese classics set in Zhenjiang, including *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, *The Legend of the White Snake* and *The Water Margin* (or Outlaws of the Marsh).

Her parents hired a traditional scholar, 50-year-old Mr Kung, to teach Buck classical Chinese literature and thought. Mr Kung, originally from Beijing, moved to Zhenjiang after his house was burned down by German soldiers.

Every afternoon at 2 pm, Mr Kung arrived at Buck's home for two-hour lessons. He taught her about Confucius, Bodhisattva, Chinese history, classical literature, life maxims, and local customs and traditions. When answering her questions, he went beyond mere book knowledge, emphasizing the connection between the "source" and the "flow" that links the past, present and future. He also encouraged young Buck to study Chinese classical novels and taught her about the "Complete Library of the Four Treasuries" that was stored in Zhenjiang's Wenzong Ge, an ancient library.

For 10 years, through reading classical texts and practicing calligraphy, She not only became well-versed in traditional Chinese classics and familiar with Chinese history, culture and geography, but also developed a beautiful regular-script style of writing, spoke fluent Mandarin, and even learned to carve seals. In Zhenjiang, she also witnessed the miserable lives of victims of the 1905 Yangtze River flood, which provided first-hand material for *The Good Earth*.

In 1910, Pearl Buck returned to the United States to attend Randolph-Macon Woman's College and, shortly after graduating in 1914, returned to China. She taught English in middle schools in Zhenjiang for two years and, after marrying John Lossing Buck in 1917, the couple went north to live in the countryside of Suzhou, Anhui province, to research life and agriculture in rural areas.







Top: Pearl S Buck (right) at a United China Relief fundraising event in the US in 1941. She played an active role in encouraging and organizing fundraising efforts in the US. **Middle left:** Buck speaking at the National Press Club in Washington. **Middle right:** A photo taken on August 17, 2025, in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, shows a Western-style building, which is now home to the Pearl S Buck Memorial House. **Above:** *The Patriot*, released in New York in 1939, was the first novel Pearl S Buck published after receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1938. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"During her four to five years in Suzhou, Pearl Buck learned about the rural areas and farmers in China more profoundly," Lu says.

From 1919 to 1934, the Bucks both taught at the University of Nanking. In the house located at No 3 Pingcang Alley, now in the Gulou Campus of Nanjing University, she completed her first novels, including *East Wind, West Wind* (1930), *The Good Earth* (1931), *Sons* (1933), and *The Mother* (1933), as well as a translation.

In 1933, Buck published the first English translation of *The Water Margin*, one of Chinese literature's Four Great Classic Novels of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), giving it the title *All Men Are Brothers*, a line she learned from the Confucian classic *The Analects*.

In 1938, when Buck received the Nobel Prize in literature, she gave a lecture, *The Chinese Novel*, in which she said, "My earliest knowledge of story, of how to tell and write stories, came to me in China". She also mentioned the "Complete Library of the Four Treasuries" she learned from Mr Kung.

The Good Earth, featuring a poor Chinese farmer's family caught in the tides of history, became an instant best-seller in the US and was translated into more than 30 languages. It won the Pulitzer Prize in 1932. In 1937, a film adaptation was produced and won an Oscar for Best Actress the following year.

In 1934, with much reluctance, Pearl Buck left China, but her connection with the Chinese people was never severed.

Since the 1920s, she had been writing articles for US magazines, including The Atlantic, Asia, The Chinese Recorder, and The Nation, on Chinese farmer's life, culture, the shifting roles of women, and China's social dynamics.

In the United States, Buck fully committed herself to humanitarian and cultural endeavors related to China.

In 1941, she became president of Asia magazine to promote modern Chinese literature, aiming to create vibrant, multidimensional Chinese characters that challenged Western stereotypes.

The same year, the East and West Association was established, and as the president, Buck utilized lectures, publications, broadcasts, and translations to spread Chinese culture and provide crucial international support for wartime China.

In 1943, Buck joined the Citizens Committee to Repeal Chinese Exclusion as a key spokesperson, publicly criticizing the exclusion laws. Her efforts contributed to the repeal of the Chinese Exclusion Act later that year.

During the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), Buck steadfastly supported China's mission. Since the September 18th Incident in 1931, she had openly condemned Japanese militarism and consistently informed the American public about the realities of the war in China.

To aid China, she initiated the Book of Hope fundraising campaign in 1940 and subsequently led the China Emergency Relief Committee and the United China Relief agency, organizing large-scale fundraising efforts to provide medical supplies, build hospitals, and aid civilians and war orphans.

Throughout the war, she frequently used media platforms to voice her support. In 1938, she reviewed the book *Red Star Over China*, predicting China's revolutionary victory and in another article published later that year she praised Chinese guerrilla tactics. In 1942, she published the novel *Dragon Seed*, set against the backdrop of the Nanjing Massacre in 1937, during which 300,000 Chinese soldiers and civilians were killed, making it one of the most horrific atrocities of World War II.

In 1938, in the Banquet Speech of the Nobel Prize, Buck said: "I have never admired China more than I do now, when I see her uniting as she has never before, against the enemy who threatens her freedom. With this determination for freedom, which is in so profound a sense the essential quality in her nature, I know that she is unconquerable."

In 1945, she witnessed Japan's surrender to the Allies, marking the end of the war. In 1973, Buck died in Danby, Vermont, at 80. According to her will, her tombstone at Green Hills Farm in Pennsylvania bears no English name, no birth or death dates, and no epitaph — only three Chinese characters in seal script, handwritten by Buck herself: *Sai Zhen Zhu*, her Chinese name.

In the Statement on the Death of Pearl S Buck in 1973, former US president Richard Nixon said: "In life, Pearl Buck was a human bridge between the civilization of the East and West."

Today, China is quite different from the one depicted in Buck's works. Characterized with modernity, urbanization, globalization, and digitalization, modern China is a far cry from the one focused on land, villages, and family ethics in *The Good Earth*, Guo, the professor, says.

"If we still read Buck solely as a way to understand China's reality, we're missing the point," Guo says.

"In today's context of challenging Sino-US relations, her significance is in her reminder that even if relations between countries are tense, the possibility for understanding between individuals should remain," Guo says, adding, "It is an agreement we reached after discussing the significance of Pearl Buck with the Ministry of Education's China Center for International People-to-People Exchange in current cultural exchanges.

"No matter how dominant political narratives become, they cannot completely obscure the reality of ordinary people's lives. While the China she wrote about is in the past, the method she represents — understanding people through their humanity — is still relevant today," he stresses.

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A well-versed exchange between Chinese and Arab writers

GUANGZHOU — Young poets, writers and scholars from China and Arab countries have gathered in South China's Guangzhou, Guangdong province, for a poetry festival aimed at deepening literary dialogue and people-to-people exchanges.

A China-Arab States special session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival began over the weekend in the southern metropolis, drawing more than 40 young poets, Sinologists and writers from 13 Arab countries, including Morocco, Syria and Egypt, alongside more than 40 young Chinese poets.

The event will run through Sunday. In the coming days, Chinese and Arab poets will take part in a series of cultural exchange activities in Guangzhou, Shenzhen, both in Guangdong province, and Beijing, including poetry readings, academic dialogues, poetry seminars, and field visits.





The opening ceremony of China-Arab States special session of the 2026 International Youth Poetry Festival in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on May 9. PHOTOS BY LU HANXIN / XINHUA

"Though separated by thousands of miles and different languages, the two great poetic traditions of China and the Arab world have become both the root and soul of their civilizations, with condensed language, profound wisdom, and sincere emotion," says Zhang Hongsen, chairman of the China Writers Association.

Zhang says he hopes young poets from both sides will draw inspiration from one another while staying rooted in their own cultures, allowing poetry to flourish through exchanges between tradition and modernity, and the local and the global.

For Egyptian poet Yahia Mohamed Wagdy Lotfy Omar, poetry can travel across languages and borders.

"When I write a line of poetry, a friend on the other side of the world who speaks a different language can still be moved by it and understand it. That is poetry," he says, adding that translation serves as an important bridge, and such gatherings can help poets break through their own limitations.

Launched by the China Writers Association in 2024, the International Youth Poetry Festival has previously held special sessions for BRICS countries and China-Latin America exchanges.

Organizers say the platform is growing into an international venue for young writers to promote literary dialogue and mutual learning among civilizations.

XINHUA



LIFE



Blending tea culture with travel

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Enthusiast-turned-entrepreneur shares his appreciation for the drink along with his sourcing adventures, report **Zheng Zheng** and **Wu Wanzhen** in Shanghai.

When Derek Poskin first arrived in the historic canal city of Yangzhou, Jiangsu province, in 2016, he was tracing a poem by Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai and developing a growing appreciation for Chinese tea culture. Nearly a decade later, the American, born in 1988, has become a tea entrepreneur, sourcing premium leaves across China and selling them to customers worldwide.

"Coffee is for work. Tea, though, is for life. I've always been passionate about Chinese tea," Poskin says from Empty Cup, his renovated tea house nestled in Yangzhou's old quarter, where he introduces visitors from around the world to China's tea traditions.

"I started drinking and buying more, and eventually turned my house into a warehouse. I had to share it somehow, and that's how the business began."





From passion to business

Poskin launched his tea venture in 2018 as a side project, aiming to connect Western tea enthusiasts with the traditions behind it. However, the early years were challenging.

"The first three or four years were really slow," he admits, recalling how only family members purchased his products initially. "I still remember the first time I got an order from somebody I didn't know. I was like, 'Oh my gosh'. That was the moment I knew I was making it. It's been a long, long process."

Navigating China's tea landscape is no simple feat. The country produces thousands of varieties across six main categories — green, white, yellow, oolong, black, and dark teas like Pu'er.

Rather than working through middlemen, Poskin travels directly to tea-growing regions across China, from the ancient forests of Yunnan province in the southwest to the oolong gardens of Fujian province along the eastern coast.

"One of the reasons I came to China was to live the tea culture. The best way to do that is to go where the tea is made," he explains. "Before coming to China, I had been drinking tea for a long time but had never actually seen a tea plant. Now I've hiked through some of the country's most remote tea mountains."

Connective expeditions

One of Poskin's most memorable expeditions took him to Guafengzhai, a remote village of the Yao ethnic group in Yunnan's Yiwu town, about two kilometers from the border with Laos. Renowned for its high-quality Pu'er tea, the village had long been a bucket list destination for the entrepreneur.

The journey began with a leap of faith — connecting through social media with a young, local farmer named Zhao Xiaoyun. "I had this prearranged date with a person I'd never met, in a town I'd never been to, to venture to the borders of China," Poskin recalls. "But as soon as I met her, I knew we were on the same page. We both spoke the language of tea."

The four-day expedition immersed him in every aspect of tea production. Joining Zhao, her mother, sister, and friends deep in the tea forests, he picked leaves, laid them out to sundry, and helped with the roasting.

"We've hosted foreign tea merchants who have visited our plantation for business before, but Derek stands out for his exceptional knowledge of tea," says Zhao. "When we taught him the leaf fixation process, a critical step that halts oxidation and preserves flavor, he learned it immediately."

The primeval forests, with tea trees hundreds of years old growing wild among other vegetation, left an enduring impression. "Walking through those ancient groves felt like stepping into another world," Poskin describes. "The farmers would point out edible herbs along the way, letting me taste spicy leaves that would numb my mouth like Sichuan peppercorns.

"That's one of the most magical aspects — experiencing the land with the people who live on it," he adds.

Pieces of a puzzle

Poskin's dedication to understanding tea goes beyond sourcing trips. He spent a year in Chaozhou, Guangdong province, studying the art of making clay teapots used for *gongfu cha* (tea with skill). This method uses small pots and cups to bring out complex flavors through multiple short infusions.

He has participated in some local customs and festivals during his trips, often as the only foreigner. "One time, around Qingming Festival, I was invited to join a family's tomb-sweeping ritual," he recounts. "We killed chickens, burned incense and paper money, and set out meals for the ancestors. It was incredible to be part of that living tea culture."

The tea is just the surface, he emphasizes. "When I experience the world through the eyes of the people in the mountains, I realize how deep tea culture really is. The leaves themselves are just a piece of the puzzle."

Through his travels across different provinces, Poskin's understanding of the drink itself has shifted from a search for correctness to an appreciation for diversity.

"I came thinking there was one correct way to drink tea," he explains. "But I've learned that Chinese tea culture is incredibly fluid and varies by region." For example, people might drink green tea straight from a glass jar in Yangzhou, while in Chaozhou, elaborate *gongfu cha* sets are the norm.

"Chinese tea culture is fluid, more Taoist," he says. "Every place has its own style, and any way you drink tea is the right way. I find that very welcoming and liberating."

Bridging East and West

These experiences have become central to his business model. Poskin documents his sourcing journeys through videos and photographs, sharing them with customers to create transparency and a connection between consumers and producers.

His content creation extends to a podcast called Tea Soup, a YouTube channel, and an active social media presence through which he has built a following of enthusiasts eager to learn about authentic Chinese tea culture.



Clockwise from top: Derek Poskin on the tea mountain in Guafengzhai, which is located on the southwest border of Yunnan province and is renowned for its high-quality Pu'er tea; The leaf fixation process; Poskin shows fresh and sun-dried tea leaves; Poskin and Zhao rolling tea leaves. PHOTOS BY ZHENG ZHENG / CHINA DAILY

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Most of his customers are based in the United States, with significant sales to Germany and other EU countries. To introduce premium flavors to a wider audience, he utilizes blending techniques that maintain high quality while remaining affordable.

"I buy some really good tea and blend it with a less expensive tea that complements it, so people can try something high-quality at an affordable price," he explains. For each product, he creates detailed tasting notes, origin information, and brewing instructions.

Unlike many e-commerce businesses, Poskin operates exclusively through his own website, maintaining full control over the customer experience — from freshly coined tea names to packaging designs. "It's something I have complete control of. For me, this is a creative expression," he says.

Looking ahead, Poskin envisions his business evolving into a social enterprise that gives back to farming communities. His new teahouse project in Yangzhou aims to create a physical space where people can experience Chinese tea culture firsthand.

"The business is doing well. My partner and I are interested in making it a social enterprise — giving back to the farmers and doing something positive," he reflects. "I don't need to make endless money. I'd rather cap it and use the excess for good.

"From the start, this has been a passion project," he emphasizes. "I want a deeper understanding of Chinese tea, to source better tea, and to awaken more people to Chinese tea culture."

Reflecting on a decade in China, Poskin offers fellow entrepreneurs a perspective of patience. "China is a world of opportunities. There are so many people who can help you. But don't rush it," he notes. "Great things take years, and then they happen all at once."

Contact the writers at zhengzheng@chinadaily.com.cn

Salon and music strengthen Sino-New Zealand friendship

WELLINGTON — Featuring a concert by the Amber Quartet, the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" in late April integrated Chinese tea culture with classical Western music in Auckland, New Zealand's largest city.

Organized by the China Cultural Center in Auckland, the event opened with tea tasting, traditional tea preparation, tea appreciation, and storytelling about tea culture, creating an elegant, harmonious atmosphere. Participants were invited to make a personalized cup of tea using an ancient Chinese style in which tea powder is applied to "draw" pictures on the tea's foam.

The Amber Quartet was founded in 2005 and has become an internationally influential string quartet in China. During the event, Debussy's *String Quartet* and works featuring the ethnic cultures of both countries were performed. "They were truly amazing," Sharon Ann from the audience says, speaking of the performers' superb skills.

Chen Shijie, Chinese consul general in Auckland, says that the event uses music as a bridge and tea as a bond to convey the friendship of the Chinese people, helping deepen mutual understanding and relations between the people of China and New Zealand, and strengthening the public foundation of bilateral relations.

Bob Harvey, former mayor of Waitakere, says he values the historical ties and current cooperation with China. "This night is cemented with tea for harmony and peace. It is such a special moment."





Left: A participant experiences traditional Chinese tea culture during the "Tea for Harmony: Yaji Cultural Salon" in Auckland, New Zealand, in April. **Right:** Auckland people enjoy traditional Chinese tea culture at the event organized by the city's China Cultural Center.
PHOTOS BY WU JIAXIANG / XINHUA

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LIFE

An island's women on wheels

On remote Qushan in Zhejiang province, a team of female delivery drivers is reshaping traditional roles, balancing motherhood and work while forging independence and solidarity, **Chen Nan** reports.

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Part of the Zhoushan Islands in China's Zhejiang province, hundreds of kilometers from the mainland, lies Qushan Island, home to fewer than 100,000 residents.

Life here revolves around a main road, which is a narrow stretch lined with schools, a clinic, a handful of shops, four bubble-tea cafes, and a lone coffeehouse. This modest cluster forms the island's "central business district". Yet, in the past year, it has become the stage for an extraordinary cast of women.

They are mothers averaging 40 years of age who have traded the predictable rhythms of domestic life for the hum of electric scooters and the uniform of the island's delivery service. Day after day, clad in orange and black, they navigate winding lanes and stair-stepped alleyways, threading the island together one takeout order at a time.

Once tied to roles defined by family and circumstance, such as wives awaiting fishermen at sea, and mothers trapped in part-time work, they now claim a new agency in these small, daily movements, quietly "rebuilding themselves" with every delivery.

From February to March this year, renowned Chinese photographer Xie Hailong, whose work has chronicled ordinary lives for 35 years, visited Qushan, drawn by curiosity.

"On an island surrounded by wind and sea, I wanted to see how these women could seize their own lives," he says. More than 10 of his photographs are being displayed in an exhibition titled *Seeing: Cities and Riders*, running from April 17 to the coming Sunday at public locations across 12 cities nationwide, capturing these women, who root themselves in a life defined not by circumstance, but by choice, against the rhythm of waves and wind.

Xie, 75, is known for a photo that he took in 1991, telling the story of Su Mingjuan, then 8 years old, with great sparkling eyes and a pencil in hand, in rural Jinzhai county, Anhui province. The photo became a household image after it was used as a poster for Project Hope, which was launched by the China Youth Development Foundation in 1989 and is dedicated to helping underprivileged children get an education.

Xie was inspired by a video online that he watched in 2025, featuring this group of women whose optimism, smiles and authenticity shone through every frame.

"I was captivated by their energy and found myself curious about this unique team — how, in such an isolated place, surrounded only by wind and sea, could they courageously choose their path, work tirelessly, and hold tightly to the life they wanted to live," the photographer says.

The first time he saw them in person, their vibe instantly drew him in. They were a diverse group of women, aged between 30 and 50, all dressed in bright orange uniforms. They gathered at the "CBD" of the island and chatted and laughed together.

"Their electric bikes were parked nearby, and they were like a burst of color against the backdrop of the island. When an order came in, one of them would zip off to deliver it, only to return afterward and join the group once again," says Xie.

During the days when their husbands were out at sea, these women became each other's family, supporting one another through thick and thin. When one of them had fewer orders, the others would step in and share theirs. If a newcomer was unfamiliar with the island's streets, the experienced riders would patiently guide her. Between orders, they would pull out little mirrors and lipsticks to touch up their makeup, reminding each other that, even in their uniforms, they never forgot the importance of feeling beautiful.

"It is a life that is both modest and deeply connected, where community comes first, and every little act of kindness carries weight. These women aren't just making deliveries; they are building lives for themselves and each other, grounded in determination, sisterhood and joy," the photographer says.

Among these women is Chen Lirong, born in 1997 and the youngest and fastest of Qushan's female riders. She is also the navigator, the one steering the small team through the chaos of rising orders. Each day begins at 7 am with the routine of family: delivering her two daughters to school. By 8:30 am, her delivery box is already brimming with orders. She rides until mid-afternoon, pauses to pick up her children, and then continues the cycle — juggling work and motherhood with the precision of someone who has spent years learning to adapt.





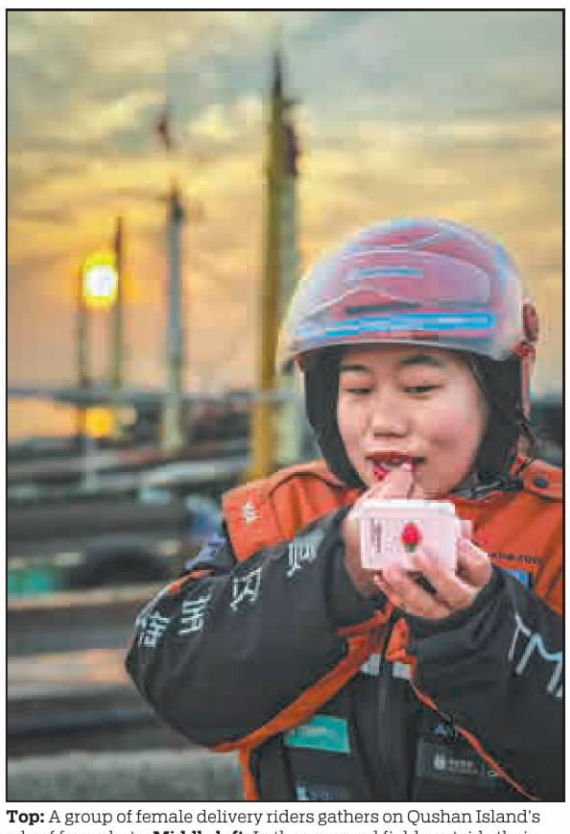
> "These women aren't just making deliveries; they are building lives for themselves and each other, grounded in determination, sisterhood and joy."
>
> **Xie Hailong,** veteran photographer

For Chen, deliveries are more than a job; it is the first work she has ever held that allows her to earn a living while tending to her children. Even at the busiest moments, she can glance at her phone, or quickly dash out an order and return home to care for her daughters.

In April 2025, when Taobao Shangou, or Taobao Instant Commerce, an online daily life services platform, officially launched operations on Qushan Island, Chen's reliability earned her the trust of Hu Gaoyang, the logistics manager. She became the leader of the all-female riders, guiding new mothers into the unfamiliar, physically demanding world of delivery work.

Initially, both Chen and Hu worried that the women, many long accustomed to full-time childcare or household work, might not adapt to the harsh rhythms of outdoor delivery. But as the first surge of orders hit, those doubts quickly vanished.

During the summer of 2025, order volumes skyrocketed by more than 1,000 percent. Some riders, brand-new to the job, handled 189 deliveries in a single day, and over the course of a month, completed more than 2,000.



Top: A group of female delivery riders gathers on Qushan Island's wharf for a photo. **Middle left:** In the rapeseed fields outside their homes, team member Wang Jinrong (left) picks a yellow flower, placing it on team leader Chen Lirong's head. **Middle right:** On an island with almost no elevators, these female delivery riders climb four to five floors per order — sometimes scaling hundreds of stairs in a single day. **Above:** Thirty-three-year-old Xu Limei loves bright lipstick. PHOTOS BY XIE HAILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chen herself was no stranger to struggle. Born in Anhui, she had drifted from factory work in Guangdong province to follow her husband to Jiangsu province. By 2016, marriage and childbirth brought her to Qushan, where her husband became a fisherman and she a homemaker, bound to domestic responsibilities while he went out to sea. Early one March morning, photographer Xie captured a photograph of her sending her husband off at 4 am, the harbor dark and silent.

"There was no dramatic embrace," Xie recalls. "Just a quiet farewell. The silent care between them hit me harder than any posed shot. I found myself tearing up behind the camera."

Raising two daughters while managing household repairs, medical trips and family errands, Chen's desire to work and earn never waned. A previous job in a local factory ended when it shut down, leaving her life once again in a transitional state. But as a delivery rider, she found not only an income, but also her calling. She schedules her team around childcare needs: mothers with younger children ride the mid-shift, those with older children the early shift, while those without children cover the late hours. In high season, she stays late to help manage orders herself, ensuring no one is overburdened.

At 46, Hu Yingrong became the first female delivery rider to join Chen's team. Having lived on the island for nearly 20 years, she's seen her life unfold in ways she never expected. Her eldest daughter is now in college, while her youngest son is still in middle school.

For nearly a decade, Hu Yingrong searched for work on the island that would allow her to balance earning an income with taking care of her children. Before she became a delivery rider, she tried various jobs but found herself doing the laborious task of mending fishing nets.

For a decade, she was bound to those nets. While the men of the island used fishing nets to bring in the harvest, Hu believed that women on the island had their own "mission" — the work of repairing and maintaining them. When the boats returned from fishing, they were filled with nets that needed mending: some torn and some covered in small fish and shrimp that had to be removed.

When her children were on vacation or at school, she would work in a fishnet factory surrounded by piles of discarded nets alongside other women just like her. They worked from sunrise to sunset, often losing track of time.

Then, in 2025, a new opportunity appeared. She became the second female delivery rider on the island, marking the beginning of a new chapter in her life. Finally, she had a job with a base salary, and the harder she worked, the more she earned.

However, the transition wasn't easy. Unlike younger riders like Chen, Hu Yingrong struggled at first. When she joined the team, she was faced with the busy periods of July and August — times when the number of orders was overwhelming. She couldn't even read the delivery routes on her phone's navigation system because they looked like a tangle of branches and twigs, constantly splitting and extending. But with persistence and a willingness to learn, she quickly adapted.

The island is full of buildings without elevators, and she often found herself climbing staircases, sometimes multiple flights in a row.

"My legs would hurt so much," she says, recalling the physical toll. Yet, she pushed through and excelled during the peak seasons, earning over 10,000 yuan ($1,472) a month — figures she had never dreamed of while working in the factory. During the off-season, she could still make 7,000 to 8,000 yuan — an amount that once seemed impossible.

Now, she has carved out some time for herself. After sending her son to school in the morning, and finishing her deliveries, she returns home to do housework or tend to her small vegetable garden.

The exhibition also features photos of other delivery riders taken by other photographers. According to the photo exhibition's curator Yang Han, more than 2,000 works were submitted for the event, with nearly 100,000 riders participating in the voting to select 200 images to be exhibited. The total number of votes surpassed 1 million.

Alongside Xie, more than 50 other photographers are featured, including Zhang Boyuan who has taken pictures of Tang Qi, a rider in Chengdu, Sichuan province, who twice jumped into an icy river to save people.

"Many photographers and ordinary people pick up their cameras and phones to document the riders around them," Yang notes.

"If your pictures aren't good enough, you aren't close enough," Xie says, quoting famous war photographer Robert Capa. "The same applies to portrait photography — this 'closeness' refers to how close you are to the life and heart of the person you're photographing.

"During this shoot, I was moved to tears several times by the passion and optimism of these mothers. Each of them faces various difficulties at home, yet they still wear a smile on their faces. In the past, I've often revisited the children I photographed for Project Hope, checking in on them every few years to see if they're still in school. I hope that in the future, I'll have the chance to return to this small island, to the 'CBD' they've been waiting for, to that little milk tea shop, and see them still wearing smiles on their faces, with their lives getting better and better," Xie says.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Ancelotti: Neymar call to be made on form, not sentiment

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As Brazil's coach gets set to announce his World Cup squad, questions remain over inclusion of 34-year-old Santos star



Neymar (center) of Brazilian side Santos fights for the ball with Matias Reali (left) and Manuel Insaurralde of Argentine club San Lorenzo during a Copa Sudamericana group-stage match at the Pedro Bidegain stadium in Buenos Aires in April. AFP

Carlo Ancelotti will walk into Monday's Brazil squad announcement with a nation peering over his shoulder and one burning question hanging in the Rio de Janeiro air: Neymar, or no Neymar?

The 34-year-old forward is Brazil's all-time leading scorer, but his place at the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off next month, hangs in the balance after years of injury troubles and an underwhelming return to Santos.

That leaves Ancelotti weighing romance against the cold, practical demands of fitness, as he lays out his high-intensity blueprint for the record five-time champion.

"When you have to choose, you have to consider many things," Ancelotti told reporters on Tuesday.

"Neymar is an important player for this country because of the talent he has always shown, but he has had problems and is working hard to recover. He has improved a lot recently, and is playing regularly. It is, obviously, not such an easy decision for me. We have to weigh up the pros and cons carefully."

Ancelotti hosted reporters at the Brazilian Football Confederation's headquarters in Rio, overlooking Barra da Tijuca, and spoke about the delicate selection call with the calm that has defined one of soccer's most decorated managerial careers.

The Italian is the only coach to have won league titles in all of Europe's big five leagues and has lifted a record five Champions League trophies as a manager, in addition to two as a player.

'Much loved'

Yet, few selection decisions will be picked apart quite like this one. Teammates have publicly lobbied for Neymar's inclusion, while supporters remain split between affection and anxiety over whether his body can still keep pace with his imagination.

"I know full well that Neymar is much loved, not only by the public, but also by the players," Ancelotti said.

"This is also a factor, because we have to consider the atmosphere that will surround Neymar's call-up. It's not as if I'm going to drop a bombshell in the dressing room. He's very well-liked, he's very much loved.

"I think it's normal for the players to express their opinion. I'm grateful to everyone who has given me advice; I thank you all.

"But, ultimately, the right person to make this decision, the one best placed to do so, is me."

Asked whether the players' appeals had influenced him, Ancelotti said they mattered only in one respect: they underlined that Neymar would not disrupt the group.

For Ancelotti, the dressing room is not the concern. The circus outside it may be.

"The internal atmosphere, I don't think it will affect the team at all. The atmosphere is a very positive, very clean one, and no matter which player is in the squad, it will remain positive and clean right to the end," Ancelotti said.

"But I can't control the external atmosphere and what the media says."

'Improved'

The bigger question may be whether or not Neymar still fits the soccer Ancelotti wants: four forwards who can run, press and track back, a demanding template for a player who has struggled to string together a sustained run of matches.



Carlo Ancelotti

The Italian, however, said Neymar had shown signs of progress.

"He has improved his fitness a lot in recent matches," Ancelotti said.

"He has played some very good matches lately and he can maintain a high intensity in a match, but there are matches and matches..."

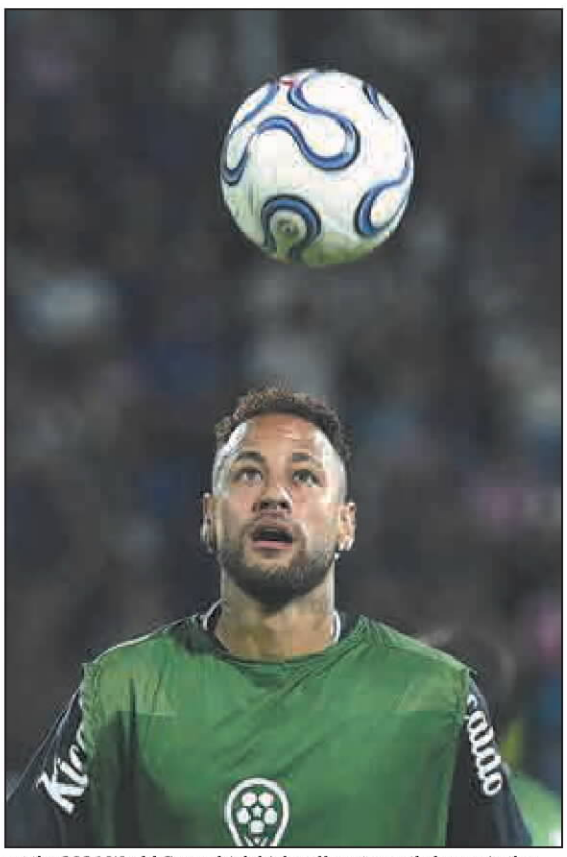
Ancelotti said the decision whether or not to select Neymar would be his alone.

"I haven't been pressured by anyone to call up Neymar. I have complete autonomy," he said. "The decision will be 100 percent professional. I will only take into account how he is performing as a footballer. Nothing else.

"Can I draw up a perfect squad? Impossible! But I can draw up a squad with fewer mistakes than others who might do so. Of that I am certain."

REUTERS





The 34-year-old Neymar is Brazil's all-time leading scorer, but his place at the 2026 World Cup, which kicks off next month, hangs in the balance after years of injury troubles and an underwhelming return to Santos, though he has shown signs of progress recently. REUTERS / AFP

With 30 days to go, LA has everything in place for the World Cup — except the pitch

INGLEWOOD, California — With 30 days to go until its first World Cup match, Los Angeles has the transportation and food nailed down. The playing surface, though? Not just yet.

The United States opens its campaign at SoFi Stadium (to be known as Los Angeles Stadium) against Paraguay on June 12, the first of eight matches to be played at the NFL stadium in Inglewood.

On Tuesday, though, the field was still dirt.

That was set to change on Wednesday, when, after a 1,600-mile trip in refrigerated trucks from Washington state, sod was due to arrive, ready to be laid over the next two days.

"This surface is the players' stage," said Otto Benedict, senior vice-president of facilities and campus operation for SoFi Stadium.

Construction on the field began April 13 after the stadium hosted a Monster truck event.

The stadium modified the field shared by the NFL's Los Angeles Rams and Los Angeles Chargers in two phases. Auxiliary space and wider dimensions were created by removing corner seats to meet FIFA specifications, and a sophisticated irrigation system was installed to maintain the grass.

"To be the place where the energy first ignites, where the home crowd gets to set the tone for the rest of the tournament is a responsibility we don't take lightly," Benedict said.

Construction, landscape, grass and engineering crews were applauded by local World Cup organizers and community ambassador Magic Johnson, who pointed out his suite where he'll be watching.

"When you think about the financial impact it's going to have on Los Angeles, it's going to be amazing," said Johnson, who is a co-owner of LAFC in Major League Soccer and the Washington Spirit of the National Women's Soccer League.

Tours of the stadium during the tournament are being sold for $86.50 and premium seats, suites and hospitality packages are still available.

Fans availing themselves of those tickets will have access to a variety of food and drink options, from lime marinated shrimp and spiced lamb rack, to aged ribeye cap with bordelaise and mashed potatoes.

There is also a range of themed desserts, including a World Cup trophy made of chocolate mousse, raspberry, chocolate crunch and chocolate sponge.

Metro debuted special edition TAP cards featuring three FIFA-themed designs, 17 country-specific designs, four FIFA collector cards, including a light-up card, and a collector's box.

"We want to provide a system that is safe, fast and fun," LA Metro CEO Stephanie Wiggins said.

Metro is working with 11 other transit lines in the region to offer direct-to-stadium bus services for $3.75 from 15 park-and-ride lots in the LA and Orange counties. Reserved parking lots range in price from $55 to more than $100. Fans can access 300 dedicated buses to every match in an effort to avoid disrupting regular services.

The official FIFA Fan Festival will be held from June 11-14 at Los Angeles Memorial Coliseum with big screens showing games. Ten fan zones around LA county will host activities and watch parties.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA





Los Angeles' SoFi Stadium hosts an event marking 30 days until the World Cup on Tuesday, featuring themed desserts of a World Cup trophy made of chocolate mousse and a soccer ball filled with vanilla mousse, that will be available to fans during the tournament. AFP / AP

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Ebola emergency
WHO warns of the virus' cross-border spread risks
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Desert museum reveals dunes' hidden wonders
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Smart caregivers
AI helps elderly citizens address health concerns from home
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, MAY 18, 2026

WORLD WATCH
By Michael Dunford

Country moving toward common prosperity

Since reform and opening-up, China has emphasized a development-oriented approach to poverty alleviation. In contemporary China, labor is the main determinant of distribution, with individuals paid according to their work. For this reason, poverty reduction is achieved primarily by enabling people to earn income through useful employment.

At the same time, China has balanced its development-driven measures with welfare-oriented tools.

For example, as not all rural households could support themselves through work, the minimum living allowance system, known as the *dibao* system, was extended to rural areas in 2007. This program provided unconditional cash transfers to the rural poor.

In 2003, a new rural cooperative medical system — an affordable public insurance program for rural residents that covers inpatient services and catastrophic illnesses, with rising reimbursement rates — was put in place. By 2013, this program had covered nearly 99 percent of the rural population.

The targeted poverty alleviation program, launched in 2013, continued along this path.

In particular, members of poor households were identified not just in terms of livelihood circumstances and income-generation capabilities, but also in terms of their access to education and healthcare. Attention was also paid to targeted support for people whose special circumstances, such as illness and disability, prevented participation in paid work.

By the end of 2020, the targeted poverty alleviation campaign had eradicated absolute poverty. The 98.99 million people who remained under the threshold in 2012 were lifted out of poverty, with many moving well above the threshold. All the 832 impoverished counties and 128,000 poor villages were lifted out of poverty. As a result, living standards of the people involved improved significantly.

With the completion of the program in 2020, the goals changed to addressing the risks that people might fall back into poverty, as well as rural vitalization, the normalization of support, enhanced social assistance and continuing efforts to equalize the provision of public services.

China also is moving toward the broader goal of achieving common prosperity, and the country's development philosophy has evolved in a more multidimensional direction, in which its high-quality development incorporates environmental sustainability, social well-being, human-centered development and public participation.

See ***Welfare,*** *page 3*

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Light-rail launch

Above: A light-rail train runs in Astana, Kazakhstan, on Saturday. The first phase of the Astana Light Rail Transit project, undertaken by the China State Construction Engineering Corp, commenced operations the same day.
Left: Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev (center) rides the light-rail line. He took a ride from the airport station to the National Museum station.
PHOTOS VIA XINHUA

Trade talks achieve positive outcomes

By ZHONG NAN
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The outcomes achieved by China and the United States in their latest round of economic and trade consultations could help bring more certainty and confidence to global industrial and supply chains, and may contribute to stabilizing the world economy amid rising geopolitical and trade uncertainties, market observers and executives said.

The Ministry of Commerce announced on Saturday that China and the US agreed to establish trade and investment councils to address their respective concerns in trade and investment. Through the trade council, the two countries will discuss issues such as tariff reductions on specific products and have agreed in principle to lower tariffs on products of respective concern on an equivalent scale.

The two countries agreed to advance two-way trade through arrangements such as mutual tariff reductions on a range of products, including agricultural goods, while also reaching arrangements on China's purchase of US aircraft and arrangements for the US to ensure the supply of aircraft engines and related parts to China, the ministry said.

The two sides also agreed to resolve or make substantial progress toward resolving nontariff barriers and market access issues involving some agricultural products. For example, the US will actively work to address Chinese concerns including automatic detention measures targeting dairy and aquatic products, while China will actively advance solutions to US concerns regarding beef facility registration and poultry exports from certain US states to China.

Business leaders said the latest outcomes could help create a more stable environment for cross-border business operations and long-term trade and investment planning.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, said that on this basis, the two sides can expand dialogue across more areas and create a more favorable environment for US companies operating in China and vice versa.

Observers said the establishment of trade and investment councils could help institutionalize communication at a time when businesses on both sides are seeking greater regulatory certainty and clarity.

Denis Depoux, global managing director at German management consultancy Roland Berger, said that whatever communication platform is established would be a positive step, helping move the relationship away from the short-term volatility and uncertainty that has characterized it in recent years.

"That does not mean tensions cannot flare up again overnight. But at the very least, it provides a clearer outlook and the prospect of relative stability in the coming months," he said.

Zheng Yongnian, dean of the School of Public Policy at The Chinese University of Hong Kong (Shenzhen), said the essence of China-US economic and trade relations is not a "zero-sum game", but mutually beneficial cooperation built on each side's comparative advantages. The key is to expand cooperation, manage differences and balance openness, development and security, he said.

"The economies of China and the US are highly complementary," Zheng said, adding that as long as mutual demand exists, the scope for cooperation can continue to grow.

US executives from sectors including agriculture and advanced manufacturing said that stable China-US economic ties remain essential for long-term supply chain cooperation and market development.

Brian Sikes, board chair and CEO of US agribusiness group Cargill Inc and a member of the US business delegation that visited Beijing last week, said that he remains optimistic about collaboration with Chinese partners, noting that "food can be a bridge to better relationships".

Achim Loeffler, global business leader of US advanced materials manufacturer Gore-Tex Brand, said that China has become one of the company's most important and fastest-growing markets, driven by rising consumer demand, faster product development cycles and a well-developed supply chain ecosystem.

China-Russia Expo seen as key platform

Xi and Putin send congratulatory letters to event ahead of Russian leader's state visit

By ZHANG YUNBI in Beijing
and **ZHOU HUIYING** in Harbin

President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin have each sent a congratulatory letter to the 10th China-Russia Expo ahead of the Russian leader's upcoming state visit to China.

The expo opened on Sunday in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang province in Northeast China.

In his message, Xi noted that this year marks the 30th anniversary of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

Bilateral cooperation in various fields has been continuously deepened and solidified, achieving fruitful results thanks to the joint efforts of the two countries, Xi said.

It is hoped that the expo will serve as an opportunity for various sectors of the two countries to leverage their geographical proximity and complementary advantages, deepen all-round practical cooperation, further promote economic and social development, and continuously enhance the well-being of the two peoples, he said in the letter.

The goal is to make contributions to the steady and long-term development of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, Xi said.

Putin said in his message that the expo has evolved into the largest exhibition event between the two countries, providing a platform for direct and in-depth dialogue between the two sides.

It is believed that this expo will achieve positive results, plan for new prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries and bring benefits to the two peoples, Putin said.

Last year, bilateral trade totaled $227.9 billion. In the first four months of this year, bilateral trade reached $85.2 billion, a year-on-year increase of 19.7 percent, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry.

Aleksandr Sergeevich Kalashnikov, deputy mayor of Blagoveshchensk, said the expo has seen the number of exhibitors grow year by year, while the lineup of sectors involved continues to expand and diversify, and there are a growing number of agreements in the areas of high technology, joint production and green energy.

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"In the economic sphere, we look forward to an increase in cross-border trade and the creation of new logistics chains. In terms of cultural exchanges, we look forward to expanding student exchanges and joint cultural festivals to strengthen the friendship between our two peoples," he said.

On Saturday, the Chinese Foreign Ministry announced that Putin will pay a two-day state visit to China starting from Tuesday.

Observers have expressed the hope that the visit will enhance bilateral coordination and mutual trust, help inject more certainty and positivity to the world's peace and security, and offer a greater boost to global prosperity and growth.

Since 2013, Xi and Putin have met more than 40 times. Xi has visited Russia 11 times, while Putin has visited China 13 times, according to Xinhua News Agency.

Zhang Hanhui, China's ambassador to Russia, said that cooperation between the two countries has "yielded fruitful results" and "reached new heights one after another".

The two heads of state have led the deepening of political mutual trust and "maintained close communication and coordination on bilateral relations and major international and regional issues", Zhang wrote in an article published on Thursday.

"This is not only a vivid illustration of the profound friendship between the two heads of state, but also a clear manifestation of the maturity and resilience of China-Russia ties. This provides the most fundamental and reliable guarantee for the long-term, healthy and stable development of China-Russia relations," he added.

Chen Wenling, a veteran economist and senior researcher at the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, said the two countries work closely together within multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations, BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and they both oppose hegemony, power politics and unilateralism.

"As two major countries, China and Russia should further play their constructive and leading roles," she said.

Contact the writers at zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

SONG BROCADE WEAVES ITS WAY BACK INTO MODERN LIFE

Once preserve of nation's elites, the traditional textile is now fabric of everyday use

By DENG ZHANGYU
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China Vibes 国潮风尚 GIFTS

When London-based fashion designer Brandon Choi walked into Shi Yi's boutique in downtown Shanghai, he did not expect to leave with plans for the following day.

Captivated by the Song brocade pieces on display, he learned that the centuries-old fabric came from Suzhou, Jiangsu province, where Shi's studio is based.

"See you in Suzhou tomorrow afternoon," he told Shi, who back then assumed it was merely a polite remark — but it was not.

Choi showed up the next day, eager to understand the fabric underneath the shimmer of soft colors and ancient motifs.

Shi has seen that reaction before. During Shanghai Fashion Week in late March, a design team from fashion house Maison Margiela wandered into her shop and ended up buying nearly everything they could carry.

"This is the allure of Song brocade," said the 30-year-old Shi. "Once people see it, it's hard to resist buying it."

That kind of enthusiasm helps explain why Song brocade — once associated with imperial taste and collectors' cabinets — is finding a new audience.

Originating in Suzhou during the Song Dynasty (960-1279), the silk-based fabric has long been prized for its intricate structure, refined patterns and understated grandeur. It was used to mount precious calligraphy and paintings and, at times, to dress the elite.

See ***Brocade,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.



Shi Yi, a Song brocade designer, helps Nikola Chovancova, a Slovak student, try on Song brocade clothing in Shi's studio in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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INDEPTH

The art of resistance in a time of war

Book documents artists' inspiring true tales of survival and sacrifice in countering acts of Japanese aggression



Left: The cover of LIFE magazine in April 1945 that published the article *Woodcuts Help Fight China's Battles*.

Below: Artist Wang Zhaowen sculpts a statue for a soldier at Lu Xun Academy of Arts, or Luyi, in Yan'an, Shaanxi province, in 1942.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





A poignant work by Wu Zuoren of his deceased wife.

By **ZHAO XU**
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"You left me less than three hours ago, and already I am enveloped by a sense of emptiness ... I would not have the strength to endure such loneliness were it not for your future ... I believe you are on the right path," wrote Celina Deprez, a Belgian woman, on June 21, 1938.

Deprez, who had taken the Chinese name "Li Na", was writing to her husband Wu Zuoren, who had set out as a front-line artist to record what he would witness in trenches, field hospitals and refugee camps.

Almost a year earlier, on July 7, 1937, Imperial Japan — already entrenched in northeastern China — escalated its aggression into a nationwide invasion with the Marco Polo Bridge Incident. Within days, China was plunged into the second stage of the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45).

Wu was later recognized as a defining figure in twentieth-century Chinese art, and his sketches would endure as records forged in the immediacy of war — of struggle and sacrifice.

Those struggles and sacrifices were not confined to the front. On Dec 21, 1939, Deprez, amid acute wartime shortages and the absence of adequate medical care, died at the age of 28, after giving birth to the couple's son 20 days earlier. The newborn followed four days later, on Christmas Day.

Wu was devastated, but not undone.

Five months later, he published an article in which he wrote: "Our contemporary artists, myself among them, have been fortunate to be born into this heroic age ..." — words that seem to carry the indelible undertone of his late wife.

Their story forms part of the newly-published book *Art in Service of the Nation — Artists During China's War of Survival*. Author Qin Jianping wrote the book based on her interviews with the artists and their offspring.

"To retrace their journey — both outward and inward — is to relive an era in which a profound humanity converged with an urgent commitment to social reality, a synthesis often absent from earlier Chinese art," she said.

"Out of this charged intersection of conflict and personal trial, modern Chinese art — and, by extension, a vital dimension of the nation itself — took shape."

Enduring tradition

For Qin, to delve into this history is also to trace the origins of her own institution, the Beijing-based Central Academy of Fine Arts, which go back to the National Peking (Beijing) Art School founded in 1918.

Following the Marco Polo Bridge Incident, the two leading art schools of the time — the Peking Art School and its southern counterpart, the National Hangchow (Hangzhou) Art School — were forced into a prolonged wartime exodus. Over the course of eight years and some 8,000 kilometers, they relocated across the country, merging in January 1938 in Hunan province before continuing together through Yunnan and eventually into Sichuan.

They endured relentless aerial bombardment by Japanese forces. On Feb 4, 1939, Wu Guanzhong — then a student at the merged school — watched enemy planes sweep low, releasing their bombs "like a black blizzard into a raging sea of fire". In the aftermath, he made his way back through smoke-choked streets, past bodies strewn along the roads. Thighs were caught on wooden poles, flesh burned, and bone laid bare, he would later recall. He and his fellow students survived only because they had been out of town, sketching.

"Given the extremity of the circumstances, the standards of artistic training they maintained were remarkable," said Qin.

During their 10-month stay in Anjiang village, on the outskirts of Kunming in Yunnan province, the school — consisting of some 250 people — was housed in seven temples, which served as makeshift classrooms.

Qin said discipline did not falter. In an oil painting by faculty member Chang Shuhong local villagers were engaged as nude models — "an extraordinary practice in so conservative a milieu".



Mass Bombings in Chongqing by artist Chang Shuhong.

"What these artists — many trained overseas — sought to do was, in the words of Wu Zuoren, to 'bring inner vision into form through technical command' in order to 'create works at once deeply personal and expressive of a nation under strain'," said Qin.

Between August and November 1937, Chinese forces committed their best troops to meet the Japanese head-on in Shanghai, fighting a brutal street battle that ended in withdrawal at immense cost.

In the immediate aftermath, 18-year-old Zhou Lingzhao painted two large anti-Japanese works, which he and fellow artists carried through the streets of the southern coastal city Guangzhou, Guangdong province, beside a wooden coffin — a stark, galvanizing declaration of a refusal to yield.

In the late summer of 1938, while the Battle of Wuhan in Hubei province was raging, Zhou was in the city, working with a team of artists on a monumental fresco — 45 meters long and 12 meters high — painted on the exterior wall of the city's landmark Yellow Crane Tower as part of the campaign for national resistance.

"I was the youngest, and was therefore assigned the highest section of the fresco, which I painted from a ladder suspended in midair," Zhou recalled in 2014, at the age of 95, in an interview with Qin.

"The fresco stood for less than a month. When Wuhan fell on Oct 25, 1938, after more than four months of fighting, it was destroyed with the tower in the battle's final stages. Yet there was never any doubt: those who had seen it, however briefly, would not forget," said Qin.

Brave performers

Around this time, theater troupes were formed under the direction of Zhou Enlai, who would become premier in 1949 with the founding of the People's Republic of China.

Taking along his eight younger siblings and cousins, Zhou Lingzhao joined the theater troupes and followed them across the wartime front — from Wuhan to Yunnan province on the southwestern Chinese border and on to Burma, where, following the United States' entry into the war after Pearl Harbor, the China-Burma-India Theater was established in early 1942.

Zhou recalled to Qin one harrowing incident in Yunnan.

"On one occasion, I needed to reach the mountaintop trenches. The soldiers led me along a winding path, but I chose a direct route up the steep slope. Climbing on all fours, I grasped what I thought were tufts of grass — only to realize they were the hair of fallen soldiers," he said.

Many of the fallen were no older than Zhou, with some younger. In western Yunnan, where the fiercest fighting of the Allied counteroffensive unfolded in 1944, a memorial now marks the presence of underage soldiers, many in their mid-teens, who volunteered for a victory they believed in but would never see.

Traveling with Zhou was Feng Fasi, a member of the theater troupes attached to the Chinese Expeditionary Force in the China–Burma–India Theater. Like Zhou, he served as an actor, set designer, and poster painter, while also recording the front-line fighting and the troupes' routines and rehearsals with charcoal sticks and brushes.

On one march, Feng came upon a fleeting scene deep in a forest — smoke rising from cooking fires, figures at the water's edge — that was so arresting that he longed to stop and draw. He waited until the troupe made camp more than 20 km away, then secured a horse and rode back alone, a drawing board strapped to his back. Reaching the spot, he set to work at once, and continued until the piece was complete some six hours later. The charcoal drawing, titled *Cooking and Washing in the Forest*, is suffused with an idyllic calm that seems to deny the war beyond it.

"A sense of beauty endured in these men — and from it came their strength to answer the call of their time, and stay hopeful," Qin said.

Safeguarding heritage

In April 1945, four months before Emperor Hirohito announced Japan's surrender in a radio broadcast on Aug 15, LIFE magazine published an article titled "Woodcuts Help Fight China's Battles".

The article introduced US readers to Chinese artists who used woodcuts to disseminate wartime messages among the masses, lifting morale, and mobilizing resistance across the vast nation.

"It is an enlightenment, in the sense that art became a decisive force in shaping modern China and in the emergence of a new artistic language," said Qin.

"The turn to realism in Chinese art carried a sense of inevitability — born of a historical moment defined by destruction and national crisis, in which art was called upon to bear witness and to sustain the nation."

When news of Japan's surrender reached Chang Shuhong, he had already spent nearly two and a half years at the Dunhuang Mogao Grottoes in the forbidding hinterland of northwestern China. It was a commitment forged in Paris in the late 1920s, where he first encountered reproductions of Dunhuang murals and manuscripts — treasures removed from China and preserved in European collections. Confronted with his own heritage in exile, he grasped both its artistic significance and its fragility; what began as an aesthetic awakening became a moral imperative. In early 1942, he carried that conviction to Dunhuang, devoting himself to the preservation and study of the Mogao Grottoes — working in relative isolation even as much of the nation remained at war.

"It was his way of safeguarding his country — not by carrying his work to the front, but behind the lines," said Qin. Upon hearing of China's triumph, Chang climbed to the top of a nine-story wooden structure, its tiers set into the mountainside to house a colossal Buddha, and rang its bell in a burst of elation.

With the war's end, the National Peking Art School and the National Hangchow Art School were reestablished in their original homes.

In 1946, Xu Beihong, a towering figure in modern Chinese art education and mentor to both Wu Zuoren and Feng Fasi, became president of the Beijing school, which would be renamed the Central Academy of Fine Arts in 1950. During the war, Xu vowed to "build a temple of art"— but "not before the war's won".

In 1939, after the death of Wu's wife, Xu wrote to the artist with a quiet injunction. Xu told him to go on "in the spirit of the boat tracker", a reference to Wu's 1933 oil painting, *The Boat Tracker*, painted as a metaphor for national endurance.

Wu, who painted his wife in the hours after her passing, did as his mentor had urged, and carried on for the next half century. During the war, he sketched, painted, and exhibited without pause, devoting himself to the creation of what he called "the art of our tempestuous time".

In 1958, he would assume the presidency of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, stepping into the path first laid by his mentor. In 1988, King Baudouin I of Belgium conferred upon Wu the Order of the Crown in recognition of his artistic achievements.

In that letter she penned in 1938, hours after her husband had left home, for the front line Deprez told Wu: "Fulfillment and happiness are yours no less than mine, nor less than those of your mother, your siblings, and all your loving family. And even as you do so, you devote yourself to your country at a moment of grave urgency, when she calls upon the dedication and labor of her sons more than ever."





Left: Artist Wu Zuoren and his wife Li Na, or Celina Deprez, in their home in Chongqing.
Right: *Cooking and Washing in the Forest* painted by Feng Fasi in 1942 is suffused with an idyllic calm that seems to deny the war beyond it.

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TOP NEWS

Xi, Trump sent clear warning to separatists

Taiwan opposition parties criticize DPP's policies, saying meeting shattered illusions

By **ZHANG YI**
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The China-United States summit has dealt a severe blow to the "pro-independence" stance of Taiwan's ruling Democratic Progressive Party and sent a clear warning to separatist forces, experts said.

During his talks with US President Donald Trump on Thursday, President Xi Jinping underscored that safeguarding peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait remained the biggest common denominator between China and the US.

Noting that the Taiwan question is the most important issue in China-US relations, Xi told Trump that if it is handled properly, the bilateral relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, the two countries will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy. Xi emphasized that "Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are as irreconcilable as fire and water.

In an interview with Fox News on Friday, Trump said: "I'm not looking to have somebody go independent," adding that Taiwan should not expect a "blank check" from the US military.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi, while briefing the media about the summit on Friday, said: "During the meeting, we felt that the US side understands China's position, attaches importance to China's concerns, and, just like the international community, does not stand for or accept Taiwan moving toward independence."

Liu Kuangyu, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Taiwan Studies, said that at the landmark summit, China made clear its stance, its bottom line, propositions, and also sincere goodwill regarding Taiwan-related affairs.

"Rather than letting hostile sentiments spiral upward, the pragmatic exchanges reflected a shared readiness to reduce strategic miscalculations, mitigate cross-Strait tensions, and eliminate the risks of unintended military clashes," Liu said.

He added that the proper and positive handling of the Taiwan question will substantially shape the outcomes achieved at the summit and determine how effectively the two sides can sustain constructive, strategic stability going forward.

Liu said that if China and the US aim to solidify a major-country relationship over the coming years, the Taiwan question must serve as the primary entry point.

Meanwhile, opposition parties and politicians in Taiwan severely condemned the ruling authorities for fabricating cross-Strait crises.

Cheng Li-wun, chairwoman of the major opposition Chinese Kuomintang party, slammed the DPP's cross-Strait strategy, saying that "Taiwan independence" is a dead end that leads nowhere and the summit has shattered the DPP's international illusions.

> "Rather than letting hostile sentiments spiral upward, the pragmatic exchanges reflected a shared readiness to reduce strategic miscalculations, mitigate cross-Strait tensions, and eliminate the risks of unintended military clashes."
>
> **Liu Kuangyu,** a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of Taiwan Studies

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KMT lawmaker Niu Hsu-ting told reporters that the summit's ripple effects will gradually surface, and the US clearly signaled conflict reduction, pouring "cold water" over the DPP's long-held separatist stance and its flawed narrative of guaranteed military defense from the US.

In a statement, Taiwan's Labor Party also warned that the DPP's separatist line remains the primary source of risk driving regional volatility.

The party condemned the administration's continuous military expansion, specifically referencing the newly passed defense budget, of which NT$780 billion ($24.7 billion) has been earmarked for procuring arms from the US.

It said that pouring vast public resources and taxpayers' money into endless weapon purchases directly sacrificed the livelihood of the grassroots.

Looking ahead, Liu of the Institute of Taiwan Studies warned that the US must exercise the utmost prudence to prevent triggering a great-power confrontation and refrain from maintaining illicit ties with the Taiwan authorities across political, military, legal, economic and ideological domains.

"They must recognize that the past tactics of using Taiwan as a so-called pawn or tool to contain China have actually done more harm than good in the long run and ultimately boomeranged," he said.

Only by translating political commitments into tangible actions can both nations consolidate the foundation of strategic mutual trust, he added.

Deadly collision



A crane lifts the charred skeleton of a bus that collided with a train on Saturday in Bangkok, Thailand. The train traveling from Chachoengsao Province to Bang Sue in Bangkok struck the bus at a railway crossing in central Bangkok, triggering a fire that engulfed several cars and motorcycles. The accident left eight people dead and 32 injured, authorities said in a statement. ATHIT PERAWONGMETHA / REUTERS

Experts hail focus on stability after summit

By **LIU JIANQIAO** in Beijing and **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Brussels

The meeting between the leaders of China and the United States in Beijing last week marked another important round of high-level strategic communication between the two countries at a pivotal moment in history.

Observers said they believe the candid and in-depth exchanges helped further strengthen mutual trust, manage differences, expand common ground and advance cooperation. The summit also provided a clearer direction for the future development of China-US relations and sent positive signals to the international community.

President Xi Jinping held talks with visiting US President Donald Trump in Beijing on Thursday. Xi said he has agreed with President Trump on a new vision of building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability.

The "constructive strategic stability" should be positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, sound stability with moderate competition, constant stability with manageable differences, and enduring stability with promises of peace, Xi said.

"We are very glad the summit concluded on a positive note," said John E. Drew, chairman of the board of directors of the World Trade Centers Association. "While the terms of the constructive strategic stability were more of a broad vision for US-China bilateral relations, they mean a lot for the rest of the world, particularly the global business community."

The commitment to greater stability reached by the leaders of the world's two largest economies will help lay a solid foundation for the ongoing restructuring of global supply chains and benefit economies and businesses worldwide, he added.

Park Soong-chan, chairman of the Korea-China Association and a professor of Chinese studies at Yong In University in South Korea, said the meeting between the leaders of China and the US was meaningful and constructive, with both sides agreeing that stable management of bilateral ties and healthy competition serve the interests of both countries.

China and the US together account for about 40 percent of global GDP. Deeper and broader economic and trade cooperation between the two countries will have a positive impact on economic development across the Asia-Pacific region, he said.

"In particular, if supply chain cooperation between the two countries is strengthened, it could become a new turning point for the current fragmented industry and value chain," Park added.

The summit carries significant importance at multiple levels. As major global powers, China and the US both exert far-reaching influence through their domestic and foreign policies, said Hussein Askary, cofounder and vice-president of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden.

"A stable and responsible relationship between China and the United States must also contribute to a more stable and prosperous world. The actions of both countries affect the entire international community, and, therefore, they must work together constructively on major global issues," he said.

From a European perspective, the summit is also of great significance. Both China and the US are key partners of the European Union and wield considerable influence in different ways. The US remains Europe's most important security and political partner, while China is one of the EU's largest economic partners, he said.

"For these reasons, it is in the EU's interest for China and the United States to find ways to cooperate, stabilize the international situation, and support a stable global trading system," Askary added.

Michael Schumann, chairman of the German Federal Association for Economic Development and Foreign Trade, said Trump's visit to China, accompanied by a high-profile delegation of US business leaders, sends an important message: despite strategic competition, the world's two largest economies remain deeply interconnected.

"From a German business perspective, this is encouraging. Stable and improving economic ties between China and the United States are not only in the interest of both countries, they are also essential for global confidence, investment and supply-chain security," he said.

The new vision of "constructive strategic stability" is, therefore, highly relevant. It can gain real credibility only when supported by practical economic cooperation. This reflects what is often referred to in Germany as economic diplomacy: building trust through business ties, dialogue and long-term engagement, Schumann added.

Yang Han in Hong Kong, Yifan Xu in Washington, and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Brocade: Pursuit of elegance embodied

From page 1

Its rarity was no accident.

According to Shen Hui, a national-level inheritor of Song brocade weaving techniques, the craft is so demanding that two weavers must operate the loom together, producing only a few centimeters a day.

"During the Song Dynasty, scholars and artists pursued elegance in every aspect of life," Shen said. "Song brocade was the perfect expression of that spirit."

Now, that same spirit is being translated into daily life.

Shi is among a younger generation of designers bringing Song brocade out of museums and formal wardrobes into modern, everyday accessories and clothing.

Her viral, best-selling brooch featuring a Tang Dynasty (618-907) woman playing polo is just one example. She also produces brocade-covered notebooks and headphone cases, which cost less than 100 yuan ($14.7), while her brocade garments are priced at several thousand yuan.

Shi attributes the surge in popularity partly to the rise of "new Chinese style".

"These fashionable items make an ancient imperial fabric accessible to ordinary people," she said.

For many buyers, the appeal is both visual and emotional.

Nikola Chovancova, a Slovak student at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University in Suzhou, was astonished when she tried on a *qipao* made of Song brocade at Shi's shop. "Gorgeous," Chovancova said. "I love the patterns and colors, so rich and layered. I'm completely in love."

At the Saint Joy center, known for its Song brocade products, the three-story boutique fills up on weekends with shoppers from across China looking for *qipao* and new Chinese-style clothing, some of which can cost tens of thousands of yuan.

"Consumers in their 20s to their 60s all find patterns they love," said store manager Ren Lin.

That broad appeal suggests something larger than a passing fashion trend.

For devotees like 42-year-old Li Xiaojing, Song brocade has moved from special-occasion wear into everyday life. She now pairs brocade jackets and waistcoats with jeans for work, and uses small, brocade accessories daily.

"Song brocade is no longer something I just admire in my closet. It's truly part of my life. I love the unique layering of colors and the traditional patterns that symbolize good fortune. It's something machine-made textiles can never replicate," Li said.

Angry workers



Striking Long Island Rail Road workers demonstrate outside Penn Station, a major rail hub in New York City, on Saturday. Thousands of LIRR workers struck work after unions failed to reach an agreement with railroad management on wages and work rules on Friday. HEATHER KHALIFA / AP

Welfare: Approach development-oriented

From page 1

The concept of common prosperity emerged in the 1950s. At the end of the 1970s, China decided to let some people and places prosper first, and at that time the late Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping repeatedly insisted that the people and places that did prosper must then help everyone else and all other regions to join them.

China addresses this challenge in a number of ways. As in the case of the poverty alleviation campaign, it invests in infrastructure, skills and industries, and mobilizes cadres to generate employment that increases primary real wage incomes. It also mobilizes collective urban and rural assets to generate property income.

At their core, these measures reflect China's development-oriented approach that common prosperity ultimately depends on people's ability to earn, and not just on redistribution.

Although income from work will remain the mainstay, in the years ahead, one can anticipate significant changes in the secondary distribution of income as a result of changes in taxation, public services, social security, social assistance and transfer payments.

Furthermore, China's system of counterpart assistance — under which well-off cities contribute to the development of less well-off places as one aspect of tertiary distribution — will continue to play an important role.

Every prefecture in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, for example, is paired with a more developed city, which must provide resources to help every tier of local government enhance local development, services and prosperity.

The international discussion around China's poverty alleviation achievements is methodological but also driven by political ideologies and narratives.

In China, the right to subsistence and right to development are considered fundamental human rights. Moreover, the nation's approach is scientific, employing comprehensive data rather than individual case studies whose representativeness cannot be established.

Its strategy involves institutional mechanisms that integrate a clear overall central design, subnational responsibility and decentralized implementation at the city, county and local levels, alongside an extraordinary mobilization of financial and human resources.

In many capitalist countries, explanations of poverty differ, and more emphasis is placed on market mechanisms, private property rights and nongovernmental organizations.

On the methodological side, poverty lines are usually expressed in terms of real income and change over time.

China has entered the ranks of upper-middle-income economies while remaining the world's largest developing country. The World Bank recently substantially increased the poverty line for such economies, first introduced in 2017, to $8.30 per person per day in 2021 purchasing power parity terms. By this higher benchmark, 21.3 percent of China's population fell below the line in 2022, compared with 48.3 percent worldwide.

However, this measure is based primarily on household cash income and may not fully capture China's property ownership and social entitlements, including food and clothing needs, access to compulsory education, basic medical services and safe housing — the core criteria of its poverty alleviation framework, known as the "Two Assurances and Three Guarantees".

At the same time, according to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), the pursuit of common prosperity will now pay attention not just to expanding the middle-income group, but also to raising low incomes.

The powerful narrative that China constructed therefore broadly holds, even if one should exercise great care in extrapolating backward.

The author is a professor emeritus at the University of Sussex in the United Kingdom. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL LENS



Hantavirus disease survivors Isabel Diaz (left) and her father Victor Diaz, identified by health authorities as patient zero during the 2018-19 outbreak that killed 11 people, including her mother and his wife, pose at their farm in the La Rinconada area, near Epuyen, Chubut Province, Argentina, on May 9. JUAN MABROMATA / AFP

OLD WOUNDS REOPENED

Hantavirus outbreak on cruise renews painful memories for residents of Argentine village

Mailen Valle lost her father and two sisters during a hantavirus outbreak more than seven years ago in Epuyen, a village in Argentina's Patagonia region.

With the recent hantavirus outbreak on the MV *Hondius* cruise ship, hard memories have resurfaced for the 33-year-old.

"Losing my dad and my two sisters in less than a month ... Nobody was prepared to see how, in a matter of days, a family table was left empty," she said.

While the outbreak onboard the ship has left three people dead, it has yet to surpass the Epuyen outbreak, which recorded 34 cases and 11 fatalities between December 2018 and March 2019 in the town of 2,400 residents, situated in a part of the Andes where hantavirus is endemic.

Mailen's father, Aldo Valle, came down with it after attending a birthday party.

"The person with the virus was just sitting at the same table as my dad. And at that table there were several people who got infected, and people died," Mailen recalled.

The wake for Valle was another locus of infection, where all three of his daughters got sick.

One sister died "within hours" of showing symptoms, while for the other, "we had to take her to the cemetery without a wake", Mailen said.

Jorge Diaz, an epidemiologist with Chubut Province's health department who worked on the Epuyen hantavirus outbreak, told AFP that "we knew very little about the disease" in 2018.

Human-to-human transmission of hantavirus was first discovered in 1996 in the neighboring town of El Bolson, and it was later found to have happened in Epuyen.

Hantavirus cases in Argentina have almost doubled in the past year, with the country recording 32 deaths alongside its highest number of infections since 2018.

The current season, which started in June 2025, has already seen more than 100 confirmed hantavirus cases, Argentina's health ministry said — compared with just 57 during the same period last season.

Not only did the country record an unusually large number of cases this year, but it also recorded one of the highest casualty rates in recent years, with the number of deaths marking an increase of 10 percentage points compared to the previous year.

"Increasing human interaction with wild environments, habitat destruction, the establishment of small urbanizations in rural areas, and the effects of climate change contribute to the appearance of cases outside historically endemic areas," the ministry said.



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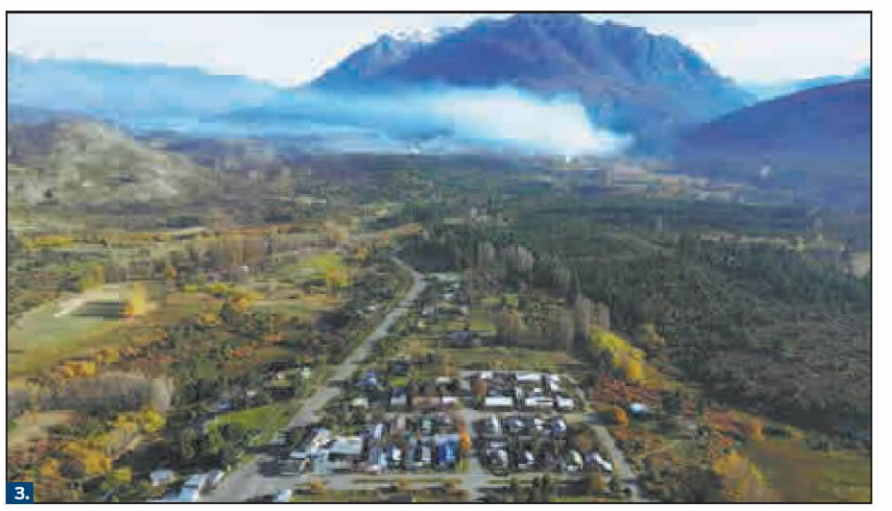

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1. A scientist from the Malbran Institute handles containers to diagnose the Andes virus in Buenos Aires on May 6. **2.** A scientist from the institute detects the virus on May 6. **3.** An aerial view of the village of Epuyen, in Chubut Province, Argentina, on May 9, where a hantavirus outbreak that killed 11 people took place in 2018-19 outbreak. **4.** A container used to diagnose the Andes virus. PHOTOS VIA AFP
5. A fruit harvester wearing a face mask looks out the window of his car in Epuyen on Jan 11, 2019, after the outbreak. GUSTAVO ZANINELLI / AP

Experts blame climate change and habitat destruction for the rise in number of cases of the disease, which is usually caused by exposure to the urine or feces of infected rodents.

Extreme weather phenomena, such as droughts and episodes of intense rainfall in recent years, are also fueling the trend, according to experts.

Temperature rises trigger changes in the ecosystem that affect the presence of the long-tailed mouse, the main carrier of the virus in Argentina and Chile.

"These rodents are better able to adapt to climate changes, which could facilitate the higher number of cases we are seeing," said Eduardo Lopez, an infectious disease specialist and adviser to the Argentine government during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Forest fires have prompted both humans and wildlife to move to new places, increasing the risk, said Roberto Debbag, vice-president of the Latin American Society of Vaccinology, while tourism trends have also had an impact.

The health ministry said technical health teams will travel to Ushuaia in Argentina's Tierra del Fuego Province to capture and analyze rodents in areas linked to the route of the Dutch couple believed to have been exposed to the virus.

Concerns voiced

Citizens of Spain's Canary Islands had expressed concern ahead of MV *Hondius*' arrival.

The World Health Organization's Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus posted a letter on his X account earlier in May.

"I know you are worried," he said, "I know that when you hear the word 'outbreak' and watch a ship sail toward your shores, memories surface that none of us have fully put to rest."

Nevertheless, Mailen remembers the stigma. "We felt very discriminated against," she said.

Others recall being banned from shops in nearby towns.

Isabel Diaz, 53, survived the outbreak with a different stigma — her father, Victor Diaz, was labeled "patient zero", and attended the birthday party while displaying the early symptoms of hantavirus.

Her father, for his part, recalled how it felt to come down with hantavirus, causing body aches and a bitter taste that even made sipping water unpleasant.

"It started with a feeling of weakness. I didn't feel like eating. And I started to get purple spots," he said. "That same day, I lost consciousness."

"People looked poorly at my father. It's not his fault he got sick," she told AFP, her eyes welling up.

"Nobody chooses to get sick, much less infect others, much less lose a mother."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA







From left: Mailen Valle, whose father and two sisters were killed by the 2018-19 hantavirus outbreak, sheds tears when speaking with reporters in a square in Epuyen, Argentina, on May 9.
Victor Diaz, identified as patient zero in the 2018-19 outbreak, feeds chicks and sheep at his farm in the La Rinconada area, near Epuyen, on May 9. PHOTOS BY JUAN MABROMATA / AFP
A man wearing a mask waits for clients at his shop, with a sign reading in Spanish "We are all family in Epuyen, be supportive, use a mask", on Jan 11, 2019. GUSTAVO ZANINELLI / AP

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WORLD

US state keen to break into China market

Oregon, Inner Mongolia explore trade opportunities to strengthen partnership

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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The US state of Oregon, which is keen to strengthen its economic partnership with China, hosted a trade delegation from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region last week to explore business opportunities.

The delegation and agricultural stakeholders in Oregon have agreed that more than 50 farms from the US state will supply 80,000 metric tons of hay to Inner Mongolia.

"We heavily rely on exports for profitability. So trade with China is very beneficial for our own farm, and it's very beneficial for a lot of the alfalfa farms in Eastern Oregon," said Mark Owens, a member of the Oregon House of Representatives and a farm owner.

Alfalfa is a plant that is used for feeding farm animals.

Oregon's agricultural sector is closely linked to Chinese markets. According to Owens, the state produces more than 220 agricultural products, of which approximately 80 percent are destined for export, making market diversification and expansion critical to farmer profitability.

"Hay exports are very important to alfalfa farmers in Oregon," Owens said. "Deals like this, at 80,000 metric tons, are very important. Oregon is very reliant on exports, just not alfalfa hay, but many agricultural products."

He stressed the importance of identifying markets and strengthening already established ones.

David Goracke, president of the Oregon Seed Council and owner of Cala Farms, emphasized that China is the most important export market for the state's seed industry.

"China is our largest export market. It is a very important and integral market to the Oregon seed industry," he said, adding the state is optimistic that China would continue to be a big user of its agricultural products.

He said Oregon is known as the grass seed capital of the world and he hoped it would maintain that reputation and become a major supplier to China.

In addition to agriculture, Oregon offers Chinese investors and business partners opportunities across multiple sectors. The state's location and established trade infrastructure make it an attractive hub for Asian commerce, said Nick Triska, head of Business Development at Greater Portland Inc, a regional economic development organization.

He viewed the footwear and apparel industry as an area that binds the economies of Oregon and China.

Cultural, economic ties

"Being a trade-dependent state in the US, our ability to build and maintain cultural and economic ties with other parts of the world is really important," Triska said. "Nike's world headquarters is based in Oregon. Adidas' North American headquarters is here. Columbia Sportswear and many other brands design a lot of their footwear here that then gets made in other parts of the world, including China."

He said a lot of intellectual property in the footwear space is tying the two markets together. "We also have some really great examples of international companies from China that are establishing a presence here in Oregon. Recently, we supported SBS Zipper (from China's Fujian province) in establishing a formal presence here in Oregon."

The timing of Oregon's trade outreach coincides with high-level diplomatic engagement between China and the US.

"We are thankful that the leaders from the two largest economies were meeting at the same time" as the meeting with the Inner Mongolia delegation to strengthen ties was happening, said Owens from the Oregon House of Representatives.

"How our two countries are investing in the future of industry and enabling really great people with great ideas and helping them realize those ideas into businesses that can change the world — there's an opportunity for that," he said. "I'm listening very intently."

Owens noted his own engagement in relationship-building, citing his visit to China in October. "We met some of the dairy folks and government people for person-to-person relationship building. … I'm very appreciative that they took the time and continue to build those relationships," he said.

Goracke, who traveled to Inner Mongolia in early November, said, "I think open communication is essential. We were able to get Chinese delegates and business officials out onto a farm tour so they could see firsthand how our family farmers are producing the seed and handling the seed."

Briefly

NIGERIA

President says senior IS commander killed

Nigeria's President Bola Tinubu confirmed on Saturday that Abu-Bilal al-Minuki, second-in-command of the Islamic State globally, was eliminated in an overnight operation carried out by Nigeria and the United States. Tinubu described the operation as "a significant example of effective collaboration in the fight against terrorism" and dealing a heavy blow to the ranks of the IS. Earlier on Friday, US President Donald Trump said on Truth Social that the IS leader was killed by US and Nigerian forces.

ITALY

8 injured as driver plows into pedestrians

A driver plowed into pedestrians in the northern Italian city of Modena on Saturday, injuring eight people — four of them critically — before trying to flee and being detained by police, authorities said. They said the man had a history of mental health issues. Authorities identified the driver as Salim El Koudri, 31, who is unemployed. He was detained and questioned by police as investigators tried to determine whether he acted deliberately.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

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Buildings are damaged by Israeli airstrikes in Tyre, southern Lebanon, on Saturday. XINHUA

Israel strikes south Lebanon day after truce extension

BEIRUT — Israel launched massive airstrikes on southern Lebanon on Saturday, despite an extension of the truce between the two countries.

Israel said it was targeting Lebanese militant group Hezbollah and that the strikes were preceded by an evacuation warning covering nine villages.

The continuing bombardment has only increased skepticism about the truce among the thousands of Lebanese driven from their homes in the south.

Lebanon's National News Agency reported strikes on more than two dozen villages on Saturday, including one more than 50 kilometers from the border. It also reported a new exodus of residents toward the southern city of Sidon and the capital Beirut.

Later on Saturday, Hezbollah announced it had struck a military target in northern Israel. It said its fighters had targeted "the Ya'ara barracks … with a swarm of attack drones", after having announced multiple operations against Israeli forces in southern Lebanon.

On Friday, the two countries agreed to extend a ceasefire — which began on April 17 but has been marred by numerous violations — by another 45 days.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said on Saturday that he "welcomes" the extension and "urges all actors to fully respect the cessation of hostilities".

Despite the truce, Israel continues to conduct strikes in Lebanon, and its forces are occupying territory near the border.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, regularly claims attacks on northern Israel and against the Israeli military in southern Lebanon, including multiple attacks on Israeli forces on Saturday.

Israel's military said on Saturday that one of its soldiers died in combat in southern Lebanon, bringing its losses to 21 personnel since the conflict with Hezbollah began in early March.

In the Gaza Strip, an Israeli airstrike killed the chief of Hamas' military wing, the most senior official from the Palestinian militant group killed by Israel since a ceasefire agreement in October that was meant to halt fighting.

The Israeli military said on Saturday that Izz al-Din al-Haddad was killed in what it described as a precise strike on Gaza City on Friday.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Ebola outbreak in Africa declared health emergency

By **SHARON NAKOLA**
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The World Health Organization has declared the Ebola outbreak linked to the Bundibugyo virus strain in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda a public health emergency of international concern, warning of rising cross-border transmission risks and major gaps in containment.

The Bundibugyo strain of Ebola was first identified in Uganda in 2007 and is one of several Ebola virus species known to cause severe hemorrhagic fever in humans. Unlike the *Zaire ebolavirus* species, for which vaccines and treatments are available, there are currently no licensed vaccines or targeted therapeutics for the Bundibugyo virus, according to the WHO.

In a statement issued on Sunday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus described the outbreak as "an extraordinary event" requiring urgent international coordination because of its rapid spread, insecurity in affected regions and the absence of approved medical countermeasures specifically targeting the strain.

"The high positivity rate of the initial samples collected, the confirmation of cases in both Kampala and Kinshasa, the increasing trends in syndromic reporting of suspected cases and clusters of deaths across the province of Ituri all point toward a potentially much larger outbreak than what is currently being detected and reported," the WHO said.

As of Saturday, health authorities had reported eight laboratory-confirmed Ebola cases, 246 suspected infections and 80 suspected deaths in Ituri Province in eastern DR Congo, concentrated in the Bunia and Mongbwalu health zones. A confirmed case was also detected in Kinshasa involving a traveler returning from Ituri.

Uganda has separately confirmed two Ebola cases in Kampala within 24 hours, including one death, both linked to travelers arriving from the DR Congo. The WHO said the two cases appeared unrelated, raising fears of undetected transmission chains. Both patients were admitted to intensive care units in Kampala.

Health officials have also reported unusual clusters of community deaths with symptoms consistent with the Bundibugyo virus strain in several areas of Ituri and neighboring North Kivu Province.

At least four healthcare workers have died in circumstances suggestive of viral hemorrhagic fever, increasing concerns that infections may be spreading inside health facilities amid weak infection prevention and control measures.

The WHO said international coordination would now be critical to strengthen surveillance, improve infection prevention, scale up emergency operations and prevent wider regional spread.



A man is carried from an ambulance into a hospital after the confirmation of an Ebola outbreak in Bunia, Democratic Republic of Congo, on Saturday. VICTOIRE MUKENGE / REUTERS

Petrochemical crunch hits supply chains across Asia

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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More than 11 weeks into the US-Israeli war against Iran, economic disruptions are reverberating across Asia's industrial supply chains as shortages of petrochemical products, including naphtha, deepen in the region.

Before the war, "almost 100 percent of the Middle East's naphtha exports land in Asia", said Darryl Xu, Singapore-based principal analyst for base chemicals and feedstocks at ICIS Analytics.

Middle Eastern supplies make up almost 65 percent of Asia's naphtha imports, but disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz have effectively cut off most shipments, with alternative sources unable to fully bridge the gap, Xu said.

A key petroleum derivative, naphtha is widely used to produce solvents and resin for printing ink. Supply shortages could affect sectors ranging from packaging and consumer goods to medical supplies and infrastructure materials.

Japanese snack maker Calbee said last week that it would switch some potato chip products to minimalist black-and-white packaging marked "packaging for conserving petroleum materials".

"The company will revise the packaging specifications of some of its products as an interim measure, with the highest priority placed on ensuring a stable supply of products," Calbee said on Tuesday.

However, Japanese Deputy Chief Cabinet Secretary Kei Sato said the government had received no reports of immediate disruptions to naphtha or printing ink supplies and believed the country had secured sufficient volumes, Reuters reported.

In the Republic of Korea, concerns are also rising in the food packaging industry, with the government working to stabilize supplies. Companies said material costs have soared 40 to 50 percent since the war began.

The ROK and Japan are among the most vulnerable economies in Northeast Asia to naphtha supply shocks, said Kwon Seok-joon, an associate professor of chemical engineering in Sungkyunkwan University.

In the first half of this year, the ROK imported about 45 to 47 percent of its naphtha, with more than three-fourths of those imports coming from the Middle East, he said.

'Structural weakness'

However, the bigger problem is the structural weakness of the ROK's petrochemical industry, which is centered on refining naphtha, Kwon said.

While Japan is also highly exposed, the ROK's vertically integrated petrochemical sector is more dependent on naphtha refineries, leaving downstream industries such as plastics, rubber, packaging and paints especially vulnerable, he said.

"If the current situation continues for several more months, the sustainability of these industries could become very fragile," he said.

Even if the Strait of Hormuz returns to normal now, naphtha supplies will not immediately recover to prewar levels because of shipping delays, permanently higher freight and insurance costs, and mismatches between existing Middle East contracts and new alternative supplies, he added.

Xu said buyers were paying premiums of up to $150 per ton for naphtha after the crisis started, while Asian producers of plastics and olefins — the building blocks of the industry — were being forced to run at minimum rates, which could still mean more than 150,000 tons of naphtha for a large olefins producer.

Kwon said the crisis would likely push Asian countries toward long-term adjustments.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Head-of-state diplomacy will guide further development of China-Russia relationship

At the invitation of President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin will pay a state visit to China from Tuesday to Wednesday, which is expected to further consolidate ties between the two countries.

That Xi and Putin sent congratulatory letters to the 10th China-Russia Expo on Sunday highlights the importance the two leaders attach to strengthening bilateral exchanges and cooperation.

Pointing out that this year marks the 30th anniversary of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, Xi said in his letter that bilateral cooperation in various fields had been continuously deepened and solidified, achieving fruitful results thanks to joint efforts of the two countries.

Noting that the expo provides a platform for direct and in-depth dialogue between the two sides, Putin in his message expressed the expectation that the expo will produce positive outcomes, help plan for new prospects of mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries, and bring benefits to the two peoples.

Thanks to the strategic guidance of head-of-state diplomacy, China-Russia relations exhibit a high level of mutual trust, and have withstood the turmoil in the international landscape, serving as a stabilizer of the postwar world order.

Last year, the two sides issued three joint statements on deepening their relations, strengthening global strategic stability and upholding the authority of international law.

At a time when global security is becoming ever more volatile, it is important for China and Russia, both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, to work together to bolster the status of the UN and continue coordinating with each other on major international and regional issues.

During the upcoming visit, it is anticipated that both sides will build on the outcomes of high-level exchanges in the past and plan together the future development of relations, which matters not only to the two countries, but also to the world.

China has been Russia's largest trading partner for 16 consecutive years, with the bilateral annual trade volume registering more than $200 billion for the last three consecutive years. And statistics from China's Ministry of Commerce show that bilateral trade reached $61.2 billion in the first quarter of this year, a 14.7 percent increase year-on-year.

The two countries are also stepping up their pragmatic cooperation in fields such as energy, artificial intelligence and agriculture, and increasing people-to-people exchanges. These exchanges and collaboration are forming strong support for the two neighbors to weather multiple challenges and further consolidate bilateral ties.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, which presents fresh opportunities for the two countries to deepen their win-win cooperation, better align their development strategies and further unleash their growth potential.

Equality, mutual respect and structural complementarity between the two economies explain the resilience of China-Russia economic ties.

The two countries not only collaborate closely but also show strategic independence in the process. As has long been pointed out, China-Russia relations are based on non-alliance, non-confrontation and not targeting any third party, forming a new type of relationship between major countries. Under this type of relationship, win-win cooperation that brings tangible benefits to the two nations is the focus.

It's important for China and Russia, which share common ground in their views of many major international and regional affairs, to leverage their robust relationship to safeguard existing international rules. In the face of rising unilateralism, the two countries need to continue shouldering their responsibilities as major countries to advance multipolarity and globalization. Their cooperation in multilateral organizations such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS will play an important role in this regard.

It is hoped that the upcoming visit by Putin will promote further development of China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, so that it can inject more stability into world affairs and provide a stronger impetus for global development and prosperity.

Remove stumbling block in Sino-US ties

The exchanges between the Chinese and US leaders on Thursday and Friday have provided much-needed strategic guidance for the future of China-US relations.

The two sides agreed to build a "constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability". The "constructive strategic stability" means positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, healthy stability with competition within proper limits, constant stability with manageable differences and lasting stability with expectable peace.

The new vision for relations between the world's two largest economies indicates that both sides recognize the need to prevent confrontation and manage differences prudently. The Taiwan question remains the most important one among all the issues affecting bilateral ties. If it is handled properly, the Sino-US relationship will enjoy overall stability. Otherwise, China and the United States will have clashes and even conflicts, putting the entire relationship in great jeopardy.

Yet certain forces in Washington continue to treat the Taiwan question as a "card" they can play to maximize US gains while claiming they value peace and stability in the region. Moves such as arms sales, political collusion and military signaling send the wrong message to "Taiwan independence" separatist forces on the Chinese island. "Taiwan independence" and cross-Strait peace are as irreconcilable as fire and water. The more external forces embolden separatist elements, the greater the risks to regional stability.

The recent remarks made by the secessionist-minded leader of Taiwan, Lai Ching-te, via virtual link at a so-called "democracy summit" in Copenhagen, once again exposed the separatist nature of the Democratic Progressive Party authorities. By attempting to portray his authorities as fighting for the "values" of the West, Lai sought external support for his separatist agenda while deliberately provoking cross-Strait tensions.

The timing of Lai's remarks was particularly telling. They were delivered shortly before the US president's visit to Beijing.

However, US President Donald Trump, in an interview with Fox News aired on Friday, warned the Taiwan authorities against pursuing "independence" under the illusion of unconditional US backing.

"They have somebody there now that wants to go independent," he said. "They want to get into a war" because "they figure they have the US behind them".

Trump poured cold water on that, saying he is not looking to fight a war thousands of miles away.

Yet the US leader also described Taiwan in the interview as "a very good negotiating chip" in dealing with Beijing — a remark that reflects a transactional and exploitative approach to the Taiwan question.

For China-US relations to achieve steady, sound and sustainable development, the stumbling block of "Taiwan independence" must be decisively removed. The US should recognize the true nature of "Taiwan independence" forces — as alterers of the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, disruptors of cross-Strait peace, and troublemakers in regional affairs.

Policymakers in Washington need to realize that the historical trend of the national reunification of China is irresistible. They should demonstrate genuine respect for China's core interests and major concerns. Beijing has made it clear that the Taiwan question is a red line in China-US ties that cannot be crossed.

The outcomes achieved during the latest China-US economic and trade consultations, held in the Republic of Korea on Wednesday, demonstrate once again that despite differences and competition, China and the US still share extensive common interests and broad space for cooperation.

No one should underestimate the complexity of managing China-US relations. Competition will continue to exist. Differences will not disappear overnight. But what matters most is whether both sides can manage these differences rationally, avoid strategic miscalculation and uphold the broader interests of peace and development.

China and the US have more common interests than differences. The US has much to gain from a healthy Sino-US relationship and much to lose from playing unilateral tricks, zero-sum games or the "Taiwan card".

Only when both sides address each other's core concerns, and especially when the US handles the Taiwan question with due prudence, can they jointly turn the agreed vision for bilateral ties into reality.

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Li Min



Opinion Line

Some in Brussels should wake up to reality, or EU will pay for overreach

The European Union likes to see itself as the defender of "rules-based" globalization. Yet by increasingly weaponizing its Foreign Subsidies Regulation against Chinese entities, it risks turning its claim into a parody.

The latest case in which the European Commission, the EU's executive body, has launched an "anti-subsidy" probe against the Chinese company Nuctech is a revealing snapshot of how Brussels is shifting toward a model of extraterritorial overreach that it once criticized Washington for.

The case dates back to 2024, when the European Commission carried out its first unannounced inspections, under the FSR, at Nuctech's offices in Poland and the Netherlands.

Brussels spent a long time complaining about Washington's long-arm jurisdiction — from sanctions enforcement to the extraterritorial use of domestic laws. Now it appears eager to replicate the same US playbook against China.

The FSR itself emerged during the high tide of transatlantic political alignment under the previous Democratic administration of the US, with China being the primary target.

But 2026 is not 2023, when the FSR took effect. The geopolitical landscape has changed a lot across the Atlantic. The EU's economic stagnation is now impossible to ignore, and many of its problems have little to do with China, but its own policies.

Former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi's report on European competitiveness warned that the continent suffers from chronic underinvestment, fragmented capital markets, high energy costs, regulatory overcomplexity and technological dependence on the US.

In other words, the EU is falling behind in some sectors because its own policy architecture has become too internally contradictory.

That raises an uncomfortable question for Brussels: does it really believe US technology giants dominate artificial intelligence, cloud infrastructure, semiconductors and digital platforms without massive state support — direct or indirect?

From Pentagon contracts and industrial policy to tax incentives and strategic procurement, the US has mastered subsidy politics while preaching free markets abroad.

The US administration openly boasts that it uses tariff revenues to subsidize domestic companies, citing this as proof of its tariff policy's success. Its predecessor, meanwhile, sought to lure European enterprises to the US with subsidies substantial enough to tilt the market — under the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022. Yet the European Commission remained mute in response.

The result is an increasingly politicized trade framework of the US masquerading as neutral regulation.

The EU's so-called "anti-subsidy" investigations into Chinese electric vehicles poisoned China-EU economic relations for a considerable time, triggering retaliatory tensions, before eventually edging back toward negotiation and pragmatic compromise on the part of the EU. That episode should have served as a lesson on the costs of weaponizing trade instruments.

As for the Nuctech case, the EU's executive arm demanding sweeping China-based information from Chinese entities and financial institutions inevitably raises legal and political red lines.

China's Ministry of Justice declared on Friday that the European Commission's cross-border investigative demands constitute "unlawful extraterritorial jurisdiction". The accompanying statement from China's Ministry of Commerce opposes Brussels forcing Chinese banks and companies to hand over unrelated domestic information, disrupting their normal business activities and undermining legal certainty for companies operating in Europe.

The European Commission has become increasingly reckless in launching lose-lose probes, while the economic and diplomatic consequences are left for others in the bloc to absorb. European manufacturers want market access. European consumers want affordable products. European industries want stable supply chains. Yet policymakers and policy executors in Brussels often appear driven more by ideological signaling than commercial reality.

The EU does not need more economic confrontation with China. It needs serious reflection about why its own innovation engine is sputtering, why energy costs remain punishingly high, and why dependence on technology and security structures of an unreliable ally continues to deepen.

The FSR was conceived during a transatlantic honeymoon that is over. The question now is whether there is enough wisdom in Brussels to recognize the bloc faces a harsher economic reality before regulatory overreach leaves a major economic partner no choice but to fight back.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

All involved accountable for AI-related IP violations

Editor's note: *China recently released a road map aimed at promoting efforts to build itself into an intellectual property powerhouse. Xinhua Daily Telegraph spoke to some researchers about the importance of IP protection. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The battle over IP in the AI era is about the restructuring of an entire innovation order. The contributors to AI-generated content are no longer just individual creators. Data providers, computing infrastructure suppliers, model trainers and application developers all play a role, and much of the resulting value falls into legal grey areas. The most obvious weakness in today's system is the lack of a workable framework for allocating benefits and responsibilities among the multiple actors. Responsibility in the AI ecosystem should not be determined solely by who controls the technology. It should also depend on who benefits from it. Profit distribution must become the primary benchmark for assigning legal obligations.

Contrary to some claims, society is not entering a legal vacuum. China's Civil Code, copyright law and regulations governing deep synthesis technologies have already established basic boundaries around personality rights, copyright protection and platform responsibilities.

The deeper problem is that enforcement mechanisms cannot keep pace with the speed at which infringement takes place, while coordination across platforms remains weak and public understanding is often inaccurate. Many people still mistakenly believe that "noncommercial use is exempt" or that labeling content as AI-generated removes liability. Neither is true.

For ordinary citizens, however, the most immediate threat does not come from abstract disputes over training data. It comes from AI face-swapping, voice cloning and other forms of personality-rights infringement. Such technologies are inexpensive to deploy, spread rapidly online and can inflict irreversible damage on personal dignity and reputation.

Rights protection is undeniably difficult, but placing the entire compliance burden on a single party is not the solution. Shifting all responsibility either on the platforms or on those who developed the application would undermine the long-term sustainability of the content industry.

A practical approach is shared responsibility. Rights holders should make fuller use of notice and takedown mechanisms, platforms should provide low-cost verification and complaint tools and application developers should bear responsibility when they "know or should know" that infringement is taking place. Only a layered system of responsibility can ensure that every line of defense is covered.

The issue of training data is unavoidable. Requiring prior authorization for data training would make one-on-one negotiations nearly impossible and significantly restrict innovation. Yet allowing unrestricted data scraping would effectively turn original creators into unpaid fuel for AI development. The challenge is to draw workable boundaries between these two extremes while introducing compensation mechanisms that protect creators' interests.

The music industry offers a useful lesson. Collective licensing provides a more realistic path. Platforms could pay annual blanket licensing fees to collective management organizations, which would then distribute revenue to rights holders according to usage proportions. Extending collective management systems into AI training could dramatically reduce transaction costs while ensuring creators receive compensation without having to negotiate separately.

The purpose of IP protection was never to prevent innovation, but to sustain it through credible incentives. The real test in the AI era is whether society can build a system in which creators receive fair benefits without crushing innovators under excessive compliance costs.

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VIEWS

China and the World Roundtable | Driving China's Small and Micro-Businesses Forward

Editor's note: *Peking University's Guanghua School of Management released a survey report on China's small and micro-business operators at a recent seminar. The seminar brought together scholars, industry experts and practitioners to discuss the current state of small businesses, the pressures they face, the changes brought by artificial intelligence and digital tools, and the policies needed to support their growth. The following are excerpts from their remarks.*

Small businesses need more support for growth

Supporting small enterprises through stable expectations



Tian Xuan is the dean of Guanghua School of Management, Peking University.

Small and micro-businesses are the deepest foundation of China's economy and the broadest micro-level base of its growth.

Understanding their operating conditions, responding to their policy expectations and paying attention to their survival and development is not only an academic task, but also a responsibility of our time.

China's GDP grew by 5 percent in 2025 despite a complex external environment and insufficient domestic demand. This was no easy achievement. For 2026, setting the growth target as a flexible range reflects an effort to reduce the emphasis on a single numerical level and shift attention toward high-quality development.

It also leaves more room for structural adjustment, risk prevention and livelihood improvement.

The logic of expanding domestic demand is changing. It is moving away from direct policy stimulus and toward activating the market's own internal momentum.

The key is to stabilize employment so that people have money to spend, strengthen social security so that people dare to spend, and create new consumption scenarios so that people have places and reasons to spend.

To foster new growth drivers, China needs to upgrade traditional industries, develop strategic emerging industries, make early plans for future industries, and improve the quality of the service sector so as to extend both ends of the "smile curve".

For small, medium and micro-enterprises, two macro-level supports are especially important. The first is a sound legal environment.

China should strengthen the implementation of the Private Economy Promotion Law, advance legislation on a personal bankruptcy system, and give "honest but unfortunate" entrepreneurs a real chance to start again. Stronger intellectual property protection is also essential, as it can provide clear incentives for private and small businesses to innovate.

The second is a stable macro-policy orientation. Research shows that policy orientation itself does not have a significant impact on corporate innovation, but policy uncertainty can seriously discourage long-term investment. It is therefore crucial to maintain policy continuity, stability and consistency, so that the market can form steady expectations. This is vital for encouraging small and micro enterprises to invest, innovate and grow over the long term.

Reading the economy through small businesses



Zhang Xiaobo is the chair professor at Guanghua School of Management, Peking University.

China's small and micro-business operators offer a valuable window into the real economy. Our long-running survey has collected nearly 250,000 questionnaires, including a large number of unregistered self-employed businesses.

These operators are highly sensitive to macroeconomic changes. Their profit margins, cash flow and confidence readings are closely correlated with indicators such as PMI, CPI and unemployment.

The main pressure facing small businesses today is no longer on the production side. It is weak market demand. Costs are rising, but many small businesses have limited room to raise product prices or wages, which has intensified competition and price pressure. At the same time, their expectations for macroeconomic growth and CPI remain relatively low.

Yet small businesses have shown strong resilience. Many respond by working longer hours and adopting digital tools. Digitalization is bringing structural changes. Online sales and the use of information systems have continued to rise after the pandemic, and roughly one in four small and micro-businesses have already adopted AI.

Digitalization has also helped expand female entrepreneurship. Over the past five years, the share of female entrepreneurs among small business operators has more than doubled from 17 percent to 36 percent.

One important reason is the equalizing effect of online credit: women often enjoy credit-score advantages in digital lending, which has improved their access to financing.

Future policy should shift more toward inclusive measures that improve livelihoods and expand demand. Raising the basic pension for rural elderly residents, for example, could more effectively stimulate consumption and market vitality. At the same time, entrepreneurs need a more stable and enabling environment for development.

AI is also accelerating a trend toward smaller organizations. This will fundamentally reshape employment and social security. China's existing social insurance, medical insurance and related legal systems were largely designed around traditional employment in large companies. They are increasingly out of step with the rise of flexible work, one-person companies, delivery riders and other new forms of employment.

The social security system therefore needs a more fundamental adjustment. A more inclusive protection mechanism would allow residents, including small and micro-business operators, to share more fully in the benefits of technological innovation and development. Only when people feel more secure can they consume with greater confidence and help form a healthier cycle of demand and growth.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Small businesses must be able to share AI's gains

For small and micro-enterprises, sharing in the opportunities created by artificial intelligence is especially important. AI is a major new source of total factor productivity growth. By using data and algorithms, it can sharply reduce waste in resource allocation and turn the reallocation of resources from broad, block-level shifts into a more detailed and precise process. Its potential is enormous.

But AI also brings "creative destruction". It can accelerate the birth and death of businesses, as well as the destruction and creation of jobs. Small and micro-enterprises are often the first to feel this pressure. They are relatively more vulnerable and may face shorter survival cycles. This could worsen structural employment mismatches and widen income gaps.



Cai Fang is an academician of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The future path of employment destruction and creation is likely to follow a "J-shaped" curve. In the short term, job losses may happen before new jobs are created. Whether the creation effect materializes, and how strong it becomes, will depend on how proactive and effective the policies are.

The policy logic should therefore change: businesses may compete and be selected by the market, but people should not be divided into winners and losers. The zero marginal cost and open-source nature of AI should be used to narrow the digital and intelligence divide facing small businesses and workers, so that they can share in the gains from higher productivity.

To achieve this, investment in physical assets must be better combined with investment in people.

More resources should go into inclusive social protection and human capital, giving entrepreneurs basic support even after business failure. Policies should also adapt to the fact that new forms of employment are becoming the new normal.

Social security and labor market systems need to be updated to support small businesses and workers caught in the cycle of creative destruction.

Whether AI becomes a blessing or a burden for small and micro-enterprises depends on whether its empowering features can be fully utilized. This is an external technological change that no individual business can avoid. To help small businesses share the benefits, they need targeted support.

For example, the government can coordinate with large technology companies to use AI's zero marginal cost advantage by sharing models, platform APIs, tokens and other technical resources, helping close the digital divide.

Using the empowering capability of technology to offset its disruptive effects is necessary to help small and micro-enterprises survive. It is also essential for keeping the overall economic cycle sustainable.

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

Kitty van der Heijden

Investing more in children is the right thing to do

Global Lens

The world has demonstrated that it is possible to make progress for children on an extraordinary scale. Child mortality was reduced by around 50 percent in two decades, based largely on a simple recipe with three ingredients. First, a safe start. One in four children is now born in a UNICEF-supported health clinic. Second, immunization.

Over the past 50 years, vaccines have saved around 154 million lives — nearly half of all children under five have been reached by UNICEF. And third, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene — which we have been able to deliver to 2 billion people in the past two decades.

These gains go beyond saving young lives. They ripple into families, communities and the whole of society. Many of the results achieved for children are the foundation of human progress.

These impressive results, achieved working hand-in-hand with national governments and local partners, should propel all of us to continue and to step it up to achieve the sustainable development goals. Sadly, we are seeing the opposite: international development and humanitarian response are currently under severe strain, with Official Development Aid declining by 23.1 percent in the past year alone — the largest contraction ever.

At the same time, challenges for children are rising rapidly. This year alone, UNICEF estimates that more than 200 million children will need humanitarian assistance in 133 countries and territories. Furthermore, around 1 billion children — nearly half of the world's child population — live in countries classified as at "extremely high risk" of climate change impacts, from drought to floods, from tropical cyclones to glacier lake outbursts. The debt crisis and recent macro-economic shocks are pushing families back into poverty.

Children are often the most affected by this — even if they are the least responsible — and they pay the highest price. After decades of sustained decline, child mortality is now rising.

It is not that we do not know what is needed to achieve the SDGs. We know what needs to be done. We have shown what can be done.

But all relevant stakeholders, from governments to UN organizations and local partners, need to be enabled to do it — and resourcing these efforts is a key part of that.

The annual financing gap to achieve the SDGs is now in the order of $3 to $4 trillion. This is not merely a shortfall in financial capital — it is an appalling deficit in maximizing human capital.

We see this in the life of a child without light to study; in a mother walking for hours to fetch water; in the levels of stunting in the first years of life, leading to lifelong cognitive disabilities that a child can never recuperate from; and in a school cut off from electricity and the digital world. But the impact goes beyond the individual child.

Because when children lose access to vaccines, diseases spread across borders. When they go without nutrition, education or protection, the desperation that follows fuels instability and displacement.

We have seen it over and over again: the more fragile children's lives become, the more fragile the world becomes. People may think that investing in children is "charity", or something "nice to have". But investing in children is one of the best investments we can make, supporting security and stability as well as peace and prosperity.

When resources are scarce, it is even more important to look at "what works" to ensure every dollar is yielding maximum results. At UNICEF, we know that investing in children yields a high economic return on investment.

For every dollar invested in children, countries see up to a tenfold return through stronger economies and more resilient societies.

If this would be your stock portfolio, you would run to invest your money here. Every dollar invested in education, brings $20 in future GDP growth, with important co-benefits. It helps to avoid, among other things, young girls getting married.

It also helps to avoid the recruitment of young boys by armed groups and terrorists. Every dollar invested in water and sanitation yields $5.5 of return in diseases prevented, saving public health budgets.

Investing in children isn't just the morally right thing to do, it is also politically smart and economically rational. It is one of the most powerful investments we can make in shaping the future we all want.

Yet today we are facing a brutal financial paradox: even as the needs of children grow, our ability to invest in their future — and hence, our own collective future — is severely constrained.

We have more conflicts now than we have ever experienced since UNICEF was established, yet humanitarian funding went down by around 33 percent last year.

We have more children than ever at risk from the impacts of climate change. Yet a mere 2.4 percent of climate finance from multilateral climate funds is child-responsive, leaving children exposed.

Compounding this is the debt crisis, with many developing countries spending more on debt servicing than on social sectors such as education, health and nutrition that children's lives and well-being depend on.

This has real consequences. When a debt crisis lasts up to three years, infant mortality increases by 2.2 percent. When that crisis exceeds three years, infant mortality increases by 11.4 percent.

The debt trap becomes a death trap for children, and the financial impact of the current crisis will exacerbate this.

We must change course. Safeguarding children's present and future is a worthy cause and a smart choice.

We need new global momentum to ensure resources flow to where the needs are the greatest and the return on investment the highest: children. We need governments in the Global North and the Global South to step up.

We need private sector entities around the world, as well as financial institutions and multilateral development banks, to engage. We need to innovate to ensure we go faster and further.

As an example, UNICEF is now exploring child-focused debt solutions with multilateral development banks and policy banks, creating fiscal space for enhanced social sector spending — including with institutions here in China.

Last year, we worked with the Export-Import Bank of China to launch a project in Nigeria on climate-resilient health, safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH), and signed a multi-year partnership to explore child-focused financing models in more countries and sectors. Recently, we also signed a new agreement to strengthen WASH and energy resilience for children in climate-stressed areas of Bangladesh.

But we must do more. We must unlock new capital and align investments with impact. Beyond grants, the scale of need requires pioneering more forward-looking and innovative financing mechanisms.

That's why UNICEF is also working with development impact funds, SDG-aligned bonds, outcome-based financing, parametric climate risk insurance and child-focused debt solutions that tie financing more closely to measurable results for children.

Every public and private sector actor has a role to play. Together, we can make a difference in the lives of children anywhere and everywhere. Their future is not a matter of chance. It is a matter of choice.

The world is a tough place to be a child today. But it doesn't have to be that way.

What is possible for children tomorrow will be shaped by the decisions all of us take today.

The author is the deputy executive director, partnerships, UNICEF, and assistant secretary-general, UN.
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GLOBAL VIEWS

DAVID GOSSET

Close encounters with history

China's museum fever is a collective recognition that the material traces of the past are a mirror for the future



The recent release of the second edition of the China Museums Annual Report — following the presentation of its inaugural volume in Paris in 2025 — signals that China's museum transformation has moved beyond a domestic feature to become an object of international attention. What was once seen as a policy success story is now examined as a structural cultural shift with global implications.

Few recent phenomena have reshaped China's public life as visibly as the surge of enthusiasm for museums. Popularly described as "museum fever" and referenced in President Xi Jinping's 2026 New Year address as *wenbo re*, denoting heightened interest in museums and cultural heritage, this development exceeds the boundaries of leisure or lifestyle. It represents the convergence of cultural tourism, heritage protection, technological modernization and civic engagement. At its center lies a profound change: museums have become pivotal arenas in which China narrates its past and situates its future.

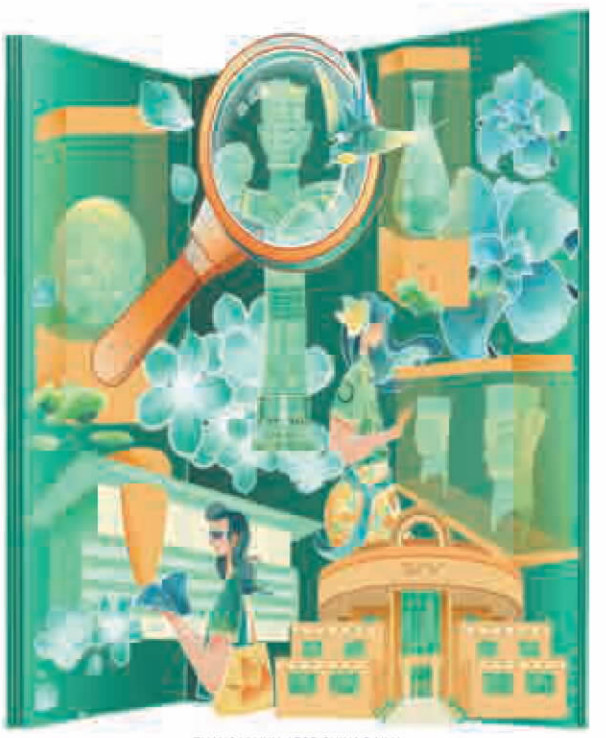
The scale of museum-driven tourism is striking. Record attendance, extended holiday queues, sold-out special exhibitions, and sustained social media engagement reflect broad, cross-generational appeal. Families travel across provinces to see archaeological discoveries; students approach exhibitions as intellectual pilgrimages; and young professionals engage with immersive displays combining digital projection and ancient artifacts. Museums now anchor domestic tourism circuits, revitalizing historic districts and redirecting travel toward culturally grounded destinations.

Yet this surge cannot be reduced to just consumption. Unlike entertainment complexes, museums cultivate reflective forms of leisure experiences. Visitors enjoy not only spectacle but orientation — an encounter with a civilizational narrative spanning millennia. Cultural tourism thus becomes an instrument of cultural literacy. To travel to a museum is simultaneously to participate in identity formation and historical interpretation.

This development aligns with China's evolving heritage strategy. Over the past two decades, the country has expanded its museum network — public, private, university-based and hybrid institutions — while strengthening legal frameworks for archaeological research and conservation. The emphasis has shifted from quantitative growth to qualitative consolidation: professional training, conservation laboratories, collection digitization and international collaboration. The museum system is increasingly integrated, technologically equipped and globally engaged.

Tourism and preservation are often perceived as competing forces. Large visitor flows can endanger fragile artifacts and historical sites. In China's current museum ecology, however, public enthusiasm increasingly reinforces conservation. Revenue from ticketing and cultural products supports restoration projects; strong attendance legitimizes further investment in safeguarding relics and intangible traditions. When newly excavated artifacts draw large crowds, preservation becomes a visible social priority rather than a bureaucratic mandate.

Museums function here as both guardians and mediators. They not only protect objects through scientific conservation, but also preserve meaning. Curatorial practice translates artifacts into narratives that illuminate regional diversity, dynastic change and intercultural exchange. The result is not a static portrait of antiquity but a presentation of civilization as plural and evolving. Museums frame China's past as dynamic — shaped by migration, adaptation and global contact.



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Technology has become integral to this transformation. Digital archives, high-resolution scanning, artificial intelligence, immersive installations and data-driven management systems are embedded in institutional practice. Virtual reconstructions revive archaeological sites, interactive platforms contextualize artifacts and online exhibitions extend access beyond physical walls. These tools attract younger audiences while strengthening documentation and research capacity.

Crucially, digitalization enhances protection. Three-dimensional modeling records endangered sites; visitor-flow analytics mitigate overcrowding; and artificial intelligence supports restoration and authentication. Technological modernization does not dilute tradition; it fortifies it. The juxtaposition of ancient bronzes and immersive projections symbolizes a broader synthesis of continuity and innovation within Chinese modernization.

The museum boom has also recalibrated domestic travel patterns. As internal mobility intensifies, cultural depth increasingly shapes destination choices. Provincial museums highlighting Silk Road exchanges, maritime history, or ethnic heritage anchor regional revitalization strategies. They connect exhibitions with surrounding historic neighborhoods, crafts and culinary traditions. The museum visit often initiates a broader engagement with place-based heritage, integrating economic development with cultural memory.

Internationally, museums operate as platforms of dialogue. Traveling exhibitions, joint conservation projects and multilateral research initiatives position Chinese institutions within global debates on restitution, ethics and interpretation. In a fragmented geopolitical landscape, museums provide comparatively stable arenas for intellectual exchange. Cultural tourism, when international visitors encounter Chinese heritage directly, fosters nuanced understanding beyond political narratives.

The deeper significance of the museum fever, as emphasized in the 2026 Annual Report, lies in its epistemic dimension. Museums are not passive repositories; they are laboratories of knowledge production. They shape how history is categorized, narrated and visualized. The rise of museum culture contributes to an emerging form of New Sinology — one attentive not only to China's historical record but also to contemporary modes of interpreting that record.

Rapid expansion nonetheless presents challenges. Balancing mass attendance with conservation standards, ensuring professional expertise keeps pace with growth, addressing regional disparities and navigating contested historical representations require sustained governance. Heritage protection is an ongoing process rather than a completed achievement. Yet the visibility of these debates indicates institutional maturity. Public engagement generates scrutiny, and scrutiny strengthens accountability.

Ultimately, China's museum-centered tourism reveals a society engaging with its material past as a resource for navigating modernity. The energy captured in *wenbo re* expresses curiosity, confidence, and a search for continuity amid transformation. Museums respond by staging temporal dialogue: Neolithic pottery alongside digital simulations, classical calligraphy adjacent to interactive interfaces. Time becomes layered rather than linear.

To enter a Chinese museum today is to observe a civilization actively curating itself. Tourism brings audiences; conservation safeguards substance; technology expands reach; and scholarship reframes meaning. Together, they constitute a cultural infrastructure anchoring civilizational renaissance in lived experience.

The measure of this transformation, however, lies not in visitor statistics but in encounters. When a bronze vessel, silk manuscript, or contemporary installation dissolves temporal distance, tourism becomes reflection and preservation becomes shared responsibility. China's museum fever is ultimately less about crowds than about consciousness — a collective recognition that the material traces of the past remain vital to the imagination of the future.

The author is a Sinologist, founder of the China-Europe-America Global Initiative and editor of the China Museums Annual Report. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

ZHANG LI AND YUN QIBURI

Shared resource, shared future

Lancang-Mekong water governance has evolved beyond its technical roots into a strategic issue that can help shape regional development



Zhang Li



Yun Qiburi

The Lancang-Mekong River — a waterway nourishing six countries — sustains not only riverside villages, cities, rice paddies and fishing grounds, but also the shared development prospects of China, Myanmar, Laos, Thailand, Cambodia and Vietnam. Water governance has shaped the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism from its inception, binding the six countries together and sustaining their shared prosperity.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the first LMC Leaders' Meeting. Over the past decade, the LMC has placed water resources cooperation at the core of its five priorities. Significant strides have been made in modernizing various facets of water governance, including cooperation platforms, navigable waterways, information sharing, capacity building and ecological protection. These achievements have become crucial pillars for the building of a Lancang-Mekong community with a shared future.

The cooperation platforms for Lancang-Mekong water governance have been continuously improved and upgraded. A basin-wide governance framework has been established, centering on the LMC leaders' meetings, ministerial meetings and the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center, delivering institutionalized and regularized synergy. Meanwhile, the hydrological information sharing mechanism has been steadily enhanced, with China consistently providing hydrological data to riparian countries. A significant milestone was reached in 2025 when the six countries agreed to mutually provide upstream and downstream hydrological information, marking a crucial shift from China's unilateral provision to multilateral sharing among all basin states. The modernization of Lancang-Mekong water governance has thus evolved from simple information exchange toward joint action.

The Lancang-Mekong countries have advanced interconnected water networks, a secure environment and digital intelligence. The modernization efforts place a premium on waterway improvement, coordinated patrols and law enforcement, and the digitization of shipping information, thereby further unlocking both the economic and security values of this "golden waterway". According to Kunming Customs, over the past decade, the navigable tonnage of vessels on the Lancang-Mekong waterway has increased from 300 to 500 metric tons, a 66.7 percent increase in single-trip capacity. A total of over 9,400 voyages have been completed, moving 1.57 million tons of imports and exports valued at 12.72 billion yuan ($1.87 billion), with an average annual growth rate of 7.6 percent. Furthermore, as of April 20, China, Myanmar, Laos and Thailand had conducted 164 Mekong River joint patrol and law enforcement missions, focusing on merchant vessel escort, search and rescue, and combating cross-border crime. In parallel, the six Lancang-Mekong countries are actively introducing digital and smart technologies into basin water resource management. These tools sharpen governance precision and visibility, while strengthening responses to extreme weather and emergencies.

The Lancang-Mekong countries have put a sustained focus on "small and beautiful" water projects that tangibly benefit local communities. With financial and technical support from China, 65 such collaborative projects have been implemented. Covering flood and drought management, rural drinking water safety, dam safety, agricultural production and grassroots capacity building, these projects directly address the most pressing needs of basin residents. Among them, the Lancang-Mekong Sweet Spring Action has built 110 rural water supply projects in Cambodia, Laos and Myanmar, providing safe drinking water to over 13,000 rural residents and earning a spot among the Fifth Global Solicitation on Best Poverty Reduction Practices. These changes — from clean drinking water to reliable power — profoundly embody a people-centered governance philosophy, building a solid foundation of public support for the Lancang-Mekong region.

Despite these notable achievements, the Lancang-Mekong water governance is entering a new and more complex phase as it embarks on its next "golden decade".

The first challenge is climate change. Extreme droughts, floods, salinization, sediment shifts and ecosystem degradation affect the basin's agriculture, fisheries, energy and public safety. For vulnerable areas — such as the Mekong Delta, the Tonle Sap Lake region, hydropower development zones and cross-border shipping hubs — water fluctuations directly threaten food security, energy security and social resilience.

The second lies in divergent development needs. Persistent tensions exist between energy development and ecological protection, as well as between agricultural irrigation and shipping demands. Balancing these competing priorities requires close coordination among the basin states.

The third is the persistent governance deficit in water ecosystems. Uneven capacities for water ecosystem protection among basin countries and significant disparities in progress toward the water-related targets of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development add complexity to basin-wide governance.

In response, the six Lancang-Mekong countries should seize the opportunity presented by the new "golden decade" and the "LMC 2.0" framework to drive high-quality, iterative upgrades in water governance — making it more targeted, resilient and inclusive. This will help forge an even closer Lancang-Mekong community with a shared future.

First, build a high-quality platform for synergy in water governance modernization. The six countries could leverage the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center to gradually establish a water governance modernization hub with sub-branches dedicated to top-level design and regional implementation. These would coordinate local water management, data sharing and project execution, enhancing both basin-wide strategic coordination and on-the-ground delivery, and ensuring that strategic plans translate into tangible regional benefits.

Second, turn "small and beautiful" water projects into a "people-to-people connectivity" initiative of Lancang-Mekong water cooperation. In the new "golden decade", the six countries could develop replicable, maintainable and evaluable project packages, covering rural drinking water safety, school water purification facilities, small-scale irrigation, community flood control, fishery resource protection and grassroots water quality monitoring. Greater emphasis should be placed on post-project management and maintenance, upgrading "demonstration sites" into "demonstration chains". At the same time, participation from local governments, enterprises, research institutions and social organizations should be encouraged to forge an integrated cooperation model encompassing funding, technology, training and operation, ensuring that more people share the benefits of modernized Lancang-Mekong water governance.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Third, safeguard the autonomous cooperation of basin countries in water governance. Lancang-Mekong water cooperation is open to extra-basin partners, but water governance must not become an arena for geopolitical zero-sum games. The six countries can remain open to cooperation that genuinely contributes to technological progress, capacity building and ecological improvement. Meanwhile, they need to remain clear-eyed about agendas that seek to incite confrontation, stoke anxiety or erode mutual trust. The 10th LMC Foreign Ministers' Meeting proposed building an LMC 2.0 characterized by solidarity, cooperation, openness, win-win outcomes, green innovation, peace and tranquility. The key lies in keeping basin countries firmly in the driver's seat of regional affairs.

Guided by the LMC 2.0 framework, the six Lancang-Mekong countries will continue to turn water connectivity into people-to-people bonds, integrating national needs into regional advantages. In doing so, Lancang-Mekong water governance will infuse fresh vitality into the building of a peaceful and prosperous regional community with a shared future.

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BUSINESS

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Fiscal, monetary tools to boost consumption

Central, local authorities roll out comprehensive policy package to lower financing costs

By **ZHANG CHENXU** in Hangzhou, **SHI RUIPENG** and **ZHANG LI** in Nanning

China is ramping up coordination between fiscal and monetary tools to further unleash consumption potential and energize private investment, in a bid to fuel a broad expansion in domestic demand, officials and business executives said.

With stronger support from the central government, local fiscal authorities are stepping up the rollout of a comprehensive policy package that combines loan interest subsidies, financing guarantees and risk compensation to lower financing costs and channel more resources into the real economy.

Xu Yong, a 34-year-old resident of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, recently took out a personal consumption loan to furnish his new apartment.

The loan offered a credit line of up to 300,000 yuan ($43,886) and originally carried an annual interest rate of 3 percent. Thanks to the latest interest subsidy policy, his effective borrowing rate was reduced to 2 percent.

"The subsidy will save me about 3,000 yuan in interest payments over a year, which came as an unexpected bonus," Xu said, adding that the application process was smooth and took only a few minutes.

The reduction in Xu's effective borrowing rate came after the central government announced in January that it would allocate 100 billion yuan this year to support a broader fiscal-financial coordination package aimed at spurring consumption and private investment.

The package comprises six policies — four aimed at supporting private investment and two focused on household consumption — designed to reduce financing costs and improve access to credit for consumers, service providers and private businesses.

The interest subsidy policy for personal consumption loans will be extended through the end of 2026, while credit card installments will be included and sectoral restrictions removed to expand consumer choice.

Service-sector businesses are also receiving stronger financial support to better meet consumer demand.

Fei Peng, who runs a music training and instrument sales company in Hangzhou, secured a 1 million yuan loan from a local bank in March to purchase instruments and support business expansion.

With a 1 percentage point fiscal interest subsidy, the loan is expected to reduce the company's annual interest payments by about 10,000 yuan.

"I hope the policy support can be sustained over the long term," Fei said.

Extending the loan cycle for cultural and creative businesses to three to five years will help ease funding pressure more effectively, Fei added.

The fiscal interest subsidy program for service-sector businesses has been further expanded this year to cover digital, green, and retail sectors. Meanwhile, the maximum subsidized loan amount per borrower has been increased from 1 million yuan to 10 million yuan, with the subsidy cap raised to 100,000 yuan, offering stronger financial support to service-sector enterprises.

According to Hangzhou United Bank, which issued the loan to Fei, the financing is expected to generate at least 5 million yuan in consumption.

Lin Shiyi, chairman of the bank, said that under the guidance of fiscal policy support, Hangzhou United Bank extended 9.38 billion yuan in loans to service-sector businesses in the first quarter, mainly in retail, cultural and entertainment, and healthcare sectors.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

At the provincial level, newly issued loans linked to interest subsidy policies in Zhejiang have topped 1 trillion yuan since the beginning of the year, data from the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Finance showed.

Wu Dagui, deputy head of the department's financial division, said the rollout has amplified the leverage effect of fiscal-financial coordination, channeling fresh liquidity to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises as well as service-sector businesses.

Private investment is another major focus of the package.

The measures feature broad coverage, stronger support and a diversified set of tools, with several policies working in tandem to stabilize private investment, Liao Min, vice-minister of finance, said at a news conference in January.

"The newly introduced interest subsidy policy for loans to micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, together with the optimized subsidy policy for equipment renewal loans, can both provide eligible borrowers with subsidies equivalent to 1.5 percentage points of the loan amount," Liao said.

The arrangement is helping companies lower the cost of equipment upgrades and project investment.

Nine Dragons Paper Industries (Beihai) Co, a private paper manufacturer based in Beihai, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, said its second-phase pulp-and-paper integration project was included this year in the interest subsidy program for equipment renewal loans.

From 2023 to 2025, the company received 64.21 million yuan in fiscal interest subsidies through a combination of local financing support measures and the equipment renewal loan subsidy program.

"Fiscal policy and funding support have strongly supported project construction and production, accelerated our digital and intelligent transformation, and effectively reduced investment and operating costs," said Zhang Yi'an, general manager of the company.

Zhang said the company's sales revenue exceeded 9 billion yuan in 2025 and is expected to surpass 12 billion yuan this year.

Beyond interest subsidies, the policy package also includes a special guarantee plan for private investment, designed to improve financing access for smaller private firms that often face collateral constraints.

A Guangxi-based dairy breeding unit of Royal Group Co is one of the businesses expected to benefit from the plan as it moves from project construction to operational expansion.

With its breeding base entering operation, the company has seen rising demand for working capital, while large upfront investment and the long cash conversion cycle in animal husbandry have added to short-term liquidity pressure.

Local financing guarantee institutions and a rural commercial bank in Guangxi have designed a tailored financing plan under the special guarantee mechanism, using the company's core breeding assets and intelligent farming equipment as counter-guarantee measures to support a three-year, 5 million yuan special loan.

The loan is expected to ease funding pressure during the expansion phase and help sustain the company's breeding program.

Data from the Finance Department of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region showed that by the end of April, new lending under the region's special guarantee plan for private investment had reached 1.79 billion yuan.

Together with interest subsidies and risk compensation, such guarantee support is designed to amplify the role of fiscal funds in mobilizing credit for the real economy.

Finance Minister Lan Fo'an has said previously that preliminary estimates suggest that every 100 billion yuan in fiscal funds can support up to 1 trillion yuan in credit, achieving a "four-ounce leverage moving a thousand-pound weight" multiplier effect.

That leverage effect is also reflected in first quarter lending.

Li Nan, deputy director-general of the Financial Affairs Department of the Ministry of Finance, said newly issued loans under the related programs exceeded 8.8 trillion yuan in the first quarter, up 4.2 percent year-on-year. The loans covered micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, equipment renewal projects, service-sector businesses and personal consumption.

On the investment side, the policies supported about 330 billion yuan in corporate financing during the same period, up 12.8 percent year-on-year, and helped generate around 480 billion yuan in investment. This has helped fixed-asset investment return to growth and narrowed the decline in private investment, Li said.

Luo Zhiheng, chief economist and head of the research institute at Yuekai Securities, said stronger consumption and investment cannot rely on fiscal support alone, but also require policies that improve incentives for households and businesses.

"By using targeted fiscal funds to lower costs and share risks, the policy can better align government support with market-based decisions, making fiscal spending more efficient and policy transmission more effective," Luo said.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu @chinadaily.com.cn

Policy package aiding in major spending decisions

REPORTER'S LOG

By Zhang Chenxu

While tracking the rollout of China's coordinated fiscal and financial measures, I found that their impact is becoming visible not just in headline funding figures, but in the everyday economic decisions of households, companies and lenders.

The policy package is being tested not only by the amount of funds it mobilizes, but by whether it helps people spend, firms invest and banks lend.

On the consumer side, that effect is becoming tangible through lower borrowing costs and easier access to policy support, helping some households make major spending decisions with less financial strain.

Li Bin, a resident of Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, who had been planning to travel to Antarctica for long, decided to finally go ahead with the trip during a rare extended break this year.

Much of his money, however, was invested in medium- and long-term wealth management products. Redeeming them ahead of schedule could have disrupted his financial arrangements and caused losses.

However, the fiscal interest subsidy policy for personal consumption loans offered another option.

After confirming that his travel expenses were eligible for policy support, Li took out a 300,000 yuan ($43,886) consumption loan. The loan qualified for a 1 percentage point fiscal interest subsidy, capped at 3,000 yuan, enabling him to cover the travel expenses without disrupting his existing financial arrangements.

Hangzhou United Bank, which provided the loan, has also made the policy easier to access. In February, the bank launched a dedicated section for fiscal interest subsidies on its mobile banking app.

Subsidy-related applications are now largely processed automatically, covering steps from application handling to post-loan management, the bank said.

Among businesses, I found that easing financing pressure can also change the timing of investment and the confidence behind such decisions.

Zhejiang Jinhua CONBA Bio-Pharm Co, a pharmaceutical subsidiary of Chinese drugmaker CONBA, recently upgraded a production line with an annual capacity of 20 million vials of freeze-dried penicillin products.

Huang Jianghua, chief financial officer of the company, said the project was financed by a 39 million yuan equipment renewal loan. The loan's interest costs are estimated at around 1 million yuan, of which about 700,000 yuan is expected to be covered through the central government's interest subsidy policy.

Huang said the subsidy has eased the company's financial pressure and made it more willing to tap credit financing, allowing it to speed up intelligent and digital transformation and invest more in high-end, smart and green equipment.

Beyond traditional manufacturers, the policy support is also reaching asset-light technology firms, many of which still face credit constraints while expanding.

Guangxi Dayuan Technology Co, a tech-oriented small and medium-sized enterprise based in Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region specializing in OLED and LCD display modules, found itself in such a situation as rising orders put pressure on its production capacity.

With limited collateral, the company encountered financing difficulties during a critical expansion period.

With support from a special guarantee program for private-sector investment, Guangxi Financing Guarantee Group worked with banks to provide the company with 7.9 million yuan in guaranteed loans, according to the company.

Of the total, 1.6 million yuan has been issued in 2026 under the program to support equipment renewal and technological transformation, the company said.

Yang Tao, deputy director of the National Institution for Finance and Development, said fiscal-financial coordination is an innovative policy instrument that uses measures such as interest subsidies, risk compensation and financing guarantees to channel targeted support to private investment and household consumption.

The approach can help reduce financial risks through fiscal credit enhancement while sending a clear signal to stabilize expectations and boost market confidence, Yang said.

During this reporting trip to Zhejiang and Guangxi, the impact of fiscal-financial coordination came into focus through small but telling decisions: a household going ahead with a long-planned trip without disrupting its financial arrangements, a manufacturer pressing ahead with an upgrade, and an asset-light firm securing the credit support it needed to grow.

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

EAGLE EYE
By Huang Qunhui

Driving development with new quality productive forces

Editor's note: *China Daily's Business Insight section has launched a column devoted to an in-depth interpretation of Xi Jinping's economic thought, with this article serving as the debut piece of the new series.*



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

The 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30) is a crucial timeframe for laying a solid foundation to basically realize socialist modernization. The fourth plenary session of the 20th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China requires remarkable results in advancing high-quality development, and major breakthroughs are needed in developing new quality productive forces, fostering a new development pattern and building a modernized economic system.

This requires a thorough understanding of the important discourses by Xi Jinping, general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, on new quality productive forces.

It is crucial for us to understand the relationship between new quality productive forces and high-quality development.

Xi characterized new quality productive forces as an advanced productivity state, in which innovation plays the leading role. The forces break away from traditional economic growth modes, feature high technology, high efficiency and high quality, and align with the new development philosophy. Developing new quality productive forces is an intrinsic requirement and an important focus for promoting high-quality development.

Productivity is the fundamental driving force of human social development. High-quality development requires the guidance of new productivity theories. Because new quality productive forces have already taken shape in practice and demonstrated strong driving power, they serve as the guiding theory and robust driving force for high-quality development.

In the new era, China has liberated productive forces through comprehensively deepening reform and high-standard opening-up, positioning innovation as the primary driver. Integrating ecological civilization into national development and asserting that protecting the environment means protecting productive forces are vital theoretical outcomes. Grasping this principle is essential to propel high-quality development during the modernization journey.

It is also important for China to accelerate new quality productive forces through innovation.

The distinguishing feature of new quality productive forces is innovation, which encompasses aspects of technology, business models, management styles and institutional innovation. It is imperative to excel in this major task to accelerate their development.

The basic path involves advancing sci-tech innovation for revolutionary breakthroughs and driving industrial innovation for deep transformation, thereby significantly increasing total factor productivity. As China embarks on a new modernization journey, focus must be placed on four aspects.

First, it is necessary to catalyze new quality productive forces guided by high-level sci-tech self-reliance and strength. During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, China must improve its new system for mobilizing resources nationwide, optimize basic research and development, and strengthen original innovation. Extraordinary measures are needed to achieve decisive breakthroughs in core tech across key fields like integrated circuits, industrial machine tools, high-end instruments, basic software, advanced materials and biomedicine.

Second, accelerated development by deeply integrating sci-tech and industrial innovation is needed. It is crucial to fuse real economy innovation with digital and green technologies. Enterprises' principal role in innovation must be strengthened, resources channeled toward them and support provided for them to lead innovation.

Third, it is necessary to accelerate green productive forces by innovating development modes. Guided by carbon peak and neutrality goals — carbon reduction, pollution reduction, green expansion and economic growth should be synergistically advanced. Deepening pollution prevention, building a new energy system, and expediting the formation of green production modes and lifestyles are necessary steps.

Fourth, constructing compatible relations of production by advancing integrated institutional innovation in education, science and technology and talent is needed. Mechanisms that comprehensively support innovation must be improved to enhance the national innovation system's overall efficacy, focusing on nurturing strategic scientists, leading talents, outstanding engineers and highly skilled personnel.

Building a modernized industrial system is important to support development according to local conditions.

To firmly grasp high-quality development as the primary task, it is necessary to develop new quality productive forces according to local conditions. Facing the new round of scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, opportunities must be seized to intensify innovation efforts, cultivate emerging industries, make plans for future industries and improve the modernized industrial system.

Crucially, developing new quality productive forces does not mean ignoring or abandoning traditional industries. It is necessary to prevent headlong rushes and bubble formations, and avoid adopting a single model. All localities must proceed from reality, establish the new before abolishing the old, customize measures to local conditions and provide categorized guidance. Based on local resource endowments, industrial foundations and scientific research conditions, they should selectively promote new industries, use new technologies to transform traditional industries, and actively promote high-end, intelligent and green industrial development.

Promoting industrial innovation through sci-tech innovation is essential for building a modernized industrial system and developing new quality productive forces. The two are interdependent. New quality productive forces are the core capability elements for the modernized industrial system, which serve as their effective carrier. Building this system translates sci-tech achievements into real productive forces, while the system's construction ensures practical economic needs guide sci-tech innovation.

On the one hand, new quality productive forces are achieving a leap in optimizing production factors. Intensive innovation is generating clusters in next-generation information technologies, life sciences, clean energy and advanced manufacturing. These accelerate the iterative leap of productive forces.

On the other hand, the modernized industrial system is developing toward digitalization, intelligence, greening and integration. New quality productive forces are directly reflected in highly penetrative digital and intelligent technologies applied across all sectors and throughout the entire value chain.

China's leadership has emphasized the "consolidation and upgrading" of traditional industries during the 15th Five-Year Plan, calling for enhanced competitiveness in mining, metallurgy, chemicals, light industry, textiles, machinery, shipbuilding and construction. Traditional industries are the "basic fundamentals" of the real economy, accounting for about 80 percent of value-added. To build a modernized industrial system and consolidate the real economy, they must never be abandoned.

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The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Domestic demand improves, exports performing well

MAIN STREET
By Wang Yiming

China's economy got off to a strong start in the first quarter with major economic indicators for January-February exceeding expectations, and the economy is showing positive developments on multiple fronts.

First, industrial production and services maintained robust growth momentum. In the first two months, growth rates of value-added industrial output above designated size — and the services production index — both accelerated from December. In particular, industrial output growth picked up by 1.1 percentage points from December, driven by exports, indicating continued strength on the supply side.

Second, exports demonstrated strong resilience, growing 19.2 percent in the first two months — far exceeding market expectations. While the delayed Chinese Lunar New Year holiday and a low comparison base from a year earlier contributed to the rapid growth, improved manufacturing competitiveness was a key factor supporting export expansion.

Third, domestic demand improved noticeably. Driven by a strong rebound in infrastructure investment, fixed-asset investment rose 1.8 percent year-on-year in January-February, reversing a 3.8 percent decline for full year 2024. Retail sales of consumer goods increased 2.8 percent year-on-year, 1.9 percentage points faster than in December. In particular, services retail sales grew 5.6 percent year-on-year, outpacing the 2.5 percent growth in goods retail sales, indicating that services consumption is becoming an important driver of overall consumption.

Fourth, marginal improvement in demand outpaced supply-side recovery, helping support a moderate rise in prices. In January-February, the consumer price index rose 0.8 percent year-on-year, while core CPI increased 1.3 percent.

Driven by external factors and rapidly growing demand for computing power, the producer price index decline narrowed to 0.9 percent year-on-year in February, while month-on-month PPI rose for five consecutive months. Based on this trend, PPI may return to positive territory earlier than previously expected. These developments have created conditions for the economy to break free from persistently low inflation throughout the year.

Fifth, industrial profits recovered. In January-February, profits of industrial enterprises above designated size rose 15.2 percent year-on-year, 14.6 percentage points faster than the full-year growth rate in 2025. Profits of State-controlled enterprises rebounded from a 3.9 percent decline last year to 5.3 percent growth. Among 41 major industrial sectors, 24 recorded profit growth. The recovery in prices, especially the narrowing decline in PPI, was an important contributor to the rise in industrial profits.

The strong economic start this year was largely attributable to front-loaded macroeconomic policies. Since the beginning of the year, proactive fiscal policy has been implemented early, with central government budgetary investments and funding for key projects aimed at implementing major national strategies and building up security capacities in key areas disbursed in advance. Fiscal spending at all levels accelerated, supporting early launch and implementation of these projects.

Monetary policy also remained accommodative. By the end of February, outstanding aggregate financing to the real economy and the broad money supply, or M2, grew 8.2 percent and 9 percent year-on-year, respectively. Meanwhile, local governments seized the opportunity presented by the launch of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) to accelerate infrastructure construction projects, supporting investment growth and economic stabilization.

China should seize the current window of increasingly positive factors to consolidate and strengthen the momentum of economic recovery. At the same time, it should be noted that uncertainties in the external environment are increasing.

The conflict in the Middle East has driven international oil prices sharply higher. Market institutions have outlined baseline, adverse and extreme scenarios for Brent crude oil prices based on different conflict outcomes. Taking UBS Securities' forecast as an example, if shipping disruptions through the Strait of Hormuz continue, under adverse and extreme scenarios, oil prices could rise to $130 and $150 per barrel in the second quarter, with annual average prices reaching $100 and $132.5 per barrel in 2026, respectively.

China's relatively low dependence on crude oil in its energy consumption structure, together with ample oil reserves, means the country is less vulnerable to supply shortages. However, soaring global oil prices will still raise production costs. If end-user demand remains weak, upstream cost increases may be difficult to pass downstream, potentially squeezing profit margins for midstream and downstream enterprises.

In addition, uncertainty persists in global trade conditions. A report released by the World Trade Organization on March 19 forecast that under a baseline growth scenario excluding energy price shocks, global merchandise trade growth would slow to 1.9 percent in 2026 from 4.6 percent in 2025. If both crude oil and liquefied natural gas prices remain elevated throughout 2026, merchandise trade growth could fall further to 1.4 percent.

A slowdown in the expansion of external demand will increase pressure to boost domestic demand. In 2025, net exports of goods and services contributed 32.7 percent of China's economic growth, boosting GDP growth by about 1.6 percentage points. If external demand weakens in 2026 and net exports contribute less to growth, maintaining stable economic expansion will require higher contributions from final consumption and capital formation.

At present, the imbalance of "strong supply but weak demand" remains prominent in China's economy, reflected in much faster expansion on the supply side than on the demand side. In the first two months, value-added industrial output and the index of services production grew 6.3 percent and 5.2 percent year-on-year, respectively, while retail sales of consumer goods and fixed-asset investment increased only 2.8 percent and 1.8 percent, indicating significantly weaker demand-side performance.

Weak demand mainly stems from three factors. First, consumer demand remains subdued. Although retail sales growth of consumer goods accelerated to 2.8 percent in January-February, up 1.9 percentage points from December, it was still below last year's full-year growth rate of 3.7 percent.

Second, the property market has yet to stabilize. Real estate development investment fell 11.1 percent in January-February, while new home sales floor space and sales value dropped 13.5 percent and 20.2 percent, respectively. Large inventories and slow destocking mean the market remains in a bottoming-out phase.

Third, private investment remains weak. Private fixed-asset investment fell 2.6 percent in January-February, and excluding property investment, growth was only 1 percent. Weak market demand and sluggish corporate profitability continue to dampen private investment appetite.

From a longer-term perspective, the "strong supply, weak demand" problem reflects not only cyclical factors, but also structural and institutional issues.

Since 2012, China's economy has entered a "new normal" characterized by slower growth, shifting from double-digit to single-digit GDP expansion. Discussions of the new normal have often focused on the supply side and declining potential growth. However, after 2012, demographic changes — including a shrinking labor force and accelerated aging — have also profoundly affected demand. Both consumption and investment growth slowed significantly, making demand an increasingly important constraint on economic growth.

The COVID-19 pandemic severely affected both supply and demand, but the demand-side shock was more pronounced, while deeper structural contradictions also became more visible.

First, the deep adjustment in the property sector caused a major contraction in demand. New commercial property sales fell from a peak of 18.2 trillion yuan ($2.67 trillion) in 2021 to 8.4 trillion yuan in 2025. Second, falling property prices reduced household assets, prompting some families to reduce mortgage debt in order to repair balance sheets, which in turn restrained consumption. Third, declining land-sale revenues and rising debt-repayment burdens have forced local governments to focus on resolving existing debt in recent years, therefore constraining investment expansion.

Insufficient demand is also due to institutional factors. China has long maintained a production-oriented fiscal and tax system, with a relatively high share of taxes levied during the production process. This has encouraged local governments to prioritize production over consumption, causing consumption growth to lag behind supply expansion. Therefore, expanding effective demand requires not only stronger policy support, but also deeper reforms.

Against this backdrop, China should combine stronger policy support with deeper reforms to sustain economic recovery and improvement.

China should intensify the implementation of proactive fiscal policy. Although the scale of new government debt this year has reached a record high, the increase from last year remains relatively limited, and broad fiscal spending growth is still below nominal GDP growth.

Moving forward, fiscal policy implementation should be strengthened and accelerated. Fiscal expenditure structures should also be adjusted, redirecting some funds used for investment toward public services and livelihood spending. A plan to raise household incomes should be launched more quickly.

The article is an English translation of remarks delivered by Wang Yiming, former deputy head of the Development Research Center of the State Council, at the CMF Quarterly Forum in the first quarter.
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CHINA

Institute to boost STEM education

China, UNESCO partnership to drive innovation, global resource sharing

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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STEM education is vital for humanity and essential to addressing major global challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, health, energy, food systems and digital transformation, UNESCO Director-General Khaled El-Enany said recently in Shanghai, calling for joint efforts to advance inclusive and accessible STEM education globally.

El-Enany made the remarks on Thursday at a high-level symposium on STEM education held at the UNESCO International Institute for STEM Education, or UNESCO IISTEM, which formally began operations following the inaugural meeting of its governing board held on the same day.

Unveiled in September in Shanghai, the Category I institute was established with a mandate to promote inclusive, equitable and quality education for all in science, technology, engineering and mathematics, or STEM, from early childhood to adulthood.

El-Enany said the inauguration of the institute marks renewed momentum in the long-standing cooperation between China and UNESCO, a strong and comprehensive partnership spanning the full scope of the organization's mandate and networks.

He said the institute will provide high-level expertise across strategic fields, focusing on curriculum development, teacher capacity-building, lifelong learning, educational planning and policy support.

"Our collective prosperity, resilience and well-being depend on educated, creative and forward-looking minds capable of imagining and building solutions that do not yet exist. STEM education will only fulfill its promise if it is inclusive and accessible to all," El-Enany said.

He noted the many challenges affecting STEM education globally, including shortages of laboratories, equipment, connectivity and trained teachers. Many countries also lack the capacity to fully engage in scientific and technological innovation.

With the new institute, UNESCO aims to tap into vast potential and help bridge divides, especially in Africa and Small Island Developing States, or SIDS.

"With China's support, UNESCO is already leading a $3 million program to strengthen STEM education in both Africa and SIDS — including Mali, Uganda, Samoa and the Solomon Islands — with a focus on curriculum reform, teacher training and innovative learning resources," El-Enany said.

Calling the new institute a global hub serving all people, he urged greater efforts to bring science closer to classrooms, technology closer to teachers, and innovation closer to those who need it most.

John Michael Kosterlitz, a Nobel laureate in physics and honorary professor at Soochow University, also underscored the importance of the institute, saying that "humanity needs STEM" to contribute to society.

"STEM education is not only about producing more scientists and engineers. It is about cultivating a way of thinking ... Humanity today faces serious challenges, and they require people who can cross boundaries, think clearly and act responsibly," he said.

Efim Zelmanov, a Russian-American mathematician and Fields Medal laureate who currently serves as chair professor at Southern University of Science and Technology, praised China's sustained efforts to promote STEM education.

"I find the support for mathematical and, more generally, STEM education in China breathtaking and amazing. It is the support at all levels of society. This is the reason why I moved to China in 2022 and have not regretted it for a second," he said.

China is continuing its efforts to cultivate STEM talent and improve scientific literacy while working toward a shared future for humanity.

"To build a peaceful, sustainable and prosperous future for all, we must deepen global cooperation and urgently improve STEM education worldwide. This will empower everyone to benefit from technological advances and industrial transformation," said Ren Youqun, vice-minister of education and chairperson of the Chinese National Commission for UNESCO.

China looks forward to working with UNESCO and all partners to develop the IISTEM into a laboratory for new STEM concepts and approaches, a global hub for policy dialogue and cooperation, an innovative platform for sharing high-quality STEM resources, and a key driver of capacity-building, especially in developing countries, Ren added.

Online
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Shanghai sets target to build intl shipping hub

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
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As Shanghai moves from scale expansion to capacity enhancement in building an international shipping center during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, demand for talent with cross-disciplinary expertise is rising, according to experts.

The port of Shanghai, the world's largest container port for 16 consecutive years, handled 55.06 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) throughout 2025, and is targeting an annual container throughput of 58 million TEUs during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, Chu Beiping, president of Shanghai Maritime University, said at the Shanghai International Shipping Center Capacity Enhancement Think Tank Forum held recently in Shanghai.

"The growth in scale is merely part of the capacity enhancement in the development of the Shanghai International Shipping Center. More important are talent supply, rule-making capacity and competition for international discourse influence, which are key to elevating the center's status and capability," Chu said at the forum, which was jointly held by the Shanghai Federation of Social Science Association and Shanghai Maritime University.

Chu said future efforts should focus on the emerging needs of the shipping industry by developing new interdisciplinary fields, jointly cultivating professionals with cross-disciplinary integration capabilities, and building a knowledge hub that is demand-driven, collaboration-based and underpinned by standards development.

Against this backdrop, Shanghai Maritime University launched the country's first undergraduate program in international cruise management in 2025, enrolling 31 students, a move expected to help address Shanghai's shortage of high-end maritime service talent, said Wu Xianhua, dean of the university's School of Economics and Management.

"Through the integration of industry and education, the bachelor's program aims to sharpen students' practical skills, foreign-language proficiency and international outlook," Wu said.

According to Wu, the program is in response to China's fast-developing cruise economy, which is evolving from a pure cruise consumer market into a comprehensive industrial chain spanning construction, independent design and operations.

"The undergraduate program is designed to fill the significant gap in medium- to high-end cruise management talent in China, and is expected to become a stable source of high-quality talent supporting Shanghai's development as an international shipping center," Wu said.

"Taking a medium-sized cruise ship as an example, there are at least 1,000 crew members onboard on a regular basis, with mid- to high-level management talent accounting for more than 5 percent," Wu added.

Representing the highest level of China's shipping center development, Shanghai serves as a stabilizer in global port and shipping development, supporting China's opening-up and supply chain stability, said Liu Xin, director of the Transport Planning and Research Institute.

"To become a globally leading international shipping center, Shanghai should strengthen its soft power during the 15th Five-Year Plan period," Liu said.

According to Liu, the focus will be on enhancing four key capabilities: facility resilience and safety, global shipping resource allocation, leadership in intelligent and green development, and comprehensive financial and legal support.

"Shanghai should strive to achieve comprehensive leadership in scale and efficiency, resilience and security, integrated services, intelligent and green development, and economic vitality," Liu added.



Guests pose for a photo in front of China's second domestically built large cruise ship, *Adora Flora City*, before its departure from Shanghai on Saturday for a 12-day sea trial. The vessel can accommodate up to 5,232 passengers and is scheduled for delivery in November 2026. YIN LIQIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Learning tea traditions



International students learn traditional tea-making techniques under the guidance of local producers at a tea culture park in Jurong of Zhenjiang city, Jiangsu province, on Sunday. More than 70 international students from universities including Nanjing Normal University and Jiangsu University took part in tea picking, tea processing and tea ceremony activities to experience Chinese tea culture firsthand. ZHONG XUEMAN / XINHUA

Study reveals how westerlies deliver moisture to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **DAQIONG** in Lhasa

A groundbreaking study has unveiled how massive, high-altitude wind currents — known as the westerlies — deliver essential moisture to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. Often called the "Asian Water Towers", this region serves as a critical freshwater source for nearly two billion people downstream.

The research, led by Gao Jing and Yao Tandong from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Tibetan Plateau Research, alongside international scientists, solves a long-standing puzzle: how these high-altitude winds pump moisture into the local environment even when it is not raining or snowing.

The findings were published in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences on May 6.

As rising temperatures accelerate glacier retreat and change river flows, understanding how the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau gets its water is vital for predicting future water supplies.

To map this hidden water cycle, the team combined real-world field data with advanced computer weather models. They launched specialized, helium-filled "Jimu balloons" to collect 32 vertical atmospheric profiles at two key locations on the plateau. These sites included Lulang, a forested valley that acts as a moisture pathway, and Nam Co, a high-altitude saltwater lake.

These balloons measured temperature, humidity, and the unique chemical "fingerprints" of water molecules, known as stable isotopes. By tracking these isotopes, scientists can trace exactly where water vapor came from and how it has changed over time.

> The results showed that moisture carried by the westerlies undergoes significant phase changes — turning from invisible vapor into tiny water droplets — as it sinks."
>
> **Gao Jing,** deputy director of the national key laboratory of earth system and resource environment on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau

At the heart of the discovery is a nighttime process called atmospheric "decoupling".

During the day, solar heating mixes the air near the ground with the air high above. But at night, the ground cools rapidly, creating a highly stratified, three-layer atmospheric sandwich over the plateau.

This structure is divided into the boundary layer closest to the ground, a middle buffer zone called the mixed layer, and the free troposphere, which acts as the high-altitude highway where the westerlies blow.

As the ground cools, these air layers separate, or "decouple", allowing the moisture carried by the high-altitude westerlies to sink toward the plateau.

"The results showed that moisture carried by the westerlies undergoes significant phase changes — turning from invisible vapor into tiny water droplets — as it sinks," said Gao Jing, deputy director of the national key laboratory of earth system and resource environment on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau.

As this sinking moisture cools, it forms a "thermal inversion cap" — a layer of warm air trapping cooler air beneath it. This cap stops the air from mixing aggressively, allowing the water vapor to quietly condense into the lower atmosphere instead.

"Remarkably, around 30 percent of the moisture transported by the westerlies is integrated into the local cycle through these nighttime phase transitions," Gao said.

The study provides a crucial breakthrough for climate science. By revealing exactly how the westerlies feed the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, the research gives scientists a more accurate benchmark to improve weather forecasting models and optimize climate projections for the region.

Furthermore, understanding this modern process helps scientists better interpret historical climate data locked away inside ancient ice cores, offering a clearer picture of how Asia's water supply has fluctuated over centuries and how it might change in the future.

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Chang'e 6 findings challenge Earth water theories

By **LI MENGHAN**
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When asteroids struck the Earth-moon system, they devastated ancient landscapes, triggered global catastrophic events and delivered water and organic compounds essential for life, leading scientists to long believe that carbonaceous asteroids from the outer solar system were a major source of the building blocks for life on Earth.

Now, a study on lunar samples from China's Chang'e 6 mission is challenging conventional theories about this cosmic process. By analyzing tiny metal grains in lunar soil, Chinese scientists have reconstructed changes in asteroid impacts between 4.3 billion and 2.8 billion years ago.

The findings were published on April 27 in the Journal of Geophysical Research: Planets.

Frequent geological activity on Earth, such as plate movement and erosion, has erased most traces of ancient asteroid impacts. As a result, meteorites — fragments of asteroids that fall to Earth — mainly preserve records from only the past 2 million years.

In contrast, the moon, which formed around the same time as Earth but has remained largely inactive geologically, serves as a well-preserved "diary of the solar system", retaining impact records spanning nearly 4 billion years.

"When an asteroid strikes the moon, the impactor vaporizes and breaks apart under extreme heat, leaving behind tiny fragments, including iron-nickel metal grains," said Liu Xiaoying, first author of the study and a postdoctoral researcher at the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, Chinese Academy of Sciences.

Liu said these metal grains are chemically different from the moon's native rocks and contain distinct trace elements depending on the type of asteroid involved. These differences act like "chemical fingerprints", allowing scientists to identify what kinds of asteroids struck the moon.

Using these "fingerprints", the research team examined 40 fragments of impact debris from the Chang'e 6 lunar samples.

Among them, 13 were found in ancient lunar highland rocks and recorded impacts dating back 4.3 billion years. The other 27 were preserved in relatively more recent volcanic rock debris, recording impacts accumulated about 2.8 billion years ago.

The study found that the 13 older fragments mainly came from ordinary rocky asteroids and iron-rich meteorites originating in the inner solar system. Metals from carbonaceous asteroids accounted for less than 8 percent.

By comparison, among the 27 fragments, the proportion linked to carbonaceous asteroids rose to about 26 percent.

The findings suggest impacts from carbonaceous asteroids became significantly more frequent between 4.3 billion and 2.8 billion years ago.

However, this increase occurred during a relatively late stage, when overall asteroid bombardment had already declined, possibly limiting the total amount of water and other volatile substances delivered to the Earth-moon system.

The team proposed several scenarios for the change in asteroid types, including giant-planet migration that scattered carbonaceous asteroids inward, the Yarkovsky effect gradually shifting them into new orbits, or the breakup of one or more large carbonaceous bodies into numerous fragments.

"The study may challenge existing theories about the origin of Earth's water," said Lin Yangting, the study's corresponding author and a researcher at the institute.

Lin added that with more lunar samples expected from future missions, follow-up studies will focus on different periods in lunar history to further uncover the mysteries of asteroid impacts and the evolution of the solar system.

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CHINA

Editor's note: *The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence is reshaping nearly every facet of human existence. This series will take an in-depth look at this transformative force, examining how AI is redefining the way we live, work and interact.*



Seniors operate a mechanized vehicle that helps them move around at a smart elderly care center in Beijing in March. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA



An elderly woman practices a *baduanjin* exercise routine at a robot-assisted elderly care center in Beijing in March. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA



An elderly woman conducts a basic checkup at a community center in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, in January. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

AI tools enable seniors to 'triage at home'

Digital technologies increase potential scope of healthcare access among aging population

By **WEI WANGYU**
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Ye Cuihua, 79, doesn't head to the county clinic when she feels a flutter in her chest. She glances at her wrist. Within seconds, her smartwatch syncs with an app called Ant AQ telling her that her blood pressure is slightly elevated. It follows by providing advice to reduce her salt intake, keep monitoring, and call her doctor if the symptoms persist.

"It feels like having someone at home who can always answer," Ye said.

Across China, this scene is playing out with increasing urgency. As the nation's population aged 65 and above doubled from 7 percent to 14 percent in just 23 years — a demographic shift that took France a century to endure — the medical system is hitting a breaking point. The solution isn't just more hospitals; it is "triage at home" powered by artificial intelligence.

China's medical system has long suffered from a basic imbalance: the best doctors and equipment cluster in big cities, while smaller towns and the countryside make do with less.

"For older patients like us, getting care often means a long bus ride, hours of waiting, and the nagging uncertainty of not knowing whether a symptom is serious enough to justify the trip," Ye said.

AI does not fix all of that, but it is beginning to reshape a critical moment that comes before any hospital visit, that is, the moment a person decides whether to go at all.

"For many older adults, the hardest question is not what treatment do I need, but do I need to see a doctor in the first place," Ye added.

AI tools are able to cross-reference symptoms, health records and basic readings from wearable devices, offering preliminary guidance that can turn vague aches and worries into something a person can act on.

Cai Juan, a caregiver at Taikangzhijia, a senior care facility in Wuhan, Hubei province, has witnessed a noticeable change in health awareness among residents in recent years. "Residents who once ignored mild discomfort or panicked over minor symptoms now tend to consult a digital tool first," she said.

"It doesn't replace the doctor," she added. "But it eases the anxiety and sometimes catches things that would have been left too long."

For elderly users, though, the meaning of these tools runs deeper than efficiency. They also introduce a new kind of presence into daily life.



A senior woman participates in setting up and testing an elderly care robot that can perform basic health checkups, monitor health status and offer companionship at a welfare center in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, in March last year. YAO YINGKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



A man learns about smart glasses during an expo of senior care products in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in September. LIANG XU / XINHUA



A senior woman tries a physical therapy robot in Beijing in March. JU HUANZONG / XINHUA

At Kangyuxuan, a private elderly care home in Beijing, some residents have built routines around their digital assistants, including checking medication schedules, logging sleep, or simply asking questions about a twinge in the knee.

Staff members say these interactions, while practical on the surface, carry an emotional undertone as well.

"They are not just using a tool," said Cui Xiaohan, a caregiver at the elderly care home. "They are getting used to being responded to."

In a country where family structures are changing fast and millions of elderly people live alone or with minimal daily company, that responsiveness matters. AI systems — always available, never impatient — can partially fill the silences left by absent children or overworked caregivers. This does not mean technology replaces human relationships. But it suggests that care, as older people actually experience it, is increasingly a hybrid affair — part human, part machine.

None of this, however, is seamless.

Although smartphone adoption among Chinese adults aged 60 and above has grown rapidly — with internet penetration reaching 53.7 percent by the end of 2025 — digital literacy remains a barrier, with many seniors struggling to navigate cluttered app interfaces, fragmented platforms and unfamiliar interaction patterns.

"A system can be brilliant under the hood, but if a 75-year-old cannot figure out how to use it, that brilliance counts for little," Cui said.

Some platforms have begun introducing simplified layouts, voice commands and even dialect recognition — adjustments that sound minor but determine whether a tool actually gets used.

"In February, Ant AQ, an app developed to help the elderly with health checks and medical consultation, started to provide a mode that is more suitable for the elderly," said Shen Yunfang, head of communications at Ant Health.

"Specifically speaking, we developed a mode that is able to understand different dialects, considering that many of the elderly could not speak in standard Mandarin," she said.

Compared with younger users, however, many older adults remain wary of advice delivered by an algorithm.

In Wuhan, Ye described her approach plainly, "I read what it tells me, but I still need a doctor to confirm."

AI may serve as a useful first step, but for most elderly users it does not carry the authority of a physician. It operates within a broader ecosystem in which human judgment still has the final word.

The rise of health AI is forcing a rethink of what "access" means. For decades, access to healthcare was measured in physical terms — how many hospitals, how many doctors, how far to the nearest clinic. Increasingly, it also has a digital dimension, that is, whether people can obtain, understand and act on health information.

For older populations, this opens real possibilities — medical knowledge delivered directly to the home, reducing the need for travel. But it also risks creating new kinds of exclusion, shutting out those who cannot navigate the technology.

The upshot is that the success of health AI may depend less on how smart it gets, and more on how accessible it is to use.

For seniors like Ye, she monitors her health more often now and seeks guidance earlier than she once did. "I used to wait and see," she said. "Now I check first."

At a systemic level, though, the transformation is still unfinished. AI can speed things up, widen the net and support better decisions. But it cannot resolve the inherent uncertainties of medicine, and it is in no position to shoulder complex clinical judgment.

The future of AI in elderly care may lie not in replacement but in coexistence — algorithms alongside physicians, digital tools alongside lived experience.

As China continues to age, that coexistence will likely become a defining feature of its healthcare landscape.

Medical progress presents opportunities, challenges

By **WEI WANGYU**

China's push to integrate artificial intelligence into its healthcare system has highlighted bottlenecks in its rollout, from elite urban hospitals to rural clinics.

The application of the technology in the medical field has so far proved uneven, with caution coming to the fore in its use.

"That has put imaging — radiology in particular — at the front of the line," said Wu You, an associate professor at the School of Healthcare Management at Tsinghua University. "In these specialties, AI systems help process the flood of CT and MRI scans, improving both speed and consistency."

Digital pathology and hospital quality management have followed. "Tools that review prescriptions, audit medical records, and flag irregularities in disease-specific protocols are increasingly part of the daily workflow at major hospitals," Wu said.

But these applications remain concentrated in large, well-resourced institutions — the kind of places that already have the infrastructure and expertise to absorb a new technology.

When AI moves closer to the patient, and especially to elderly patients, things get more complicated.

One underappreciated issue is the uneven capacity for working alongside machines. Research has shown that less experienced doctors sometimes lean too heavily on AI outputs, which can lead to more false positives or a kind of passive decision-making.

"How well they work depends heavily on who is using them. In primary care settings — often understaffed, undertrained, and far from the top-tier hospitals where these tools are first tested — that dependency can limit what AI actually delivers," Wu said.

A second challenge is the gap between lab conditions and the real world. Regulatory approval in China ensures that AI systems meet baseline standards under specific, controlled circumstances. But once a tool lands in a busy rural clinic or a community health center with aging equipment, outcomes can look quite different.

"How the system is integrated, how long it has been running, and how comfortable the staff is with it all shape performance in ways that no test environment can fully predict," said Mo Kai, a senior consultant at the Singapore-based regional association APACMed.

Some experts have begun arguing that governance needs to extend well beyond the moment of approval, into ongoing monitoring and adjustment.

Data governance adds yet another layer. Medical records are sensitive, and hospitals — understandably — are cautious about sharing them with outside technology companies. Encryption, data isolation and contractual safeguards help, but institutional trust builds slowly.

"For elderly care, all of these structural issues converge with a more basic question, that is 'can the people who need these tools most actually use them'," Mo said.

"Looking ahead, the next chapter of AI healthcare in China will probably be defined less by dramatic leaps in what models can do and more by the hard, unglamorous work of integration," he said.

"The important questions are: How do you fit AI into existing clinical routines? How do you make it work across a healthcare system that ranges from world-class urban hospitals to bare-bones village clinics? And how do you keep it accessible to people who did not grow up with smartphones?"

For a country where the population is aging at a pace that few systems have ever had to absorb, these are not abstract questions. The answers will shape not just the future of technology in medicine, but what it means to be cared for in old age.

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CULTURE



Handmade stories from the highlands

Ancient Tibetan crafts reach Beijing, where visitors watch artisans work and learn about heritage through engaging experiences, **Yang Feiyue** reports.





A diverse array of artifacts, including *thangka* paintings, glazed porcelain panels and carved wooden blocks created by artisans from Rangtang county, Sichuan province, is on display at Beihai Park in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY











The event at Beihai Park features (from top) a live demonstration of *thangka* painting, hands-on workshops and traditional Tibetan music and dance performances.

Inside Beihai Park in downtown Beijing, beneath the shade of ancient cypress trees, a horse appears frozen mid-stride, its muscles taut and mane lifted as if caught in the wind. But the image has been fixed in fire.

Painted in mineral pigments yet sealed in glaze, it belongs neither entirely to the world of *thangka* (Tibetan Buddhist painting or scroll) nor to traditional ceramics. Instead, it exists somewhere in between.

The piece is part of a newly unveiled series at the *Cultural Homeland — Blessed Land Rangtang* exhibition, which opened in late April at Chanfu Temple in the park.

Now in its third year, the event has become an annual meeting point between the remote Rangtang county in southwestern Sichuan province and one of Beijing's most historic imperial gardens.

This year's exhibition, which runs through May 25, adds a new dimension to that dialogue.

Among the most striking works on display are porcelain panels inspired by the epic of King Gesar — a centuries-old oral tradition often described as one of the world's longest epic narratives, recounting the heroic deeds of a legendary Tibetan ruler and his warriors.

The porcelain series depicts more than 30 generals in elaborate armor, each rendered with distinct expressions and movements. Created by *thangka* artists from Rangtang, who work in China's porcelain capital, Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province, the pieces are the result of years of experimentation.

Translating *thangka* imagery onto porcelain involves bridging two very different artistic systems, as traditional *thangka* painting is typically created on cloth using mineral pigments, while porcelain requires high-temperature firing, the exhibition organizers note.

Artists have to adapt Tibetan painting techniques to ceramic surfaces. The finished works retain the detailed linework and storytelling associated with *thangka* while taking on the glazed depth and luminosity of porcelain.

Crossing distances

The journey from Rangtang to Beijing is not an easy one. Located deep in the Aba Tibetan-Qiang autonomous prefecture, the county is more than 500 kilometers from the provincial capital, Chengdu, often requiring over 10 hours of travel by road.

Yet, that remoteness has also helped preserve Rangtang's remarkable concentration of intangible cultural heritage. The county is home to 143 registered heritage items and dozens of training workshops, where artisans spend years mastering crafts passed down through generations.

For three consecutive years, those traditions have traveled beyond the plateau. Artisans, performers and cultural practitioners have made their way to Beihai Park, turning what began as a one-time exhibition into a recurring cultural exchange.

Inside the temple halls, visitors move between rows of *thangka* paintings, glazed porcelain panels and carved wooden blocks, while conversations about the history and techniques behind the exhibits fill the space.

In one corner, artisans demonstrate how horse motifs are printed onto Tibetan paper using hand-carved plates. At another, visitors trace gold lines onto black ceramic pieces under the guidance of instructors. Nearby, shelves of crafts and food products, from hand-shaped pottery cups to woven textiles and highland snacks, invite visitors to browse, touch and purchase.

"There are exhibitions, but also experiences," says Ren Kai, deputy director of Beihai Park.

"Visitors can see, participate and even take something home."

This shift, he adds, reflects a broader change in how the exhibition is designed, moving away from passive viewing toward hands-on participation, where cultural objects become part of a lived experience rather than distant artifacts.

Cao Fei, who is in charge of the interactive programs, guides visitors to press their fingers carefully on a sheet of fibrous Tibetan paper at a long wooden table. Beside them, a local artist lifts a carved wooden block from a tray of ink, then steadies each visitor's hand as the paper meets the surface.

When the paper is peeled away, a vivid horse image emerges.

"It is a wind horse, a traditional motif symbolizing luck and the carrying of prayers," Cao says.

"This year we introduced more hands-on activities. We want people not only to see these traditions, but also to understand how they are made."

The paper itself carries a story. Made from the roots of the wolfsbane plant, it is produced through a labor-intensive process of lifting pulp from water by hand, sheet by sheet.

"It is highly durable and resistant to water, insects and decay, which is why it has long been used for printing important scriptures," she says.

Around the corner, another group gathers around a table of dark matte pottery. Visitors dip fine brushes into gold pigment and carefully trace characters across curved surfaces.

Cao sees the distance between the plateau and the capital dissolving through these interactions.

For Wang Zhen, general manager of the Beijing Tourism Group's subsidiary BTG Tourism Development, this shift reflects something larger than exhibition design.

"It's about helping people understand the deeper value of these crafts. They are not simply artifacts, but living art forms that still resonate in contemporary life," Wang says.

He sees the exhibition as part of a broader effort to transform cultural heritage into an emotional and intellectual journey shared by both creators and audiences.

> "When visitors understand the stories, techniques and meanings behind these artifacts, they stop seeing them as distant objects from another time and place and begin to see them as part of their own cultural fabric."
>
> **Wang Zhen,** general manager of BTG Tourism Development

"When visitors understand the stories, techniques and meanings behind these artifacts, they stop seeing them as distant objects from another time and place and begin to see them as part of their own cultural fabric," Wang says.

Over the past three years, BTG Tourism Development has worked with Rangtang to build a pathway linking exhibitions with tourism routes, study programs and product development.

The county's remoteness, once viewed as a disadvantage, has increasingly become part of its appeal, Wang says. Many visitors, he notes, are urban professionals seeking a slower, quieter experience.

"When they arrive, they don't feel the journey was long, and most believe it was worth it," he says.

Outside the exhibition halls, that value becomes tangible.

Growing interest

At a small stall, Badanlam arranges rows of handmade pottery while speaking with visitors who stop to test the texture and weight of her work.

"People have been showing strong interest in our handcrafted items," says the woman in her 20s.

Her coffee cups, adapted for modern use, are among the most popular items. Familiar in function, they still carry the marks of handwork, featuring slight ridges along the rim, faint thumb impressions in the clay, and small variations in thickness that reveal the rhythm of the potter's hands.

Last year, Badanlam stayed in Beijing for a week and sold hundreds of pieces. This year, she notices that the interest has continued.

But for her, the change runs deeper than sales. Growing up in Rangtang, her life was once defined by physical labor — long days spent digging for caterpillar fungus and medicinal herbs in the mountains. "Back then, we depended on labor," she says.

As a teenager, Badanlam joined a local training center and spent years learning language skills and traditional crafts. The process was slow, repetitive, and at times uncertain. Now, she makes pottery, creates traditional clay works, and explains their meanings to visitors at places she never imagined visiting. Her income has increased by about 30 to 40 percent.

"But more importantly, I can come here. I can travel. I can let people understand where we are from," she says.

Luo Xianquan, an official of Rangtang, notes that the county has been selected as one of the first national pilot counties for cultural industries empowering rural vitalization. With 46 intangible cultural heritage training workshops, the county has helped over 3,000 local farmers and herders find employment close to home, increasing annual incomes by an average of 4,000 yuan ($588) per person.

Young Tibetan women like Badanlam reflect "how 'fingertip skills' are being turned into real economic returns across Rangtang", Luo points out.

Around Badanlam, visitors continue to browse. Some leave carrying small objects ranging from a printed sheet to a lamp and a cup still bearing the imprint of a hand.

Modest as they are, they carry with them a journey that begins in the highlands, passes through fire, paper and clay, and settles quietly into everyday life.

"I'm happy that I can let people understand where we are from this way," she says.

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LIFE



Left: Children explore the recently opened Qianhai Nature Center in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. **Middle:** A visitor interacts with a local musical instrument at the Taklimakan center. **Right:** Visitors take photos of the front of the Qianhai center. **Bottom:** The desert center has recently risen from the earth against the blue sky, its color indistinguishable from the dunes around it, next to a layered red frame, which is the signature of the Chinese National Geography magazine.

Treasures that make the Taklimakan tick

The Chinese National Geography magazine's new nature center allows visitors to learn about and connect with the country's largest desert, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

East of Alar in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, across the Tarim River, the city's green landscape gives way to an expanse of ocher. This is the northern edge of China's largest desert, the Taklimakan, one of the thresholds where ancient Silk Road travelers once stepped into the sea of sand.

Here, a new building has recently risen from the earth, its color indistinguishable from the dunes around it. Next to the building is a layered red frame, the signature of the Chinese National Geography magazine, standing against an expanse of ocher sand and brilliant blue sky — this is the Taklimakan Nature Center.

"Nature centers are small-to-medium integrated experience spaces, mostly under 1,000 square meters, that use scientific and artistic means to offer a deep, systematic interpretation of nature," says Guo Yingqian, general manager of the Chinese National Geography Camp.

Three narrative threads — The Realm of Life, The Way of Survival, The Path of Ecology — unfold across the exhibition space, offering a systematic decoding of what makes the Taklimakan tick.

Approaching it, a nine-layer topographical model meticulously carved from contour data brings the region's scale into focus. The snow-capped Tomur Peak, the highest point of the Tianshan Mountains, rises to 7,443 meters, while the desert floor lies at an elevation of just over 1,000 meters. A glowing globe reveals that even from space, this sandy expanse is unmistakable.

Surrounding mountains trap moisture, leaving the desert with an average annual rainfall of just 26 millimeters. At the center, visitors can turn the device and watch sand swirl, creating their own miniature dust storm. Additionally, a massive interactive thermometer lets visitors feel the region's wild swing between scorching days and freezing nights.

But one of the most astonishing revelations is when a mirror installation shows visitors a staggering amount of meltwater from surrounding peaks seeping underground, accumulating over eons into a subterranean sea beneath the sand.

Other artfully reproduced images include snow-brushed dunes and the ancient cities of Loulan and Niya buried beneath the sand.



Three narrative threads — The Realm of Life, The Way of Survival, The Path of Ecology — unfold across the exhibition space, offering a systematic decoding of what makes the Taklimakan tick. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"The Realm of Life chapter opens with the Extreme Realm exhibits, reshaping people's perception of the desert," Guo explains.

It then moves into the Desert Creatures section, which systematically presents the survival strategies of dozens of endemic animals and plants that have evolved to survive drought and high temperatures.

Among them, the wild camel takes center stage. Visitors can stand beside a life-size model to touch its head and hip, then push a button to hear the sound of a *satar*, a Uygur bow-stringed instrument.

"The idea is to make learning tactile and memorable," she says.

Visitors learn that wild and domestic camels diverged 800,000 years ago. Fewer than 1,000 wild camels remain today, making them rarer than giant pandas.

Many have found it fascinating that these wild camels' oval red blood cells keep flowing even in extreme dehydration, and their specialized coats deflect the desert's searing heat, Guo says.

Nearby, a massive dune-shaped installation teems with hand-drawn, meticulously detailed life.

Tarim hares and foxes use oversized ears to radiate heat. Desert beetles have fused wing covers that function like personal "air conditioners", capturing exhaled moisture. Long-eared jerboas are the desert's "jumping stars", while great gerbils, or "desert rats", build sprawling underground cities with distinct quarters for sleeping and storage.

"We've added interactive elements throughout," Guo notes, adding that 30 scientific models are on display.

The nature center's staff expect visitors to find the most delightful surprise in the Shifting Dunes section, where six classic dune types, ranging from crescent and linear to parabolic, transverse and dome, have been reimagined as sculptural "little cakes" displayed in jewel cases.

The nature center also weaves in human stories in a colorful reconstructed Oasis Dwellers area that re-creates domestic life along the desert's edge.

Patterns of almonds, pomegranates and grapevines bloom on fabric stamped by traditional wooden molds. Local distinctive Atlas silk shimmers, while four traditional housing models, such as the wind-resistant *Ayiwan* (a square, protruding-top structure), depict daily life.

Recordings of the Muqam suite fill the air, featuring eight instruments. An interactive backdrop invites visitors to "join" the ensemble, reaching through cutouts to strum a *dutar*, a two-stringed lute that is characterized by its long neck and pear-shaped body, alongside illustrated musicians.

The Way of Survival chapter then turns to the wisdom of coexistence between people and the desert.

"The 'Alar Miracle' section shows how the local residents created agricultural miracles on the Gobi Desert, ingeniously using saline-alkali water to cultivate 'inland seafood'," Guo says.

Seventy years ago, though this area was barren, locals managed to grow cotton and farm blue crabs and prawns to ship across China.

"The people here didn't just endure. They created beauty, music and poetry," she notes.

The final section, Desert Arteries, celebrates the roads and railways that now traverse the sands. It exposes visitors to the challenges in building those engineering marvels on shifting dunes and defending against relentless erosion.

The exhibition's showstopper is the Green Belt display, one of humanity's longest-running desert-containment projects. Over 46 years, multiple generations have built a 3,046-kilometer-long green belt around the Taklimakan. Satellite imagery shows the once-barren land now encircled by green.

Visitors can literally touch the belt. A strip of Xinjiang long-staple cotton invites handling, and they can stamp a card with images of the plants that made it possible — poplar, saxaul, tamarisk, and calligonum.

"Put on the green scarf, and feel the desert's embrace," the display says.

The Taklimakan Nature Center is part of a broader vision that extends far beyond Xinjiang.

On the opposite edge of the country, another Chinese National Geography project has taken shape — the Qianhai Nature Center in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

Sitting along the shores of Lingdingyang Bay, the center transforms the daily drama of dusk into a hands-on science experience. Visitors can use dark filters to safely watch the sun sink into the sea, flatten the solar disc with a curved prism that mimics Earth's atmosphere, and learn about the elusive "green flash" that sometimes crowns the vanishing sun.

A large interactive screen offers real-time sunset forecasts and simulations that show the timing and position of the sunset's shift throughout the year along the bay's 68-km coastline.

The two centers represent a growing network of the Chinese National Geography Camp's aim to transform how people experience the natural world, according to Guo.

The Xinjiang center is already resonating with local officials.

Dan Hong, director of the local culture, sports, radio, television, and tourism center, notes that the nature center allows visitors to experience both the unique natural beauty of the Taklimakan Desert and the vibrant cultural atmosphere of the oasis.

It offers a relaxing, enjoyable, and educational experience, and visitors can gather more information here before heading out to other local attractions, Dan says.

At the same time, visitors can learn about how the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps is developing the frontier region in Alar and gain a new understanding of this young city, Dan adds.

The center will connect with the nature imaging center in Kashgar and other nature centers in Aksu, as well as in Makit county, all of which contribute to a growing network of southern Xinjiang's scattered landscapes and deep heritage.

The ultimate goal is to enable visitors to systematically understand and experience how mountains shape the desert, how oases nurture civilization, and how humans wisely coexist with extreme environments, Guo says.

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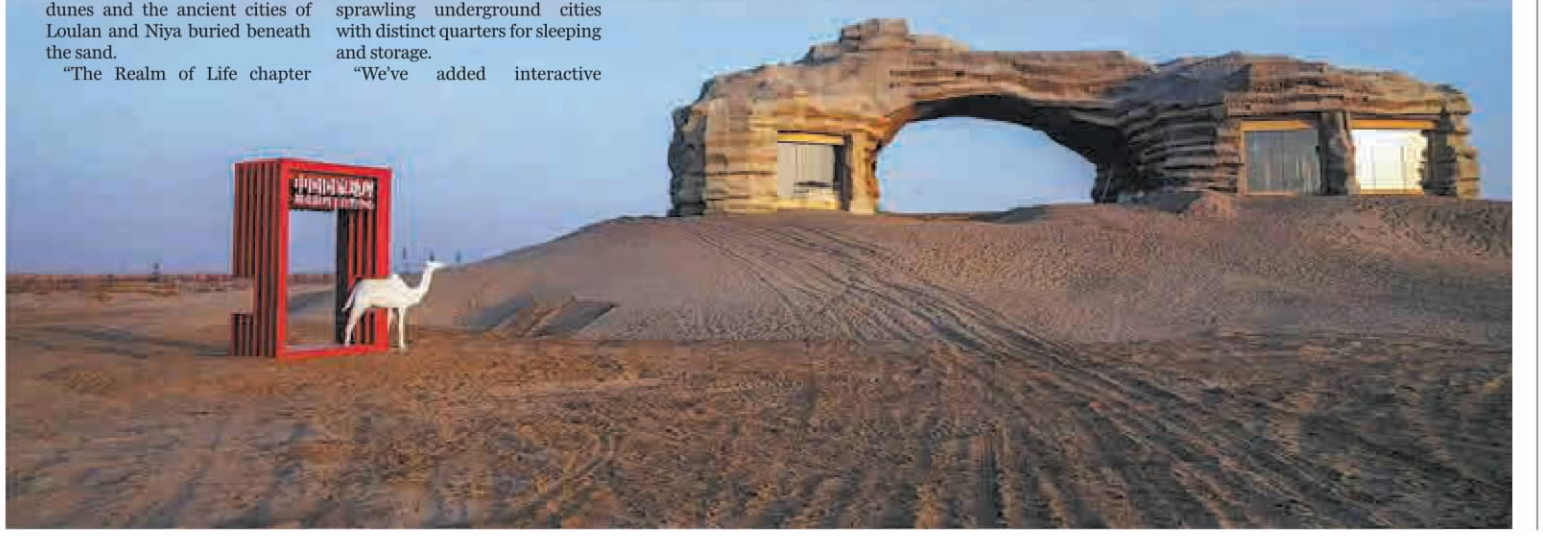

Watsons pop-up indicates island upgrade

GUANGZHOU — What if you could step into a 19th-century pharmacy and find today's most popular skincare and sparkling water on the shelf? That is an experience Watsons is re-creating at its new pop-up store on Shamian Island in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, near one of its earliest locations from about two centuries ago.

The store, spanning over 100 square meters, is designed to evoke the atmosphere of a century-old pharmacy. The initiative coincides with the AS Watson Group's 185th anniversary. The company traces its origins to the Hong Kong Dispensary, founded in 1841, with Alexander Skirving Watson, a British pharmacist, serving as one of its first managers.

The pop-up showcases a wide range of health, body care and beauty products. Items on display include everything from early-era Vaseline to modern skincare lines, as well as a retro version of Watsons soda water for visitors to sample. The brand's iconic bottled water has evolved into a Chinese lifestyle symbol that reflects changing consumer habits.

> "Encouraging century-old enterprises to return to Shamian is part of this plan."
>
> **Li Chen,** project operator

According to the company, the pop-up is not only a tribute to its history but also a response to China's consumption upgrade, aiming to offer more tailored and diversified services in the health and beauty sector. Since re-entering the Chinese mainland market following the reform and opening up in 1978, Watsons has expanded to nearly 3,500 stores.

The move demonstrates foreign investors' confidence in China's development. From 2021 to 2025, the province saw the establishment of 113,800 new foreign-funded enterprises, a 31.3 percent increase from the previous five years. In 2025, Guangzhou, the provincial capital, recorded 11,000 newly established foreign-invested enterprises, with paid-in foreign capital growing by 9.1 percent year-on-year. As China pursues high-quality economic development, the appeal of its vast market continues to strengthen.

The pop-up store's return to Shamian Island was made possible by the area's recent revitalization. Once a French and British concession, the island is home to 49 historical buildings, including the original site of Watsons. Efforts have been made to restore and upgrade the area, aiming to turn it into an international hub for consumption and cultural exchange.

"Encouraging century-old enterprises to return to Shamian is part of this plan. Apart from Watsons, we hope to see dozens of other companies that once operated here, such as HSBC and Standard Chartered, return," says Li Chen, the project operator of Guangzhou New Shameen Industrial Development Co.

Guangzhou has long served as a gateway for Sino-foreign exchanges. As early as the Tang Dynasty (618-907), the city established the *fanfang*, a government-designated residential unit for foreigners.

"This project will showcase a more open, inclusive and modern Guangzhou, while offering people new possibilities for a better quality of life," says Yi Zhaozhao, a researcher with the Guangzhou Urban Planning and Design Survey Research Institute.

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CULTURE







Quiet drama finds powerful audience

A film in the Chaoshan dialect about *qiaopi* letters has become the surprise hit of the May Day holiday season, **Zheng Caixiong** reports in Guangzhou.

A low-budget Shenzhen-produced movie centered on *qiaopi* (overseas Chinese remittance letters) has earned widespread acclaim and emerged as one of the biggest surprise hits of the May Day holiday box-office season.

Dear You follows a series of letters tied to Ye Shurou, a grandmother who spent decades waiting for her husband, Zheng Musheng, while her grandson searches for the truth behind their family's past.

The journey gradually uncovers the hidden story of Xie Nanzhi, a Thai woman of Chaoshan, or Teochew, descent who was Zheng's sworn sister and trusted confidante.

After Zheng's death, Xie quietly cared for Ye Shurou from afar, secretly writing letters and sending money in his name for 18 years. Years later, Xie's adopted son, Xie Zehua, reads those letters aloud to Grandma Ye, revealing a long-buried story.

The film received a rating of 9.0 out of 10 on Douban, a major review platform — the highest among all new releases during the holiday — underscoring its broad audience appeal.

By Thursday, the movie had grossed about 227 million yuan ($33.5 million), with ticketing platforms Maoyan and Beacon projecting its final box office revenue could reach 725 million yuan.

Written and directed by Lan Hongchun, a native of eastern Guangdong's Chaoshan region, *Dear You* is deeply rooted in local culture and *qiaopi* history.

The story revolves around a Chaoshan grandmother who spends half a century waiting for letters. Through old correspondence, the younger generation retraces family memories and gradually uncovers the intertwined lives of two women shaped by endurance, sacrifice and longing.

Featuring authentic Chaoshan dialect throughout, the film weaves together local customs, family bonds and the historical experience of overseas Chinese communities.

Without relying on sensational plot twists or formulaic storytelling, *Dear You* adopts a restrained, lifelike narrative style, portraying the emotional weight carried by ordinary people during waves of migration of Cantonese people to Southeast Asia.



Above: (From left) Xie Nanzhi's son, Xie Zehua, reads aloud the letters she once wrote to grandma Ye Shurou. After years of misunderstandings melted away, grandma Ye Shurou gazes at the kapok flowers sent along with her husband Zheng Musheng and Xie Nanzhi's handwritten note, quietly savoring the feeling of being deeply loved. An elderly Xie Nanzhi spends the quietest moment of her day reading the letters. **Left:** The film's protagonist, Ye Shurou, gets a new bicycle and happily learns to ride it with her daughter beneath the sprawling banyan tree.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "The emotional power and dramatic tension in those real stories made me feel that these experiences had to be brought to the screen."
>
> **Lan Hongchun,** director

Released during the fiercely competitive May Day holiday season, the Chaoshan-dialect *Dear You* achieved an impressive breakthrough, despite lacking major stars.

Driven by its solid artistic quality, audience word-of-mouth, and a carefully planned distribution strategy expanding from Guangdong to the entire country, the movie defied market headwinds and stood out.

The film held advance screenings in selected cities ahead of the May Day holiday. Officially released on April 30, it gradually expanded its run from a full release across Guangdong province to nationwide screenings.

As audience praise continued to grow, cinemas increased the number of screenings. By Thursday, cumulative admissions had reached 5.98 million.

Facing competition from big-budget action, comedy and suspense films, *Dear You* maintained steady box-office growth and became the season's standout emotional dark horse.

Industry observers believe the film could continue performing strongly long after the May Day holiday period ends.

Compared with more commercially driven genre films released during the same period, including suspense, action and comedy productions, *Dear You* takes a realistic and heartfelt approach. Through themes of hometown nostalgia, family ties and the lives of overseas Chinese, it resonates with audiences through simple and grounded storytelling, observers say.

A viewer surnamed Chen in Shantou says the film reminded her of her grandmother.

"The movie portrays the authentic daily lives of Chaoshan people in those years," she says, adding that she has seen the movie twice.

Director Lan says the story of *Dear You* is 90 percent authentic, and 100 percent sincere.

"In the childhood memories of the Chaoshan people, Grandma is always the warmest and most comforting presence," he says.

"The original idea was simple — I just wanted to tell audiences a pure story about grandpas and grandmas," says Lan.

Lan, a Chaoshan native, has long been deeply passionate about depicting rural stories from his hometown.

The generation portrayed in the film lived through major historical periods, including the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45), the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, and the country's reform and opening-up beginning in the late 1970s.

Lan says the Chaoshan people endured hardship for generations as they left home and crossed the seas to make a living, while many overseas Chinese later returned to support their hometowns after the reform and opening-up.

He says that over 90 percent of the plot in the film is based on real events.

"For various reasons, many people could not return home decades ago. Their families and friends would hide the news of their passing, keep sending remittances, and write letters as if they were still alive," he says.

"The emotional power and dramatic tension in those real stories made me feel that these experiences had to be brought to the screen," he adds.

Zheng Runqi, who plays the grandson, says he hopes more filmmakers will create movies in the Chaoshan dialect because the region contains countless stories worth telling.

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The human bridges and personal histories of China-US relations

By **JOSEPH TSE-HEI LEE**
for China Daily

People with extraordinary experiences tell the most compelling stories. This is evident in Xiamen University professor of management William N. Brown's collection of narratives about Americans who lived and worked in China and developed deep affective ties with the people they encountered.

Against a scholarly literature that has long prioritized states, institutions and policy outcomes — whether in studies of educational networks, or Cold War diplomacy — Brown recenters individuals as moral actors who navigated uncertainty, risk and political transformation in pursuit of meaningful human connection. What is often missing from both academic and policy-oriented analyses is closer attention to the voices of individuals — state and non-state actors alike — who adapted to shifting circumstances and advanced cross-cultural exchange as a lived humanistic practice.

Brown's book, *West Meets East: Stories of Americans in China*, addresses this gap by foregrounding the moral dimensions of everyday encounters: trust amid distrust, respect and responsibility toward others, and the willingness to act selflessly under difficult conditions. These qualities have quietly but persistently sustained Sino-American relations in moments when formal diplomacy faltered.

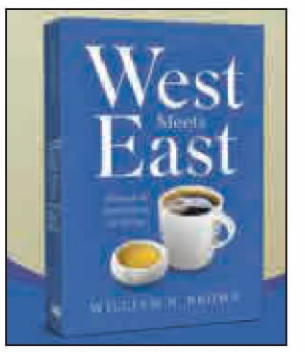
Brown begins with early 20th-century American missionary educators and their families in Kuliang, Fujian province, including figures such as Donald MacInnis and his descendants, as well as Joseph Stilwell, who contributed to China's war efforts against Japan despite tensions with Chiang Kai-shek over military strategy, and John Service, the China-born son of missionaries who later served in the US Foreign Service and fell victim to McCarthy-era persecution. These stories illuminate how educational and diplomatic infrastructures functioned not only as channels for cultural transmission but also as ethical communities grounded in humility and relational responsibility. Brown is attentive to the moral complexity of these encounters, in which power relations often coexisted with genuine efforts at partnership and care.

One of the most moving episodes in the book illustrates this intimacy at its most elemental. During severe flooding in the Minjiang River region, a Chinese boatman chose — at considerable risk — to ferry Methodist missionary educator Harry Russell Caldwell so that he could visit his wife in a Fuzhou hospital. This generous act was rooted in trust and shared humanity during wartime. Such moments, often absent from grand historical narratives, suggest that cross-cultural engagements involved ordinary individuals making extraordinary choices in moments of need.



William N. Brown, Xiamen University professor of management.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The narrative does not end with the political transition in 1949. Brown extends his accounts into the Reform era and beyond, tracing the experiences of Americans who arrived in China in the 1980s and 1990s. Some experimented with creative pedagogies — using songs and visual aids — to make learning Chinese more accessible, while others organized badminton camps, established international schools, or embedded themselves in local communities through teaching and mentorship. He further brings the story into the present, including millennial and post-COVID travelers who came to China to study, teach, produce online content, build careers as songwriters and influencers, and, in some cases, establish families.



William N. Brown's book, *West Meets East: Stories of Americans in China.*

This multigenerational arc is revealing. Across distinct historical moments — missionary China, wartime assistance, socialist transformation, reform and opening-up, and post-COVID rebuilding — Americans have continued to be drawn to China's history and culture. Page after page, Brown highlights faithful friendships forged through war and peace, ideology and disillusionment. While not immune to political rupture, these relationships were grounded in ethical commitments that transcended short-term calculations. One enduring lesson of these stories is that genuine friendships can embody a cross-cultural version of internationalism that emphasizes mutual



Joseph Tse-hei Lee, professor of history, Pace University, New York, United States.

flourishing rather than instrumental gain. The individuals in Brown's book — missionaries, teachers, doctors, students, families — thus leave behind a legacy of selfless service and moral imagination that continues to resonate with humanistic values of cross-cultural engagement.

The book also reflects on the changing directionality of humanistic ties. In the early 20th century, it was largely unidirectional, shaped by American missionary educators, diplomats and military advisers engaged in China's modernization and wartime resistance, particularly during World War II. By the late 20th and early 21st centuries, exchange became more reciprocal, as increasing numbers of Americans traveled to China to study, work, and live, even as Chinese migration to the United States remained far more extensive. This shift points to a more complex and layered landscape of transpacific exchange.

Although Brown's book is not a conventional monograph, its narrative form makes a valuable contribution by restoring the personal dimension to the discussion. By focusing on lived experience, it challenges dominant media narratives that reduce the bilateral relationship to economic competition or geopolitical contest. Instead, it reveals the importance of non-state actors whose moral and cultural commitments often buffered the transnational ties from collapsing entirely into confrontation. Importantly, the book does not romanticize this history. It acknowledges the fragility of these cross-cultural ties. Across the decades, friendships have been disrupted, educators expelled, institutions closed, and channels of dialogue severed. Yet these humanistic ties, once formed, often leave enduring memories.

At a moment of renewed geopolitical uncertainty, *West Meets East* reframes the development of Sino-American relations as a moral history — one empowered by people who repeatedly chose compassion, dialogue and partnership in uncertain times. Their cumulative acts of dedication have long tempered the harsher edges of global politics.

The author is a professor of history at Pace University in New York, United States.

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SPORTS

ENDURANCE RACING

Journey through the west

More than a thousand participants from nearly 40 leading global business schools embark on an epic trek through the Gobi desert



On May 4, the 2026 business school Gobi friendship race, also known as "Gobi to West 2026", concluded after four days and three nights across 121 kilometers of desert terrain. More than 1,100 participants from nearly 40 leading business schools worldwide took part, following a route once traveled by Tang Dynasty (618-907) Buddhist monk Xuanzang more than 1,300 years ago. PICTURES PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY









Thinking of doing it yourself?

Transportation: Take a high-speed train from hubs like Lanzhou or Xi'an to Guazhou Railway Station (or the nearby Liuyuan South High-Speed Station). Alternatively, fly to Dunhuang Mogao International Airport, followed by a 1.5- to 2-hour taxi or bus ride to Guazhou.

Best time to visit: May to October offers the most comfortable weather for outdoor activities and desert sightseeing. Spring and early autumn are particularly suitable for hiking and Gobi-crossing experiences.

What to see: Key cultural sites within Guazhou include the stunning Yulin Caves (the "sister caves" to Mogao) and the Suoyang City ruins, a UNESCO World Heritage site along the Silk Road featuring the adjacent Ayuwang (Ashoka) Temple. You will also see ancient beacon towers scattered across the Gobi. Most visitors combine this trip with a visit to nearby Dunhuang to see the Mogao Caves and Crescent Spring.

Local specialties: Guazhou literally translates to "Melon City", so do not miss its famously sweet honeydew melons. The region is also known for Provence tomatoes and locally raised lamb.

Tips: Desert temperatures can vary sharply between day and night, so layered clothing, sun protection and sturdy hiking shoes are highly recommended. Strong winds and dry conditions make sunscreen, sunglasses and constant hydration essential for outdoor activities.

By **LI YINGXUE**
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As dusk settles over the black Gobi Desert in Guazhou county, Gansu province, rows of towering wind turbines stretch across the horizon.

Nearby, ancient beacon towers stand silently against the evening sky — relics of the Silk Road once traveled by Tang Dynasty (618-907) Buddhist monk Xuanzang on his westward pilgrimage more than 1,300 years ago.

This spring, that ancient route became the setting for a very different kind of pilgrimage.

On May 4, the 2026 business school Gobi friendship race, also known as "Gobi to West 2026", concluded after four days and three nights across 121 kilometers of desert terrain. More than 1,100 participants from nearly 40 leading business schools worldwide — including China's Tsinghua University, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and China Europe International Business School (CEIBS), Britain's University of Cambridge and Harvard University in the United States — crossed the finish line at the No 1 beacon tower ruins in Baidunzi.

Yet the event was about far more than endurance.

As business executives, entrepreneurs and MBA students gathered in this remote county in northwestern China, the race became an immersive experiment in sportsmanship, cultural exchange, ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) practices and rural revitalization.

"Before leaving Xi'an, many team members still understood the Silk Road only through textbooks," said Xie Xiaoyan, executive team leader of Xi'an Jiaotong University's delegation and chairwoman of the university's international outdoor club.

"They imagined the Gobi as endless emptiness."

That perception quickly changed.

As participants crossed the black desert near Ayuwang (Ashoka) Temple, and passed by historical sites such as the Suoyang City ruins and the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) Shuangdunzi remains, history became tangible.

For many participants, accustomed to office towers and boardrooms, the journey became deeply introspective.

"When you are surrounded by endless wilderness and feel there is no end in sight, you can only calm yourself and keep moving forward," Xie said. "You begin to have a dialogue with yourself."

The race route intentionally overlapped with Xuanzang's westward journey.

For many participants navigating uncertainty in business, Xuanzang's perseverance carried modern relevance.

"His belief — 'I would rather die heading west than return east alive' — is very inspiring for modern entrepreneurs," Xie said.

She compared the desert crossing to leading a company through uncertainty.

Under exhaustion and extreme weather conditions, people are easily shaken by external pressure. The Gobi, she said, strips away professional identities and forces participants to rediscover inner resilience.

That sense of transformation was also felt by the trek's international participants.

Twenty-three-year-old Ukrainian MBA student Dima Vasylenko from the CEIBS arrived with limited expectations or preconceptions about western China.

"Do you know tea was exported in two ways? One by boat and one by the Silk Road," Vasylenko said.

"The tea exported by boat from Hong Kong or Guangzhou ports is called 'te', but in all the countries where it was exported via the Silk Road, the name is 'cha'.

"In our country, it is 'chai', which is very similar to 'cha.'"

Following Xuanzang's route made the continuity of civilizations feel tangible to him, but Guazhou's modernity surprised him just as much as its history.

On the third day of the race, participants encountered vast fields of wind turbines stretching across the desert.

"Here in China, there are a lot of wind turbines working very well. Even in not so internationally well-known places, it's already very developed. It's the same as Shanghai. The roads and infrastructure are good."

For organizers, showcasing both "historical China" and "modern China" was central to the event's vision.

Zhou Haibin, preparatory chairman of the event's sports committee, said the race attracted overseas alumni and scholars from Cambridge and Harvard.

After the race, Cambridge professor Simon Taylor delivered a "Gobi lecture" beneath the stars, where participants from different countries exchanged ideas on business and life.

"It became more than a race," Zhou said. "It became a cultural gathering."

But bringing more than 1,500 people, including support staff, into the heart of the fragile Gobi also raised questions about how to balance human activity with environmental protection.

Organizers responded with low-carbon operations, zero-waste practices and biodegradable materials at campsites and supply stations, while also supporting local ecological restoration projects.

"Guazhou receives little more than 100 millimeters of annual rainfall, while evaporation exceeds 2,000 millimeters," Zhou said.

"The native vegetation here is extremely fragile."

He said the event aimed not only to minimize ecological impact, but also to raise broader awareness of environmental protection in western China.

Vasylenko was struck by the long-term vision reflected in the desert's development.

"They are not just taking care of the next 100 years, but thinking about 1,000 years into the future," he said.

Beyond its cultural and environmental significance, the race also brought tangible economic benefits. Guazhou's relatively small county seat saw a sharp increase in demand for hotels, restaurants and transportation services during the event.

"After such intense physical exhaustion, many participants were deeply impressed by the local food," Zhou recalled.

"The lamb, melons and Provence tomatoes — made especially sweet by the dramatic temperature differences between day and night — became unforgettable memories."

Many participants chose to extend their stay after the race, traveling onward to nearby landmarks such as the Mogao Caves and Crescent Spring in Dunhuang.

The event also boosted local employment through logistics, campsite construction and rescue support services.

At the opening ceremony, organizers donated computers and multimedia equipment to local schools and launched an education assistance fund.

As exhausted runners crossed the finish line at Baidunzi — covered in dust but still determined — many left with more than medals.

They carried away a renewed understanding of endurance, history and connection.

In Guazhou, along a Silk Road once defined by caravans and pilgrimage, the race is creating a new form of exchange — connecting sports, culture, sustainability and the future of China's western regions.

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Israeli attacks kill 8 as ceasefire efforts falter

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Drawing a line

Performer's intimate act sparks debate on immersive tourism

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, MAY 19, 2026

XI'S VISION | A SHARED FUTURE

Ties bolstered by high-level meets

Frequent head-of-state diplomacy by Xi, Putin shapes momentum of key bilateral relationship

By **MO JINGXI**
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"Is it not a joy to have friends come from afar?" Confucius once said.

The ancient Chinese saying offers a fitting note as China welcomes Russian President Vladimir Putin on Tuesday for his 14th visit to the country since 2013.

Putin used the same phrase when recalling his first meeting with Xi Jinping, then Chinese vice-president, in Moscow in March 2010. The meeting, he wrote in a signed article published in People's Daily in 2023, was held in a "business-like and at the same time sincere and friendly" atmosphere — a style of communication that he said he personally liked.

Three years following the early encounter, Xi chose Russia as the destination of his first overseas trip after taking office as Chinese president in 2013, underscoring the special weight of China-Russia relations in China's foreign policy.

During that visit, President Xi said that a high-level and strong China-Russia relationship serves not only the interests of both countries, but also the international strategic balance as well as world peace and stability.

More than a decade later, the two leaders are meeting again at another important moment.

Putin's two-day state visit, at the invitation of Xi, comes in a landmark year marking the 30th anniversary of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

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"China-Russia relations are standing at a new historical starting point. The two sides are entering a golden period of opportunity marked by stronger political trust, deeper economic integration, closer people-to-people ties and greater global influence," said Li Yonghui, a research fellow of Russian studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

She said that Putin's visit is not only a review of decades of neighborly friendship and strategic coordination, but also an opportunity for the two sides to plan the next stage of cooperation under the guidance of the two heads of state.

Andrey Denisov, first deputy chair of the Russian Federation Council Committee on Foreign Affairs and former Russian ambassador to China, said that Putin's upcoming visit will once again demonstrate the high level and stability of Russia-China relations.

He said Russia-China relations are not an alliance in the traditional sense, but the two sides maintain a high degree of mutual trust and close coordination on major international issues, which he described as the essence of the relationship.

The momentum of China-Russia ties has been shaped by more than a decade of frequent head-of-state diplomacy. Since 2013, Xi has visited Russia 11 times, while Putin has traveled to China 13 times for state visits or major events. Last year, the two leaders paid state visits to each other's countries, underscoring the intensity and continuity of top-level exchanges.

In a signed article published in Russian media in 2023, Xi said that high-level interactions have played an important strategic guiding role in China-Russia relations.

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The winning team



French rider Valentin Debise (center) of Chinese motorcycle manufacturer ZXMOTO celebrates with his team after winning Race 2 of the World Supersport category at the Czech Round of the 2026 FIM Superbike World Championship on Sunday. With his fifth win of the season, Debise moved up to second place in the riders' standings with 147 points. ZXMOTO remained third in the manufacturers' standings with 149 points, underscoring the growing impact of the Chinese bike maker in the championship. XINHUA

Economy stays resilient as industrial output expands

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **WANG KEJU**

China's economy displayed continuing resilience in the first four months of the year, though some indicators pointed to the need for more targeted policy support to boost domestic demand and put growth on a firmer footing, officials and analysts said.

While higher energy costs stemming from geopolitical tensions weighed on economic activity in April, robust expansion in high-end manufacturing and resilient exports pointed to a steady outlook for China, they added.

Figures released on Monday by the National Bureau of Statistics showed that the country's industrial output expanded 5.6 percent year-on-year in the first four months.

Retail sales increased 1.9 percent year-on-year. In April, retail sales rose 0.2 percent year-on-year, slowing from 1.7 percent in March, the figures showed.

Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said the moderation in retail sales was partly due to slightly smaller subsidies being offered under this year's consumer goods trade-in program and a relatively high base for comparison from the same period last year.

While consumption of goods softened, service consumption remained resilient. Retail sales of services rose 5.6 percent year-on-year in the first four months, 0.1 percentage point faster than in the first quarter, the NBS said.

Fu Linghui, spokesman and chief economist of the NBS, said that strong demand for cultural tourism and sports events had emerged as a new growth driver in the sector.

Fixed-asset investment fell 1.6 percent year-on-year in the first four months, reversing the 1.7 percent growth recorded in the first quarter, according to the NBS.

"The moderation in some April indicators reflects normal month-to-month fluctuations," Wang Guanhua, a spokeswoman for the bureau, said on Monday.

Despite headwinds, Wang said that China's underlying economic stability remains intact, as innovation-driven growth drivers and resilient exports are expected to sustain amid favorable conditions.

The data showed that equipment manufacturing and high-tech manufacturing expanded at robust rates of 8.7 percent and 12.6 percent year-on-year, respectively, in the January-April period.

China's exports of goods, meanwhile, rose 11.3 percent year-on-year in renminbi terms, with April exports up 9.8 percent from a year earlier, the bureau said.

Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, said that China's export strength is expected to persist, with the sector's resilience likely to create positive spillovers for industrial upgrading.

On the back of robust exports as well as strong capital expenditure related to artificial intelligence and green sectors, Morgan Stanley recently raised its full-year growth forecast for China to 4.8 percent.

However, Xing cautioned that recovery remains uneven, with domestic demand continuing to lag, as factors such as the ongoing adjustment in the real estate sector still weigh on consumption.

Zhang Bin, deputy director at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, said that China's economy is on an upward recovery trajectory, but the limited strength of its self-sustaining recovery underscores the need for stronger countercyclical policy support.

Contact the writers at zhangchenxu@chinadaily.com.cn

Foundational paradigm to guide Sino-US relations

WORLD WATCH
By Ong Tee Keat

The state visit by the President of the United States to China was widely seen as an urgently needed stabilizer in Sino-US ties that was facing unpredictability.

This diplomatic confidence was bolstered by President Xi Jinping's declaration that he and US President Donald Trump had reached a consensus to construct a relationship of "constructive strategic stability" between China and the US.

This formulation is intended to serve as a new foundational paradigm for bilateral ties in a rapidly shifting global order.

From the Chinese perspective, it is hoped the year 2026 is elevated to a historic, landmark year fundamentally redefining the trajectory of Sino-US engagement.

While the Chinese host made clear an unwavering commitment to nurturing stable, healthy and sustainable relations with the US, he explicitly sought to avoid the perilous "Thucydides Trap" that historically plagued rising and established powers.

This newly articulated paradigm marks a vital cornerstone, which is strategically designed to provide robust guidance for relations between the two major global powers over the next three years and beyond, provided the relationship stays undistracted by peripheral geopolitical shocks.

However, despite this grand vision, the Sino-US summit is still being watched carefully by the international community. Both China and the US possess diverging priorities, and their bilateral dynamic is shaped by a mixture of strategic rivalry and deep, structural economic interdependence.

President Xi commenced the summit by striking a high and unambiguous note regarding Chinese preparedness to instill a positive, enduring stability into the ties.

He emphasized that cooperation must remain the absolute mainstay of Sino-US engagement, working alongside the careful management of inevitable competition and ideological differences in the pursuit of sustainable global peace.

Furthermore, Xi astutely framed his aspirations for the collaboration of these two great powers through a broader global perspective, emphasizing their shared responsibility in addressing overarching transnational challenges.

In stark contrast to Beijing's focus on long-term strategic frameworks, Trump approached the summit driven by acute domestic political imperatives.

The US president was visibly preoccupied with the pressing urgency to score immediate, tangible economic victories.

His focus was on ensuring Chinese commitments to purchase American goods, specifically targeting agricultural produce and Boeing aircraft.

Agricultural exports have a direct, disproportionate bearing on his core vote bank sprawling across the agro-based states of the American Midwest.

Plainly put, the driving force behind the US administration's negotiating posture was the severe risk of losing Republican control in both the Senate and the House of Representatives; securing the legislature is the metric that matters most to Trump.

Simultaneously, fierce technological rivalry remains a paramount sticking point.

*See **Relations,** page 3*

DALIAN REELS IN THE BENEFITS AS BIG-GAME FISHING THRIVES

For visitors angling for a thrilling ocean experience, Zhangzi Island is a place to catch

By **ZHANG XIAOMIN**
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China Vibes

It's 5 am, and as the first rays of sunrise touch the waters north of Dalian, Liaoning province, several fishing enthusiasts board a yacht bound for a "sea ranch", hoping to land some big game fish.

Near Changhai county's Zhangzi Island, one of the fishermen, surnamed Li, once landed a Japanese amberjack weighing 17.5 kilograms.

"The thrill of fighting a giant fish — that heart-pounding duel with the sea — is something only those who have experienced it can truly understand," he said, still vividly recalling the moment.

"It's a story I can keep telling until I catch an even bigger one," he said.

Li describes himself as an ordinary hobbyist using affordable gear. His catch, he said, owes much to the location, a premier big-game fishing spot.

"Since the bait fish are mostly active in the upper water, it is possible to land large fish with ordinary light tackle and thin lines," he said.

On the eastern side of the Liaodong Peninsula, Changhai county consists of 195 islands, 18 of which are inhabited.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.



Contestants display their catch during the 2025 Changhai sea fishing elite challenge in August. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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INDEPTH





Left: Former Scottish world champion Stephen Hendry plays at a local snooker club in Shuangfeng county, Hunan province, on March 14, 2025. NAI JIHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** A young player competes in the CBSA Chinese Snooker Junior Series Hefei Open in the capital of Anhui province on Oct 1. YUAN BING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chinese snooker on cue for global dominance

With consecutive world champions, booming interest, nation tilts sport's balance of power

By **LI YINGXUE**
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In the narrow backstage corridor of snooker's most storied arena, the Crucible Theatre in Sheffield, an unusual scene unfolded during the 2026 World Snooker Championship as three Chinese players from different generations prepared for another night on the sport's biggest stage.

Ding Junhui, 39, the pioneer of Chinese snooker, Zhao Xintong, 29, the then defending world champion, and Wu Yize, 22, one of the sport's rising stars, stood side by side in silence, waiting to walk out.

A backstage photograph captured the moment. It quickly resonated across China, where it was widely interpreted as a reflection of Chinese snooker's shift from isolated breakthroughs to generational continuity of excellence.

That belief was reinforced days later.

On May 4, Wu defeated England's Shaun Murphy 18-17 in a dramatic World Championship final. The match went to a deciding frame for the first time in more than two decades, highlighting both the tight competition at the elite level and the emergence of new contenders from China.

Under immense pressure in the final frame, Wu opted for an aggressive long shot on a red ball. The gamble paid off, shifting momentum in his favor.

"I have been trying to go for this for ages," Wu said after the match. "For the past few months, I have been living the same life. I am so happy that I could play well today."

Former world champion Murphy, a veteran of the professional circuit, acknowledged the quality of Wu's performance. "I played the best shots I could and as a snooker player that's really all you can do," he said. "I don't feel like I lost the match — he won the match."

Wu's victory marked China's second consecutive world title, following Zhao's defeat of Mark Williams 18-12 last year.

Zhao became the first Asian player to win the World Snooker Championship. Zhao's breakthrough ended more than a century of European dominance, predominantly British, at the Crucible, while Wu's win confirmed that the result was not an isolated outcome.

The 2025-26 season has so far confirmed a clear shift in the balance of power, with Chinese players chalking up tournament wins on the World Snooker Tour circuit and climbing the player rankings.

Zhao, who won four titles, was named Player of the Year and inducted into the sport's Hall of Fame. Wu received the fans' Player of the Year award, while Chang Bingyu won Breakthrough Player of the Year.

Collectively, Chinese players claimed seven titles — the strongest single-season performance in the country's history.

At the Crucible Theatre, 11 Chinese players entered the main draw of 32, the highest representation to date. Alongside established names were younger players including Fan Zhengyi, Lei Peifan and others who emerged through qualifying routes.

Inside the venue, Mandarin was increasingly heard in practice rooms and corridors, while Chinese flags appeared among traveling supporters.



Wu Yize receives his winner's trophy after beating English player Shaun Murphy in the 2026 World Snooker Championship final in Sheffield, the United Kingdom on May 4. LI YING / XINHUA





Left: Zhao Xintong celebrates with his trophy after winning the 2026 World Grand Prix in Hong Kong on Feb 8. LU BINGHUI / XINHUA **Above:** Wu poses for photos with his parents after winning the final on May 4. LI YING / XINHUA **Below:** Ding Junhui competes with Shaun Murphy during the 2025 World Snooker Tour International Championship in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Nov 5. LIU ZHENRUI / XINHUA



Early breaks

In the early 2000s, Ding Junhui emerged as China's first global snooker star.

In 2005, the then 18-year-old defeated superstar Stephen Hendry at the China Open, a landmark victory and a turning point in raising the sport's visibility in China.

At the time, China had only a small number of professionals playing abroad. Ding's early career was marked by isolation and limited support in Sheffield. But he established a path that later generations of Chinese snooker professionals would follow.

"Without Brother Hui, there would be no current generation of Chinese snooker players," Zhao has previously said.

Ding now works informally with younger Chinese players in Sheffield.

"From Zhao Xintong to Wu Yize, Chinese players have stood on the top podium for two consecutive years," Ding wrote after Wu's world title. "This is not just a breakthrough — it shows our time is coming."

Unlike earlier generations, today's players are supported by a growing domestic network of academies, training centers and professional pipelines.

The shift from family-driven investment to institutional support is now widely recognized as key to the newfound success. Earlier players often relied on significant personal sacrifice.

Ding, for instance, began playing at age 8 in his father's grocery store. Once his talent was recognized, his father sold the family home and moved to Dongguan, Guangdong province, where Ding trained for more than 10 hours a day.

Wu followed a similar path. Born in 2003 in Lanzhou, Gansu province, he moved with his family to Dongguan at age 13 to join the Ding Junhui Snooker Academy, winning a national junior title the following year. He later won the World Junior U21 Championship in 2018, and was named Rookie of the Year in 2022.

From 16, he trained in the United Kingdom with his father, who supported him financially by working outside the sport. After his world title win, Wu said: "Since I made the decision to drop out of school, my dad has been by my side. My mum has not been in very good health. Since we have been in Sheffield, she has been staying a long time in hospital. She has sacrificed everything for me.

"My parents are the true champions … They are the source of my strength," he said.

Expanding ecosystem

China currently has nearly 300,000 billiards clubs and an estimated 80-100 million enthusiasts nationwide, said Qiao Bing, vice-chairman of the Small and Medium Commercial Enterprises Association and president of the Billiards Industry Branch.

This massive grassroots base directly feeds the country's growing presence on the professional circuit. Over the past five years, junior participation in cue sports has surged, reflecting broader access to coaching and deepening of the nation's talent pool.

China has also become integral to the sport's competitive calendar. In 2005, the country hosted a single event, but now the scale and prize money of Chinese tournaments are redefining the professional game.

"Genius is everywhere, but we need the talent spotters more," said Xingpai Billiards general manager Gan Jialin.

Chinese cue sports have a well-established talent development system and training infrastructure that is world-leading.

"For Chinese snooker, this is only the beginning. In the years ahead, it will become increasingly common for Chinese players to win the World Championship and other major titles," Gan said.

Once a national training base for young talent, Dongguan has evolved into one of the country's snooker strongholds, combining player development, equipment manufacturing, and tournament operations in areas like Changping and Tangxia.

A cluster of billiards equipment manufacturers has formed a complete industrial chain covering table components, slate production, and cue manufacturing.

Institutional investment further strengthened the city's talent infrastructure. In 2022, the Guangdong branch of the CBSA WPBSA Academy was established in Changping to standardize player cultivation. The academy provides a direct route from youth training to professional competition.

Players emerging from this environment often arrive on tour with stronger fundamentals and greater composure. Zhao, Wu and women's world champion Bai Yulu all completed key stages of their development within this framework.

Related industries in event operations, broadcasting, refereeing and youth tournaments have continued to mature in the city.

Slated for success

If Dongguan represents China's talent pipeline, then Yushan in Jiangxi province is the sport's industrial base.

The county, located at the intersection of Jiangxi, Fujian and Zhejiang provinces, originally developed through slate production for billiard tables. Over the past two decades, it has transformed into a comprehensive billiards industry cluster spanning manufacturing, events, training, refereeing and branding.

It's estimated that China accounts for the majority of the world's billiards tables and related equipment, with Yushan a key production hub.

Yushan International Billiards Culture City includes a modern 4,000-seat arena built to professional tour standards in lighting, broadcasting and event production. Adjacent to it, the World Billiards Museum traces the evolution of cue sports from their origins to globalization, giving the city both manufacturing and cultural significance.

Since 2016, the World Snooker Open and other major tournaments have been regularly staged in Yushan, establishing it as one of Asia's leading snooker destinations. All-time snooker great Ronnie O'Sullivan lost the World Open to Thailand's Thepchaiya Un-Nooh there in March.

Just as importantly, Yushan has become a major source of emerging talent.

The Yushan International Billiards Academy introduced international coaching methods and standardized curricula, creating a direct route to the professional tour.

Wu completed a key stage of his training there at the age of 11 under renowned Australian coach Rodney Leighton, focusing on fundamentals and match rhythm.

Leighton recalled of young Wu: "Just a few weeks later, he made a break of 86. I said to him, 'That's fantastic, incredible!' But he replied, 'It's no good, because if it was Ronnie (O'Sullivan), he would have cleared the table.'"

The intensity of the training culture has led many in the sport to describe Yushan as the "cradle of Chinese snooker champions".

The city has also accelerated the integration of technology into the sport, including digital refereeing, performance analytics and smart tournament management tools designed to improve accuracy and transparency.

Changing of the guard

The emergence of Chinese champions has redrawn the boundaries of what nations and regions dominate the sport.

For decades, the sport was headed by players from England, Scotland and Wales. Names such as Stephen Hendry and Mark Williams defined different eras of professional dominance.

Today, Chinese players are consistently competing at the highest level, with multiple competitors ranked in the top tier.

This shift has been accompanied by increased international scheduling of events in Asia, particularly in China, where tournaments now account for a significant number.

The commercial structure of the sport has also taken a new direction, with China becoming a key market for broadcasting rights, sponsorship and audience engagement.

Meanwhile, snooker's long-standing ambition to be included in the Olympic Games has been revived by the shifts in the sport. After Zhao's and Wu's world titles, senior officials within the sport have suggested that momentum for a future Olympic bid has strengthened, with the Brisbane 2032 Olympics often cited as a potential starting point.

Jason Ferguson, chairman of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association, has noted that China's standing within the Olympic movement will be a significant factor in any future application.

"China is a very important country to the IOC (International Olympic Committee) — it has been a host of the Games on many occasions and they are heavily invested in sports, in IOC terms," he told The Associated Press. "So the fact that China is a key market for snooker is a really important part about any Olympic bid."

With cue sports gaining broader international recognition, stakeholders view the coming decade as a potential window for inclusion.

Players such as Chang Bingyu, Fan Zhengyi and Lei Peifan now represent the next wave rising behind the current crop of stars. As Ding noted when witnessing the collective rise of Chinese players: "The threshold I crossed back then has now become the runway for everyone."

China is no longer simply producing world-class players. It is increasingly shaping how snooker is played, financed, promoted and globalized. For decades, the sport's center of gravity rested firmly in Britain.

Now, the ball is rolling eastward.

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TOP NEWS

Envoys honored



Foreign Minister Wang Yi (center) poses for a group photo on Monday with eight current and former ambassadors who received the Outstanding Diplomat Medal during a presentation ceremony in Beijing. The medals recognize their extraordinary contributions to promoting friendship and cooperation between China and their respective countries.
WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Satellite navigation sector eyes 1 trillion yuan mark

By ZHAO LEI
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The overall market value of satellite-enabled navigation and positioning services in China, especially those based on the Beidou Navigation Satellite System, is expected to surpass 1 trillion yuan ($147 billion) before the end of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, according to an industry leader.

Zhang Huifeng, president of the Global Navigation Satellite System and Location-Based Services Association of China, said the next few years will be crucial for Beidou to fully unleash its potential and value.

During the current plan period, the Beidou system will empower all public and business sectors, he said, as the annual report on Beidou-related businesses was unveiled on Monday at a meeting of the association.

"It will be deeply integrated into our daily life, and will continuously improve user experience. Nearly all smartphones, electric vehicles and passenger cars manufactured in China now come with Beidou as a standard feature, meaning that members of the public use Beidou-enabled services on a daily basis," Zhang said.

In the international market, users will be given greater access to Beidou-enabled services to facilitate their work and improve their lives, he said, noting that Beidou-based services and related products have been exported to more than 140 countries and regions.

Through localized cooperation, Chinese enterprises have established more than 20 overseas service centers in countries and regions involved in the Belt and Road Initiative, continuously expanding the service network, he added.

By the end of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, Beidou-enabled products and services gained ground in countries and regions involved in the BRI, achieving a 58 percent market share in such places, Zhang said.

According to the association's report, by the end of 2025, the overall value of satellite-enabled navigation and positioning services in China was about 629 billion yuan, up 9.24 percent year-on-year.

Nearly 2 million Chinese people now work at more than 30,000 domestic institutions and companies doing business related to Beidou and other satellite-based navigation and positioning services, the report said.

In 2025, more than 410 million terminal devices with satellite-based positioning and navigation functions were sold in China, including about 280 million smartphones supporting Beidou-enabled services, it said.

By the end of last year, there were over 2.2 billion devices, such as smartphones, computers and vehicle-mounted terminals, on the Chinese mainland that could use Beidou-enabled services, the report added.

Beidou is China's domestically developed satellite navigation system and the fourth such system in the world alongside the United States' GPS, Russia's GLONASS and the European Union's Galileo.

Starting in 2000, as many as 64 Beidou satellites, including four experimental ones, have been launched using 47 Long March 3 rockets from the Xichang Satellite Launch Center in Sichuan province. The satellite-based navigation system was declared complete in July 2020, and it began providing full-scale global services.

Currently, more than 50 Beidou satellites are in active service, operating in multiple types of orbits.

Growing role of China's capital market stressed

Pakistan's first panda bond sets precedent for other Belt and Road economies, experts say

By ZHOU LANXU
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The first sovereign panda bond issuance by Pakistan — priced at a historically low coupon rate — highlights the growing potential of China's capital market to provide diversified and lower-cost financing channels for developing economies, experts said.

The issuance not only opened an avenue for Pakistan to secure continued access to renminbi financing, it may also set a precedent for more Belt and Road economies to lower financing costs through China's bond market at a time when energy-related inflation pressures are driving up global borrowing costs, they said.

A panda bond is an RMB-denominated debt instrument issued by overseas governments or institutions in China's onshore capital market. Pakistan issued its first sovereign panda bond on Thursday, becoming the first South Asian economy to do so.

The issuance totaled 1.75 billion yuan ($257 million), with a three-year maturity and a coupon rate of 2.5 percent. China Economic Net reported that the coupon rate was "the lowest Pakistan had achieved on a sovereign bond". This was also confirmed by China International Capital Corp, or CICC, the lead underwriter and book runner for the deal.

The issuance, the proceeds of which will finance sustainable development projects in Pakistan, was oversubscribed more than five times and marked the first tranche under Pakistan's newly established 7.2 billion yuan panda bond program.

Pakistan's Minister for Finance and Revenue Muhammad Aurangzeb said he is confident that the program would provide his country with a strong platform for future issuances, further deepening financial connectivity and sustainable economic cooperation with China.

Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor of international economics at the Central University of Finance and Economics, said the issuance highlighted the unique role China's bond market plays in providing lower-cost financing and diversified funding channels for international issuers.

"With China's interest rates remaining relatively low and RMB assets increasingly showing safe-haven attributes, the panda bond's 2.5 percent coupon rate was far below the cost of Pakistan's US dollar bonds, which could reach roughly 7 to 8 percent under some circumstances," Liu said.

Despite Pakistan's long-term sovereign credit rating being kept in the speculative grade category of B- by S&P Global Ratings, the bond received an issue rating of AAA, supported by an innovative partial guarantee structure, under which the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Asian Development Bank provided guarantees covering 95 percent of the bond's principal and interest payments.

Analysts said the enhanced credit profile helped significantly lower the bond's coupon rate and improve investor acceptance.

Paul Rui, director at the investment banking department of CICC, said the partial guarantee arrangements — the first of their kind in China's onshore bond market — could offer a replicable model for other developing economies.

"Emerging market economies have strong financing demand in infrastructure, green transition and livelihood development, but face challenges such as ratings, investor recognition and issuance structures when entering a new market for the first time," Rui said.

"This transaction combined a sovereign issuer, multilateral development institution-backed credit enhancement, sustainable development-oriented funding purposes and access to China's renminbi bond market, providing a reference model for more Belt and Road economies seeking to enter China's bond market," he added.

Ji Haisheng and Xu Wei contributed to this story.

Relations: Fruits likely in realms of commerce

From page 1

The easing of stringent US restrictions on advanced semiconductor exports and the comprehensive rolling back of administrative measures aimed at blocking China's access to critical, next-generation chip-manufacturing technology remain absolutely central to the interests of Beijing.

This newly articulated paradigm marks a vital cornerstone, which is designed to provide robust guidance for relations between the two major global powers.

Consequently, the most realistic, low-hanging fruits of this high-stakes diplomatic summit will likely manifest in the more easily quantifiable realms of commerce. We can expect increases in the bulk purchase of US goods by Chinese enterprises, operating alongside a mutual de-escalation of the damaging "tit-for-tat" tariff war, and the diplomatic reaffirmation of the US' one-China policy.

All in all, regardless of the granular details of the agreements reached, which are still largely under wraps, the public outcome of the summit will be meticulously curated by both sides.

The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Visit: Years of Education to be launched

From page 1

Xi noted that he and Putin had maintained close working contact and met 40 times on bilateral and international occasions, drawing blueprints for bilateral ties and cooperation in various fields, and maintaining timely coordination on major international and regional issues of common concern.

In his New Year greetings exchanged with Putin on Dec 31, 2025, Xi said he was ready to maintain close contact with Putin and jointly lead China-Russia relations in the new era toward new achievements.

During a virtual meeting on Feb 4 this year, Xi noted that the day coincided with the Beginning of Spring on the Chinese calendar, which represents a new start, and expressed his readiness to work with Putin to chart a new blueprint for bilateral ties.

Xi also called on the two sides to increase high-level exchanges and strengthen pragmatic cooperation in various fields.

Li, from the CASS, said the frequent interactions between the two presidents have helped the two sides build consensus, set the direction of the relationship and maintain strategic steadiness despite fluctuations in the international situation.

"Each meeting helps reaffirm mutual support on issues concerning sovereignty, security, territorial integrity and independent development paths," she said, adding that such political mutual trust serves as a key anchor for the steady and long-term development of China-Russia relations.

The close communication between the two heads of state has also helped translate political trust into practical cooperation, Li added.

One notable example is trade, where top-level consensus has been translated into measurable progress. China-Russia trade exceeded $240 billion in 2024, meeting ahead of schedule the $200 billion target set by the two heads of state.

People-to-people ties

The two sides have also continued to expand cooperation in areas such as energy, agriculture, connectivity, education and people-to-people exchanges. The China-Russia Years of Education, to be launched this year, are expected to provide another platform for closer exchanges between young people from both countries.

Denisov, the Russian diplomat, noted that China and Russia once set a goal of increasing two-way student exchanges to 100,000. "At the time, it seemed almost out of reach, but today it has become a reality," he said.

Youth exchanges carry special significance for the long-term development of bilateral relations, he said, adding that he hopes that more young people from the two countries will participate in educational and cultural cooperation, and deepen mutual understanding and friendship through such exchanges.

Andrey Kortunov, former director-general of the Russian International Affairs Council, wrote in a recent CGTN commentary that trust defines what is possible in relations among major powers.

In the case of China-Russia relations, he said that strong personal relations between the two top leaders add to the stability and predictability of bilateral ties.

Li, the CASS researcher, said that at a time of geopolitical conflicts and global uncertainty, the steady development of China-Russia relations serves as an important pillar for global strategic balance.

Close communication between the two heads of state allows the two sides to exchange views in a timely manner, coordinate positions, manage differences and safeguard their core interests, she said. It also helps translate top-level consensus into cooperation across various fields.

"Such high-level engagement uses the certainty of head-of-state diplomacy to offset the uncertainty of the international environment," Li said, adding that it helps consolidate the foundation for regional and global peace and development.

Civilizational exchange



Visitors admire artifacts on Sunday at an exhibition, titled *Maize, Gold, Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations*, at the Capital Museum in Beijing. It features about 800 treasures from more than 20 cultural institutions in Mexico and Peru, and sets new records for the museum in terms of both the number of exhibits and international partners. The exhibition officially opened on Monday, which marked International Museum Day, and runs through Oct 18. JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Fishing: Anglers of all levels welcomed

From page 1

The islands are collectively known as the Changshan Archipelago, which is the country's first island-based national tourist resort.

Nestled within one of the country's most productive fishing grounds, the archipelago offers pristine marine resources and serves as critical habitat for large migratory species such as yellowtail amberjack and Japanese amberjack.

The yacht carrying the fishing enthusiasts belongs to Liu, a seasoned angler with fishing experience across the world's top big-game destinations. He runs a high-end homestay and owns two specialized yachts, allowing him to pursue his own passion while hosting tourists.

Liu's proudest catch came in the waters off Komodo Island in Indonesia, where he battled a giant trevally for 2.5 hours, eventually landing a specimen measuring more than 1.5 meters and weighing 62 kg.

Yet for him, Changhai's waters hold a unique charm, with each season offering different species for anglers of all skill levels.

"Visitors start arriving from mid-April, when the weather warms, and the season lasts until December," Liu said.

During last summer's peak tourist season, Liu said that he once saw more than 200 people on the same stretch of water, all bent over their rods, tirelessly working their jigs.

"A bit crazy, but spectacular," he said. "The moment a fish suddenly strikes, the nerves fire. While you're reeling it in, you have no idea what will come up. That feeling is highly addictive," he said.

In recent years, the slogan "to catch big fish, come to Dalian — head to Changhai" has spread widely, attracting professional anglers from far and wide.

In 2023, the county launched an elite sea fishing challenge, and last year's event attracted about 140 competitors from home and abroad. This year's tournament is scheduled for August.

Zhang Shengzu, the county chief of Changhai, said the local government aims to build the annual event into a stage for top anglers to demonstrate their prowess.

"Beyond their exceptional natural endowments, another major advantage of Changhai's fishing grounds is their proximity to land," he said.

It takes only 20 minutes by yacht to reach the fishing spots, allowing anglers to return to shore easily. Last year, Changhai saw sea fishing visitors exceed 190,000, driving a revenue increase of more than 30 percent for homestays, restaurants and fishing-tackle shops.

Given the rapid growth of sea fishing, the tourism service infrastructure is in urgent need of an upgrade, and a standardization system for the sea fishing industry is also being expedited, Zhang said.

"With safety as a prerequisite, the sector will further strengthen the capacity of tourism services," he said.

Dalian is transforming into northern China's marine leisure hub. In March, the city signed a 15-billion-yuan ($2.2 billion) agreement for a yacht manufacturing base — a signal that the harbors may soon welcome even more boats.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.

Scam crackdown creates new problem

Experts welcome Cambodia's actions while also noting risks of displacement



More than 300 Indonesians who had fled from fraudulent activities wait for repatriation procedures at a factory in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, on March 26. PHOTO VIA AP

As Cambodia pushes forward with its effective crackdown on scam centers, a new problem has emerged.

On April 24, Cambodia declared that the authorities had cracked down on more than 250 online scam locations and closed 91 casinos between July 2025 and mid-April this year.

However, the shutdown of these centers has left thousands of foreigners without jobs or shelter, and they are unable to return to their home countries without passport or money.

Analysts warn these people could end up being recruited back into new scam centers, become a source of social disorder, or even trigger a humanitarian crisis.

In the last two months, hardly a week has gone by without reports about Cambodian authorities cracking down on scam operations. In early March, Prime Minister Hun Manet vowed to shut all scam centers in the country by the end of April to restore tourist and investor confidence.

Besides the capital Phnom Penh, other scam hot spots include border areas with Thailand, such as O'Smach town and Poipet city in northwestern Cambodia, as well as border cities with Vietnam, including Bavet and Kampot in the south.

On a weekday in April, about 70 men were seen milling around a park opposite the Indonesian embassy in Phnom Penh. At night, many slept on straw mats on pavement outside shops that had shuttered for the day.

Marco Lem, 28, said he had been sleeping on the street outside the Indonesian embassy for the last two months while seeking help to obtain a passport and return to Jakarta. The father of two claimed he was lured to work in a casino but was subsequently led to Sihanoukville and forced to scam people.

Sihanoukville, a coastal port city in southwestern Cambodia, is known as a global hot spot for gambling, cybercrime and reported cases of human trafficking tied to such activities.

"I don't know whether I will be arrested when I return to Indonesia. But I've seen friends who went back and were not arrested," Marco said.

Another Indonesian, David Butar, 23, has also been left on the street to fend for himself. The father of a two-year-old daughter said he was tricked into working in a scam compound in Bavet, Svay Rieng Province bordering Vietnam.

On the street for two months now, he is waiting for the Indonesian embassy's help to return home. He said he needs official documents to be repatriated, as he had overstayed in Cambodia while being holed up in the scam compound.

$442 billion

was lost to scammers in 2025 across the globe, according to estimation of the Global Anti Scam Alliance.

The Straits Times was unable to independently verify both men's claims of being tricked into scam compounds. The Indonesian embassy has yet to reply to queries on the matter.

The crackdown has raised concerns that large numbers of scam workers — both voluntary and forced — could be left stranded.

It is difficult to estimate the number of workers involved in scam operations in Cambodia, as the centers operate like a revolving door, with workers recruited regularly and moved to different locations in the country.

While some joined willingly for the pay, others were deceived with job offers, and many ended up trapped after their passports were seized by operators.

In the update on April 24, the government said that 241,888 individuals had left the country voluntarily between mid-January and April 19.

But many former scam center workers remain in Cambodia, with some housed by nongovernmental organizations or in temporary holding facilities like the one near the old Phnom Penh airport.

"If thousands of displaced workers are left homeless or scattered without a clear plan for repatriation or protection, the country risks a secondary security crisis," said independent Phnom Penh-based analyst Vanly Seng, referring to the possibility that these workers may turn to crime out of desperation.

Reports have also surfaced online of some former female scam workers claiming they were raped after being left to fend for themselves on the streets.

"It's quickly turned into a humanitarian disaster, with both the local authorities and international organizations struggling to keep up," said John Wojcik, a senior threat researcher with cybersecurity firm Infoblox.

Beyond borders

The scourge of scams is not just a Cambodian issue.

The Global Anti Scam Alliance estimates that across the globe, $442 billion was lost to scammers in 2025. A UN report in 2026 said the scam industry in the Mekong region alone is worth over $43.8 billion a year.

Cambodia's intensive crackdown on scam compounds has not gone unnoticed by neighboring Thailand.

Thailand's Foreign Affairs Ministry said there may be a risk of the scam centers moving to neighboring countries as Cambodia intensifies its operations.

The ministry said Bangkok has strengthened its controls and surveillance, with security agencies on high alert.

Despite strained relations after their border clashes in 2025, Thailand said it remains committed to working with Cambodia to combat online scams.

The Cambodian government has identified combating online scams as a top national priority, saying the illicit activities have affected its economy and image.

Phnom Penh said it wants to dismantle entire criminal networks and sever all the scam syndicates' financial sources in Cambodia to ensure a lasting solution.

While analysts largely welcome Cambodia's efforts, they say these are not enough to root out the problem of scams.

Seng, the analyst, said, "Raiding physical buildings is only half the battle.

"Without a sustained effort to dismantle the financial pipelines and the encrypted communication networks they use, I suspect we are seeing a displacement of the problem rather than its total eradication."

As part of its enforcement efforts, the Cambodian government has filed 112 cases in court involving 1,089 individuals linked to scam operations.

But Bunna Vann, head of research and advocacy program at the Cambodian Youth Network Association, said the government has largely taken action against low-level perpetrators. Many influential figures and those with political backing behind the scam activities remain at large.

Wojcik of Infoblox said today's highly sophisticated and hypermobile syndicates operate more like transnational corporations, making them difficult to eradicate completely.

He advised countries to devise better ways to tackle the fast-evolving and sophisticated online scamming activities. One strategy is to implement national Protective Domain Name Service programs, which will make networks more secure by preventing access to malware, phishing attacks and viruses at the source.

Meanwhile, David remains hopeful even though he has been sleeping rough for weeks.

"I'm happy now because I'm free from the scam compound. I want to go back to Indonesia."

THE STRAITS TIMES, SINGAPORE

Bangkok set to be SE Asia's hottest major city by 2050

Bangkok is set to become the hottest major city in Southeast Asia by 2050, with temperatures projected to rise above 38 C as climate change and the urban heat island effect intensify across the region.

The warning comes from the report "Roadmap for Extreme Heat Protection through Passive Cooling in ASEAN Region" by the ASEAN Centre for Energy, which says Thailand's capital faces a far more severe heat crisis in the decades ahead.

In 2025, Bangkok had around 45 "extreme heat days" a year, defined as days when temperatures exceed 35 C. By 2050, that number is expected to rise to 120 days a year, meaning residents could face almost three times as many days of accumulated extreme heat within just a few decades.

The report also projects that Bangkok's average daily maximum temperature will climb to 38.1 C by midcentury, up nearly 5 C from 33.3 C in 2000.

Compared with other major ASEAN cities, Bangkok is forecast to record the highest temperature in 2050, followed by Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam at 37.7 C, Manila in the Philippines at 37.2 C, Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia at 36.9 C, Jakarta in Indonesia and Singapore at 36.1 C.

Such conditions could push the city's infrastructure, public health system and economy toward unprecedented limits.

The report identifies climate change and rapid urbanization as the two main forces driving ASEAN's worsening heat crisis. In Bangkok, the urban heat island effect is a major factor, as concrete and asphalt absorb heat during the day and release it at night.

Data from the Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, or ADPC, shows that dense central areas of Bangkok can be up to 3 C hotter than greener outer areas. Rising heat directly threatens public health by increasing the risk of heatstroke, chronic fatigue and sleep problems that damage quality of life.

Economically, severe heat could hit labor productivity, especially among more than 1.3 million outdoor workers in Bangkok. The report says that without proper adaptation, economic losses from heat and humidity could reach 6 percent of the city's gross product by 2050.

Households are also facing higher electricity costs. Some 90 percent of survey respondents said their energy bills rose by 10 to 50 percent during heat waves. Low-income residents in congested communities are among the most affected, as many live in poorly ventilated buildings.

As heat intensifies, air conditioning is becoming more essential, widening inequality in access to cooling. At the same time, heavy use of air conditioners releases more heat outdoors, creating a cycle that further worsens urban heat.

Irma Ramadan, a senior officer at the ASEAN Centre for Energy, said urbanization was pushing heat toward almost unbearable levels, while current policies were failing to keep pace with the changing climate.

Effective measure

Pornphrom Vikitsreth, adviser to the Bangkok governor on environment and the city's chief sustainability officer, agreed that expanding green space was a low-cost, high-impact measure that must be taken urgently.

"In the long term, we need to significantly increase green space. This is a relatively low-cost measure but offers major benefits. At the same time, preserving existing green areas and preventing them from being replaced by concrete structures is also essential," Pornphrom told Singapore broadcaster CNA.

Peeranan Towashiraporn, director of geographical information at ADPC, said Bangkok was right to treat heat as a disaster, rather than merely a seasonal condition. He said the city needed cooling shelters across all areas, along with public alerts during periods of extreme heat.

The report says the most sustainable solution is to integrate passive cooling into building design and urban planning. Measures include natural ventilation, tree shade and heat-reflective roof colors.

Building upgrades and high-performance glass could cut cooling energy demand by 35 to 70 percent. The government also needs to revise building regulations to require passive cooling features in new developments.

The report adds that public awareness and training for experts in tropical building design will be crucial for long-term change, alongside public-private cooperation, funding support and tax incentives to encourage the real-world use of cooling technologies.

THE NATION, THAILAND



Tourists wearing traditional Thai clothing shield themselves from the sun with umbrellas and cool off with fans during hot weather at Wat Pho temple in Bangkok, Thailand, on April 14. EPA

Elephants in Indonesia critically endangered as habitat areas dropped by half

Sumatran and Kalimantan elephants are now critically endangered as their habitat areas have been reduced from 42 to 21, Indonesian Forestry Minister Raja Juli Antoni told a meeting with various nongovernmental organizations in Jakarta earlier in May.

The government will issue a presidential instruction on rescuing the populations and habitats of Sumatran and Kalimantan elephants.

Raja Juli said the progressive step was taken as a response to the conditions of Sumatran and Kalimantan elephants and their reduced habitat.

The policy serves as an operational basis for interagency work. The presidential instruction draft is currently being circulated among ministries.

"The presidential instruction shows a strong commitment from (Indonesian) President Prabowo Subianto to save our elephants. Our focus is on how to execute those ideas in the field," Raja Juli said.

"Future governance must provide full orientation to conservation."

One crucial point in the presidential decree is the integration of infrastructure with animal living space.

Raja Juli provided an example that if the Public Works Ministry is building toll roads, then it must consider elephant home range maps, which have been prepared by the Forestry Ministry.

Technical solutions such as tunnels or underpasses will be mandatory to allow elephant herds to still roam their home range without being disrupted by human activities.



Staff members from the Riau Natural Resources Conservation Center install a GPS collar on a wild elephant that has been blindfolded to reduce visual stimulation, in Riau, Indonesia, on Nov 6. AFP

The minister also directed that the 21 remaining elephant habitat areas be maintained and their ecosystem quality improved. The main strategy is to build a corridor uniting all fragmented habitats because of illegal activities and changes in land use.

"It is important for us to have accurate data. There must be a clear target to increase the (elephant) population in the Conservation Strategy and Action Plan," he said.

"If there is no increase in population, we must find the problem and solve it."

Handling conflicts

As part of the long-term solution, Raja Juli also highlighted the handling of the conflict between elephants and humans in Way Kambas, Lampung, which has been ongoing for some 40 years.

He said that Prabowo suggested constructing an effective barrier to prevent casualties among both humans and elephants, while continuing to repair elephant habitats.

Experts estimated that there were some 2,800 to 4,000 Sumatran elephants in the 1980s. The Forestry Ministry estimated in 2007 that the population decreased to between 2,400 and 2,800 and further reduced to between 1,694 and 2,038 in 2017.

Forest encroachment and deforestation for oil palm plantations have further cornered the Sumatran elephant in its habitats.

Rampant deforestation and land conversion for various economic activities such as mining, plantation and energy development, are also believed to have contributed to the natural disasters in northern Sumatra in November 2025.

THE JAKARTA POST, INDONESIA

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WORLD

US warns Iran over deal delay amid war fears

Talks hang by a thread as Gulf states unite against strike on nuclear plant

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

The United States has issued a fresh warning to Iran, urging it to move quickly toward a deal or "there won't be anything left of them", as Gulf nations rallied in solidarity after the Arab world's only nuclear power plant was targeted for the first time.

With diplomacy struggling, military preparations intensifying and inflammatory rhetoric escalating, fears are growing that the region risks sliding into a wider, potentially more dangerous phase of the conflict.

"For Iran, the clock is ticking, and they better get moving, fast, or there won't be anything left of them," US President Donald Trump wrote on Truth Social shortly after a call with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

According to media reports, the two leaders discussed the possibility of renewing military operations against Iran.

On Monday, Israel's Channel 13 reported that dozens of US cargo planes carrying ammunition from bases in Germany had landed in Tel Aviv, Israel's commercial hub, in the past 24 hours, as Netanyahu told a Cabinet meeting on Sunday that the country was "prepared for any scenario" over Iran.

Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said on Monday that Iran has submitted its response to US revisions of the conflict resolution plan, as talks are ongoing through Pakistan. Iranian and Omani technical teams have met to negotiate a mechanism for safe transit in the Strait of Hormuz, he added.

A Pakistani source told Reuters on Monday that Pakistan has shared the revised proposal with the US.

"We don't have much time," the source said, when asked if it would take time to close gaps, adding that both countries "keep changing their goalposts".

Baghaei said Tehran was prepared for all scenarios.

"As for their threats, rest assured that we are fully aware of how to respond appropriately to even the smallest mistake from the opposing side," he told a televised weekly news conference.

The renewed tensions have raised concerns across the Gulf, particularly after Sunday's drone strike near the United Arab Emirates' Barakah Nuclear Power Plant, which is vital to the country's clean energy goals, supplying about 25 percent of its electricity needs.

The International Atomic Energy Agency said on Sunday that the strike had caused a fire in an electrical generator and that radiation levels remained normal in the four-reactor plant.

Brought online in 2020, the $20 billion Barakah plant — the Arab world's only nuclear power station — sits 200 kilometers west of Abu Dhabi and operates on US-supplied nuclear fuel.

The UAE Defense Ministry said three drones entered from its western border with Saudi Arabia, two of which were intercepted. Officials said they were investigating the source of the strike, adding that the UAE reserves the full right to respond to such "terrorist attacks".

Although no one was immediately blamed, UAE presidential adviser Anwar Gargash said it represented a dangerous escalation, whether carried out by "the principal perpetrator" or one of its proxies.

So far, Kuwait, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Egypt have condemned the attack and reaffirmed full solidarity with the UAE.

On Sunday, Ebrahim Rezaei, spokesman for the Iranian Parliament's National Security and Foreign Policy Commission, said Tehran has not "closed the door to friendship in dealing with the UAE, but they should know that Iran's patience has limits".

"The UAE should not become entangled in Israel's plots and schemes," he said, as reported by Iran's ISNA news agency.

Hormuz management

Regarding the Strait of Hormuz, Iran's Supreme National Security Council announced on Monday the formation of a new body to manage the strategic waterway.

On its X account, the council shared a post for the Persian Gulf Strait Authority, saying it would provide "real-time updates on the #Hormuz_Strait operations and latest developments".

The account of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps navy shared the same post.

It was not immediately clear what the new body would do, but earlier this month, Iranian English-speaking broadcaster Press TV said it constituted a "system to exercise sovereignty over the Strait of Hormuz" and that ships passing through the strait were sent "regulations" from the email info@pgsa.ir.

Amid escalating tensions, international airlines remain cautious in their response to the regional security situation.

American Airlines said on Sunday that it was extending the suspension of nonstop flights between New York and Tel Aviv until Jan 6, 2027, citing ongoing instability linked to the Iran conflict.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn



Children line up to receive food cooked in large pots and distributed for free in Gaza City on Sunday. AHMAD HASABALLAH VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israeli airstrikes kill 8 in Gaza as protest boats seized

CAIRO — Israeli strikes killed at least eight Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Sunday, health officials said, as ceasefire efforts meant to end fighting between Israel and the Hamas militant group falter.

In the weeks since halting its joint bombing with the United States in Iran, Israel has stepped up its attacks in Gaza. Medics said an Israeli strike killed one Palestinian near a police post and another at a tent encampment in Khan Younis in the enclave's south.

The Israeli military said it killed a militant who posed an immediate threat to forces in the area.

Separately, Gaza medics said another Israeli airstrike killed at least three people at a community kitchen near Al-Aqsa Hospital in Deir al-Balah, in the central Gaza area. The Israeli military said the strike targeted a Hamas commander developing anti-tank missiles.

Gaza medical officials said three more Palestinians were killed, one in a shooting incident in Khan Younis and two others in an Israeli airstrike near a bakery in Deir al-Balah.

In addition, the Israeli military said it had killed Bahaa Baroud, a Hamas Operations Headquarters commander, in an airstrike on Saturday, accusing him of planning multiple imminent attacks against troops and Israeli civilians in recent weeks.

The United Nations demanded on Monday that Israel take measures to prevent acts of "genocide" in Gaza.

In a report, the UN rights office said Israel's actions in Gaza since the start of the conflict in October 2023 involved "gross violations" of international law, amounting in many cases to "war crimes and other atrocity crimes".

UN rights chief Volker Turk urged Israel to ensure compliance with a 2024 International Court of Justice order that it take measures to prevent acts of genocide in Gaza.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military intercepted on Monday boats off the coast of Cyprus, part of the latest wave of flotilla activists attempting to break Israel's blockade of Gaza.

More than 50 vessels departed from the port in Marmaris, Turkiye, last week in what the organizers of the Global Sumud Flotilla described as the final leg of their planned journey to Gaza's shores.

The organization's livestream on Monday showed activists aboard several vessels putting on life jackets and raising their hands before a boat carrying Israeli troops approached. Wearing tactical gear, they boarded the ship, and the livestream abruptly ended. Many of the ships are currently off the coast of Cyprus.

In a statement issued on Monday, Turkiye's Foreign Ministry said, "We condemn the intervention by Israeli forces in international waters against the Global Flotilla ... which constitutes a new act of piracy."

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Trade show highlights China-Canada business ties

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto
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The expanding 2026 Toronto Trade Show highlighted renewed momentum in China-Canada business ties, as organizers, officials and exhibitors pointed to growing interest among Chinese companies seeking opportunities in the Canadian market.

Held in Toronto over the weekend, the event brought together more than 100 exhibitors from sectors ranging from artificial intelligence and healthcare to manufacturing and green technology.

"This year, for the second edition, I feel full of confidence," said Lena Xu, president of the Canada-China Enterprise Overseas Service Center and the event's organizer.

Xu told China Daily that the inaugural event last year faced pressure as organizers worked to establish the platform, but this year's exhibition expanded significantly in size and participation.

"We started recruiting exhibitors earlier, and our whole system is now AI-powered," she said, adding that companies were able to register and participate more efficiently through the platform.

According to Xu, about 80 percent of exhibitors came from China, while participants also arrived from Mexico, the United States and South America.

"The variety of exhibitors is much richer this year," she said.

Xu described the event as more than a temporary exhibition.

"It's not a one-time trade show," she said. "It's a long-term bridge for cooperation."

She said the platform aims to connect China and Canada in trade, tourism, education and cultural exchange while helping Chinese companies establish themselves in Canada.

Xu also linked the stronger turnout this year to improving China-Canada relations.

"The warming of China-Canada relations has certainly promoted many Chinese enterprises going abroad," she said.



Visitors browse exhibition booths during the 2026 Toronto Trade Show in Toronto, Canada, on Saturday. The two-day event attracted more than 100 exhibitors from sectors including artificial intelligence, healthcare, manufacturing and green technology. YANG GAO / CHINA DAILY

She added that improved visa conditions and policy support had made overseas expansion easier for Chinese businesses.

"Prime Minister Carney's visit to China also brought back many positive results," Xu said, referring to Canadian PM Mark Carney.

Chinese officials attending the event also emphasized the economic potential between the countries.

Cheng Hongbo, deputy consul general of China in Toronto, said the strong presence of Chinese exhibitors demonstrated the competitiveness of Chinese manufacturing and brands.

"We are glad to see that in recent years more and more Chinese products have found their way into Canadian households," Cheng said.

He described the trade show as "a very important platform" for strengthening economic and trade cooperation between the countries.

"China and Canada, although separated by vast oceans, are highly complementary economically," Cheng said. "There are very broad opportunities for our cooperation."

He also pointed to China's large consumer market and Canada's push to diversify its foreign economic ties.

"I think China is the best partner for Canada to diversify its foreign economic relations for economic resilience," he said.

For many businesses attending the exhibition, however, entering North America also requires adapting to a very different commercial environment.

Chen Kai, who advises Chinese companies entering the Canadian and North American markets, said many firms initially approach overseas expansion with a domestic sales mindset.

"Most Chinese companies come with a sales mentality," Chen told China Daily. "But North America is more about the chain of responsibility."

He said companies must adapt to stricter expectations involving consumers, distributors and supply chains.

"The supply chain is actually a responsibility chain," he said. "Chinese manufacturers need to think more about responsibility rather than just finding agents or focusing only on sales."

Chen said many Chinese firms remain heavily focused on the United States, but often underestimate the complexity of the North American market.

"People who really understand North America know the US is not a unified market," he said, noting that regulations can vary widely between states and cities.

"Canada is relatively easier," Chen added. "Entering the Canadian market is one of the best first choices for Chinese companies entering North America."

He said Toronto's large Chinese business community and service sector also provide strong support for newcomers from China.

The trade show also attracted Canadian and European entrepreneurs seeking closer cooperation with China.

Matteo Merla, whose business imports fast-growing trees from Germany and plants them in Canada for lumber production, said China remains an important long-term market for his business during his second time attending the trade show.

"We're growing the fastest tree in the world, 18 meters in six years," Merla said. "We now have 15,000 trees planted in Dunnville, Ontario."

Merla said his company was seeking investors and partners to help expand the business.

"We believe in nature, we believe in resources," he said.

Having worked with Chinese partners for years, Merla described his experience with the Chinese market positively.

"They're very reliable. They know what they want," he said.

Merla said China's demand for lumber products makes cooperation especially important for his business.

"I think this tree, specifically in the lumber industry, having a resource for China, is very important," he said.

He also expressed support for stronger China-Canada cooperation.

"I hope they stick together," Merla said. "Going a different way without working with China is a big mistake for everybody."

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COMMENT

Editorials

It's time G7 members looked at themselves rather than blaming China for their woes

The gathering of G7 finance ministers in Paris from Monday to Tuesday has been framed, predictably, as another exercise in diagnosing the ailments of the developed economies through the prism of "imbalances". Yet what stands out clearly is not China's trade surplus as claimed, but the growing inability of some developed economies to confront the structural contradictions within their own economic systems.

Before the meeting, French officials spoke of an "unsustainable" global economy in which China "under-consumes", the United States "over-consumes" and Europe "under-invests".

The US runs chronic fiscal and current-account deficits because it has long chosen debt-fueled growth over fiscal discipline. Europe's investment weakness, meanwhile, reflects years of strategic hesitation, demographic stagnation and energy insecurity. Japan worries about bond-market volatility because decades of ultra-loose monetary policy dictated by Washington have left it exceptionally exposed to shifts in global capital flows.

To hold China accountable for that is scapegoating to avoid self-correction. Trade balances are shaped by industrial structures, comparative advantages, corporate investment decisions and the international division of labor. China's trade surpluses with the G7 members, as well as the European Union, are the de facto objective result of policies designed and practiced by some advanced economies themselves.

For years, multinational corporations shifted production to China in pursuit of lower costs, industrial clustering and market access. The profits from these operations flowed overwhelmingly back to shareholders and corporations in developed economies. Yet the products manufactured in China and exported to Western markets are statistically counted as Chinese exports.

Some developed economies have systematically constrained their own export potential to China. Restrictions on high-tech exports have become increasingly expansive over the past decade. Advanced semiconductors, aerospace technologies, industrial software and precision equipment have all been subject to tightening controls. One cannot simultaneously suppress exports and lament trade deficits.

Indeed, China's own technological progress increasingly reflects this reality. The latest data on the BeiDou Navigation Satellite System offer a telling example. According to an industry white paper released on Monday, China's satellite navigation sector reached an output value of 629 billion yuan ($92.34 billion) in 2025, while the broader BeiDou spatial-temporal industry exceeded 1.3 trillion yuan. The system's products and services have expanded to more than 140 countries and regions.

What this illustrates is not merely industrial scale, but technological substitution. As some developed economies narrowed technology exports to China, the country accelerated indigenous innovation. Domestic supply chains have emerged with increasing levels of self-sufficiency.

The same pattern is unfolding in artificial intelligence, green energy and advanced manufacturing. China's preparation for the AI era, including the integration of AI across industrial production, logistics and services, is advancing at remarkable speed. So too is its transition toward renewable energy, electric vehicles and intelligent infrastructure. China's industrial upgrading has proceeded faster and more coherently than in many advanced economies.

This raises a deeper question for the G7. Has "de-risking" from China become a political slogan masking internal weaknesses?

Ironically, much of the "anxiety" voiced within the G7 club concerns instability emanating from the US — from its fiscal deficits and trade tensions to its sanctions policy and the geopolitical volatility it is engineering. For many developed economies, the more immediate form of "de-risking" increasingly involves reducing overdependence on US financial and strategic unpredictability.

China, meanwhile, continues to expand its high-standard opening-up. It is already the world's second-largest import market, and its future import potential remains enormous as its industrial upgrading continues. New demand for services, consumer goods, advanced manufacturing and green technologies will create opportunities for trading partners.

The tragedy is that parts of the developed world still interpret China's rise primarily as a "threat" instead of an opportunity. The intent of globalization should not be that the prosperity of one side is at the expense of another. It should be that interconnected growth can enlarge the economic pie for all. If the G7 wishes to address its "imbalances", it should begin with a more uncomfortable exercise in self-examination.

Chinese EVs a boon to world consumers

The first shipment of 24,500 Chinese-made electric vehicles has been cleared for import in Canadian ports recently. The anticipation, excitement and positive feedback from Canadian car dealers, consumers and auto market analysts make it clear that Chinese EVs are by no means the "threat" to industry or security some Western politicians have portrayed them to be. On the contrary, they are a boon to the market.

The decision by the Mark Carney government of Canada to slash tariffs on Chinese EVs and introduce an import quota system is a departure from the protectionist policies adopted by its predecessor. In October 2024, the then Justin Trudeau government imposed a 100 percent tariff on Chinese EVs, effectively shutting Chinese manufacturers out of the Canadian market. This move followed the lead of the then US administration.

However, with the new policy announced during Carney's visit to China in January, Canada has opened its market to 49,000 Chinese EVs annually, with a reduced most-favored-nation tariff rate of 6.1 percent. This shift not only reflects a pragmatic approach to trade but also signals a willingness to engage with China on mutually beneficial terms.

The import of Chinese EVs comes at a juncture for Canada, which is striving to meet its climate goals. Ottawa has set ambitious targets to phase out internal combustion engines and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Chinese EVs, with their technology, competitive pricing and proven performance, can play a big role in helping accelerate Canada's transition to green mobility.

Canadian Minister of Industry Melanie Joly has emphasized the potential of joint-venture partnerships with Chinese EV companies to help boost domestic manufacturing and competitiveness. "The idea is to be able, in North America, to adopt new technology," Joly told the media on the sidelines of the Public Policy Forum's 2026 Canada Growth Summit in Toronto early this month. "If other countries don't necessarily want to adopt them right now, we can adopt them first."

As some observers say, Canada can gain access to cutting-edge technologies, improve its industrial competitiveness, and create jobs in the clean energy sector by collaborating with Chinese EV companies. The partnership is not a one-way street; it offers opportunities for Canadian companies to integrate into global supply chains and benefit from China's vast market.

The import of Chinese EVs can help address the affordability gap in Canada's EV market. Chinese EVs, known for their affordability without compromising on quality, can make EVs more accessible to a broader segment of the population.

Canada's practical approach is in stark contrast to the shortsightedness of some developed economies that still impose hefty tariffs on Chinese EVs under the excuse of safeguarding "security" and protecting local enterprises. Protectionism only harms consumers by raising prices and stifles the technological progress of domestic industries by removing the incentive to be competitive.

That explains why the European Union — under growing pressure from its enterprises and consumers to open the market to Chinese EVs — has chosen to resolve its self-created problem with them through negotiations with China. The energy shortage triggered by the Middle East crisis has further driven consumers worldwide toward EVs.

Protecting inefficient industries only breeds stagnation; while embracing competition breeds innovation. The policymakers of the EU should heed the experience of Canada and view China's EV sector with objectivity.

The competitiveness of Chinese EVs stems from market dynamics. The technological edge of Chinese EVs lies in the country's complete industry chain, innovation and fierce market competition. The ability to source almost all the battery components within a single city cluster allows manufacturers to produce high-quality vehicles at lower costs.

Chinese EVs lower the barrier to green mobility for consumers worldwide, and support global climate goals. By embracing this, the Canadian government has made a rational choice to join many other economies in the world and opt for a path of shared prosperity and sustainable development.

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Shi Yu



Opinion Line

Aviation engineers give wings to soaring aerospace industry

In the realm of military aviation, few developing countries have made as remarkable a leap as China. From relying on imported aircraft to developing cutting-edge, world-class fighter jets, China's journey in aerospace is a testament to its engineering prowess and manufacturing capabilities.

The J-10 was China's first independently designed advanced fighter jet, heralding the beginning of a new era for the country's aviation industry. The J-10 was more than just an aircraft; it was a statement of China's intent to shed its reliance on foreign technology and carve out its own path in the skies.

The development of the J-10 was a groundbreaking achievement. It not only elevated China's technological and manufacturing capabilities but also nurtured a generation of engineers. These engineers, driven by patriotism and a commitment to excellence, laid the foundation for China's future aerospace endeavors. The J-10 proved that China could compete with the best in the world, ending the long history of the People's Liberation Army Air Force relying on imports and modified variants.

Building on the success of the J-10, the Chengdu Aircraft Design and Research Institute and Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group unveiled the J-20 in 2011, making China the second country in the world, after the United States, to develop and manufacture a fifth-generation stealth fighter.

The J-20 is a marvel of modern engineering, equipped with advanced stealth capabilities, supercruise and integrated avionics.

The J-20 has revolutionized China's aerial combat capabilities, providing the PLAAF with reliable long-range strike capabilities and enabling the construction of a modern combat system centered on stealth fighters.

Its success has not only boosted national pride but also symbolized China's growing comprehensive national strength.

The J-10 and J-20 have undergone significant upgrades, with variants such as the J-20A and J-20S leading the way. The J-20S, the world's first two-seater stealth fighter jet, represents a new frontier in aerial combat, capable of cooperating with drones to launch long-range attacks undetected by enemy forces.

In addition to its domestic success, China's aviation industry has made waves in the international arms market. The J-10CE, the export version of the J-10C, has proven its mettle in real combat.

This impressive performance has solidified China's status as a global player in the aerospace industry, attracting foreign buyers seeking powerful and reliable aircraft.

During a recent visit to the Chengdu Aircraft Design and Research Institute and Chengdu Aircraft Industry Group, I had the privilege of witnessing the J-20 and J-10CE up close. The high quality of the manufacturing is a testament to the dedication and expertise of China's aviation engineers.

As a journalist covering military affairs and defense technology, and as a military enthusiast, I am genuinely delighted by these achievements. The progress China has made in aerial combat capabilities is a source of national pride and a reminder of the incredible talent and determination of its people.

China's journey from lagging behind global powers to the current achievements of its modern aerospace industry is a remarkable story of innovation and perseverance. The J-10 and J-20 are symbols of China's growing strength and its ability to protect its skies.

To the aviation engineers who have made this possible, we extend our deepest gratitude. Your work has not only strengthened our nation's defense but also inspired a new generation of engineers and enthusiasts. Here's to many more advancements and a future filled with even more powerful aircraft to protect our motherland.

— ZHAO LEI, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Strategic mineral security critical for country

Editor's note: *The outline of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) calls for stronger efforts to prospect, develop and ensure reserves of strategic mineral resources. Liu Gang, a professor at the College of Urban and Environmental Sciences in Peking University, spoke to the 21st Century Business Herald about what these resources are and how China's mineral security can be ensured. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Strategic mineral resources are crucial minerals that serve as the core foundation for economic and industrial development. A country's list of strategic minerals may change as its economy and society evolve.

For example, petroleum has been regarded as a strategic mineral since the Industrial Revolution. Oil and natural gas resources power aircraft and road transport, and serve as essential raw materials for daily products such as chemical fibers, plastics and textiles.

A host of new technologies are being rapidly developed to replace petroleum both as an energy source and as a basic chemical material. For example, solar and wind power technologies can replace fossil fuels in power generation while bio-based materials can substitute traditional petroleum-based products.

Yet despite the rapid growth of clean energy capacity in China in recent years, fossil energy remains the mainstay of the country's energy consumption. It is relatively easy to diversify oil imports thanks to the wide distribution of oil-producing regions worldwide.

However, as the transition to clean energy and green, low-carbon growth advances, the emphasis has shifted to metals such as lithium, cobalt and nickel, which are important raw materials for electric vehicle batteries. Additionally, the development of artificial intelligence has led to an increase in the strategic importance of metals such as gallium and germanium, which are essential for semiconductors, integrated circuits and chips.

To enhance China's strategic mineral security, efforts could focus on four key areas: domestic prospecting, increasing reserves, diversifying imports and promoting recycling.

The country also needs to closely follow upgrades in technology. For example, though lithium, cobalt and nickel are all important for the lithium batteries in electric vehicles, the high prices of cobalt and nickel have spurred the development of lithium iron phosphate batteries, which are more economical. Such emerging technological routes driven by resource constraints and the need to stay cost-efficient deserve closer attention.

Efforts are needed to advance technology and promote the circular economy to reduce the consumption of these minerals, enhance their recycling and even replace them entirely.

The growth of AI has increased the demand for rare earth elements, which are also widely used in areas such as magnetic materials, luminescent and laser materials, hydrogen storage and atomic energy.

After years of development, China has established significant advantages in the global rare earth industry supply chain. In recent years, other countries have intensified efforts to catch up with China in this industry. However, it's unlikely that they will overtake China in the near term.

To consolidate China's advantages in rare earths, it is crucial to promote high-quality utilization of these resources, particularly by nurturing the high-end permanent magnet industry.

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VIEWS

Olga Migunova

Russia, China forge stronger ties in turbulent times



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

This year marks several milestones: the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the Russia-China strategic partnership of coordination, the 25th anniversary of the signing of the Russia-China Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), and the opening of the cross-years of education between the two countries.

Thus, 2026 is a chronological convergence for Russia-China relations. Within just a few months, four distinct historical trajectories — each with its own meaning, ranging from the geopolitical agreements of the 1990s to technological and humanitarian planning for the 2030s — have intersected. These trajectories form a new historical configuration of political, economic, humanitarian and diplomatic cooperation.

At the center of this convergence is the state visit of Russian President Vladimir Putin to China from Tuesday to Wednesday. These four milestones effectively shape the agenda of the visit. Amid global turbulence, the visit serves as a moment that "fuses" these timelines together.

It is a mechanism for synchronizing the development strategies of both countries for decades ahead. Its historical significance will not be measured by the length of the final communique or the number of contracts signed, but by its ability to connect the past, present, and future — assessing the past 30 years, adapting the legal legacy of the 2001 treaty to new challenges, aligning national strategies through 2030, and launching long-term personnel cooperation.

Thirty years ago, Russia-China relations achieved a historic breakthrough.

Over three decades, they evolved from cautious rapprochement after the collapse of the Soviet Union into what is now described as a "comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination", often seen as a model of major country relations.

This transformation reflected Russia's shift toward a multipolar foreign policy and China's need for stability along its long shared border, as well as balance in its relations with the United States.

The political breakthrough of 1996 was preceded by important groundwork, including agreements on confidence-building measures and mutual force reductions along the border. These established a legal framework that fostered trust. Today's relationship is often described as a new model of international relations based on the principles of "non-alliance, non-confrontation, and not targeting third parties", helping both countries avoid the classic "great power dilemma".

The Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation formalized the legal foundation of bilateral relations in the 21st century, enshrining principles such as mutual respect for sovereignty, non-aggression, non-interference, equality, mutual benefit and peaceful coexistence. It committed both sides to resolving disputes peacefully and reaffirmed their pledge not to be the first to use nuclear weapons.

Originally valid for 20 years, the treaty was automatically extended in 2021 for another five years. The presidential visit is an ideal moment to reaffirm the commitment to its principles for the years ahead. Over the past 25 years, China and Russia have turned their coordination into a global factor. Their cooperation within the United Nations, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS has become a key pillar of international governance.

Both countries act as stabilizing forces in the UN Security Council, often coordinating positions and advocating reforms to global governance systems.

They have also played leading roles in expanding and strengthening alternative international frameworks, particularly among developing countries and the Global South.

President Putin's visit is not merely about marking anniversaries but about evaluating three decades of cooperation and defining the parameters of a new stage — one shaped by China's 15th Five-Year Plan. This plan, while domestic in nature, sets clear technological and industrial priorities that will influence bilateral cooperation.

It emphasizes breakthroughs in areas such as 6G networks, artificial intelligence, big data, quantum technologies, biotechnology, semiconductors and green energy, with the overarching goal of achieving a high degree of technological self-reliance.

For Russia, this opens broad opportunities. The alignment of China's plan with Russia's Far East development strategy creates a natural platform for cooperation. The launch of international priority development territories in several Far Eastern regions of Russia offers favorable conditions for large-scale Chinese investment, supported by long-term guarantees.

Energy cooperation will remain central. In 2025, Russia and China signed the memorandum on the construction of the Power of Siberia-2 gas pipeline project.

Transport infrastructure is another key focus. Projects such as the Central Eurasian Transport Corridor, linking Siberia, Mongolia and western China, could significantly enhance connectivity.

Financial cooperation is also advancing rapidly. Russia and China have largely shifted to national currencies in bilateral trade, reducing vulnerability to external financial pressures.

Both countries advocate reforms to global financial institutions to make them more equitable and less politicized.

Beyond economics, deeper industrial and technological integration is becoming the new priority. This includes aligning the Eurasian Economic Union with the Belt and Road Initiative, as well as promoting the concept of a Greater Eurasian Partnership.

Education and human capital development play a crucial role in this process. The years of education (2026-27) aim to expand academic exchanges, joint campuses, and dual-degree programs.

In a global environment marked by instability, Russia-China relations have emerged as a stable anchor. The partnership reflects not only economic interdependence but also a shared perspective that rejects hegemony and emphasizes balance.

President Putin's visit will likely reaffirm this vision, demonstrating that the Russia-China partnership remains a pillar of stability in an increasingly turbulent world.

The author is the academic supervisor of the Center for the Study of China and Asia-Pacific Countries at St Petersburg State University of Economics.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Alexander Lukin

Old friendship in new era vital beyond Far East

Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to China, from Tuesday to Wednesday, will be a commemorative occasion to some extent.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation between Russia and China as well as the establishment of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization.

These two initiatives have laid the foundation for the rapid strengthening of cooperation between the two countries, now seen by the two sides as a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era.

The strengthening of the partnership has yielded tangible results. Over the past 25 years, more than 300 intergovernmental treaties and agreements have been signed.

There are five intergovernmental commissions, covering all areas of cooperation: economics, trade, humanitarian affairs, investment, energy, and interaction between border regions.

This comprehensive structure of strategic partnership extends from annual meetings of heads of state and government to cooperation between regions, provinces, municipalities, universities and companies.

There's hardly any major organization in Russia or China that doesn't have partners in the other country.

According to the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, deepening relations with China is a priority for Russia, and aligns with the objectives of strengthening good-neighborliness and mutual development.

Neither Russia nor China has such a comprehensive system of cooperation with any other country in the world.

The partnership is based not on the similarity of ideologies, but on the strategic interests in an emerging multipolar world.

Both China and Russia aim to be the new poles of global influence.

Since the Western center of power, dominant since the collapse of the Soviet Union, is unwilling to relinquish its supremacy, rising non-Western centers of influence find common ground in balancing Western influence.

The goal is to gradually improve the global governance system.

Several other countries, including India, Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia, are potential players in this multipolar order.

This explains the growing popularity and influence of non-Western international organizations and groups such as BRICS, SCO, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations among several others.

The development of many of these forums, such as BRICS and the SCO, was initially spurred by the Sino-Russian proposals and the two countries' shared vision for the world order.

However, contrary to Western narratives, Russia and China do not seek to undermine the existing "rules-based" international order.

Following the collapse of the Soviet Union, the world order — based on the idea of sovereignty of states and the central role of the United Nations, where decisions were not made without the consensus of all permanent Security Council members — began to constrain the US and its allies' pursuit of complete dominance.

Theories such as the "responsibility to protect" emerged in the West, which, contrary to the UN Charter, effectively permitted interference in the internal affairs of sovereign states without their consent.

Russia and China rejected these ideas and advocated preserving the post-World War II international law.

Thus, Russia and China play a stabilizing role in international affairs.

This has been particularly evident in the policies of certain Western powers, which openly reject the principles of international law and proclaim the simple right of might, drawing mild criticism from their own allies that are accustomed to justifying their hegemonic goals with elaborate interpretations of international law.

At a meeting with Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov on April 15 in Beijing, President Xi Jinping urged closer and stronger strategic coordination between China and Russia to firmly defend their legitimate interests and safeguard the unity of Global South countries.

Xi also called on the two countries to shoulder their responsibilities as major countries and permanent members of the UN Security Council.

It is necessary for the two sides to fully leverage the advantages of proximity and complementarity, deepen cooperation on all fronts, and enhance the resilience of their respective development.

Xi also emphasized the need to strengthen multilateral cooperation, firmly uphold and practice multilateralism, join hands to revive the authority and vitality of the UN, engage in closer coordination and cooperation within the frameworks of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS countries, and promote the development of the international order in a more just and reasonable direction.

These goals align with Russia's interests, and China exemplifies their successful implementation.

Despite some unfair criticisms from the West, China remains the most peace-loving and effective major power in the world.

For nearly half a century, its armed forces have not been deployed in any operation abroad, except for peacekeeping and UN-approved ones.

China does not participate in any regional conflict, but always expresses its principled position.

It has put forward peace initiatives, and even expressed a willingness to mediate in their resolution.

By focusing on domestic development, China has achieved unprecedented success, becoming the second-largest economy in the world.

It is approaching the status of moderately developed countries in per capita GDP, with a powerful and stable economy, a unique culture, and one of the best-equipped modern armies in the world.

Today, China is Russia's most important strategic and trade partner. Its role has grown particularly over the past four years, when Russia's ties with Europe have been curtailed.

At the same time, China is extremely interested in expanding cooperation with Russia, amid political and economic pressure from the US and its allies.

Under these circumstances, the strategic partnership between the two countries will only deepen.

The outcome of Putin's visit to Beijing will be closely watched around the world.

The author is the academic head at the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Bakhtizin Albert

Building stability in a fractured trading world

Current developments surrounding Iran, marked by sharp disruptions in trade flows and growing threats to the security of established maritime routes, are increasing uncertainty in global markets, national economies, and international supply chains. The question is, which countries are likely to be the worst affected and which are positioned to cushion the impact.

History offers a useful perspective. Local disruptions in major trade corridors have often produced consequences far beyond their immediate epicenters.

The Yom Kippur War of 1973, followed by the oil embargo, caused oil prices to surge, accelerated global inflation and pushed major economies into recession. The closure of the Suez Canal in 1956 and again in 1967 forced the restructuring of trade routes and raised transportation costs.

The current situation is considerably more complex, since supply chains have become longer, production systems are more sophisticated, and the density of the global trade network has increased.

To understand how the crisis unfolding in the Strait of Hormuz will affect different countries, it is important to examine the structure of the global trading system. There are three dimensions of global trade.

The first is a country's position within the trade network, which determines its connectivity with other economies. The key nodes here include the United States, China, Germany, France, the United Kingdom and Japan.

Their centrality means that disturbances reaching them can quickly affect large parts of the global economy.

The second is the scale of trade, or a country's share in global exports and imports. The leaders here are China, the United States and Germany. Their trade volumes are so substantial that fluctuations in their external demand or supply capacity are transmitted widely across markets.

The third is the breadth of trade ties, or the number of countries for which a given economy is among the principal trading partners.

By this measure, China is the clear leader. Its economic links extend across regions and development levels, making it one of the most deeply embedded participants in world trade.

Across all three characteristics, the leading economies are China, the US and Germany.

Within this space, China is the center of production and exports, the US is the financial center and a major consumption hub, while Germany is the core of European production chains.

The difference is that today such mechanisms can operate on a new technological foundation.

How do shocks spread through such networks? Typically, disruptions begin at a bottleneck, such as an important trade artery. Then the impulse spreads through the global network and reaches the central nodes, namely China, the US and Germany.

These countries act as shock absorbers and redistribute pressure across the network. The scale of their trade network makes it possible to redirect flows and compensate for supply disruptions. On the other hand, the peripheral nodes — countries that depend on a narrow range of suppliers, have limited trade structures and few alternative routes, and are not deeply integrated into the global network — suffer more from the disruption.

This fragility is reflected in global assessments. In April, the International Monetary Fund released its flagship report titled Global Economy in the Shadow of War in which it lowered its forecast for global GDP growth from 3.3 percent to 3.1 percent.

The report identified the escalation of the Iranian conflict, further fragmentation of the global trading system, and rising energy prices as among the main risks to future global development.

Other leading institutions such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development have also warned of global recession risks. The question is whether this applies to all countries and the mechanisms that each country has to escape stagnation and maintain steady development.

Interestingly, the answer comes from the IMF. In March, it published a paper titled Institutions for Industrial Policy: The Foundation of Economic Development.

An institution that for many years promoted minimal state intervention in the economy has finally acknowledged that market reforms alone are not enough. Citing the example of East Asian countries, the study notes that technological breakthroughs can be achieved through active industrial policies.

According to the researchers, long-term growth requires a dedicated agency for managing industrial policy. Its role would be to coordinate the state and business, support strategic sectors, align policy tools, and finance science and education. This would not be a traditional ministry functioning along rigid lines, but a flexible and learning-oriented development system.

Many elements of this model resemble Asian development institutions, especially those in China. They also have roots in the strategic planning traditions of the 20th century, including Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry and other successful historical experiences of state-led coordination.

The difference is that today such mechanisms can operate on a new technological foundation. Digital monitoring, modern balance systems and data analytics now make coordination more precise, timely and responsive.

In other words, the IMF has recognized the return of coordination tools once used by successful industrial states, particularly China.

The current global crisis may end not only in recession, but also in a reconsideration of the economic model itself.

But this alone may not be enough for sustainable development. Enhanced economic and technological collaboration between major economies, such as that between China and Russia, can bring greater stability. Their technological convergence, together with the combination of their resource capacities, could give rise to a resilient economic cooperation zone capable of maintaining stability amid global uncertainties and advancing as a new technological and industrial self-sustaining center in the evolving global governance landscape.

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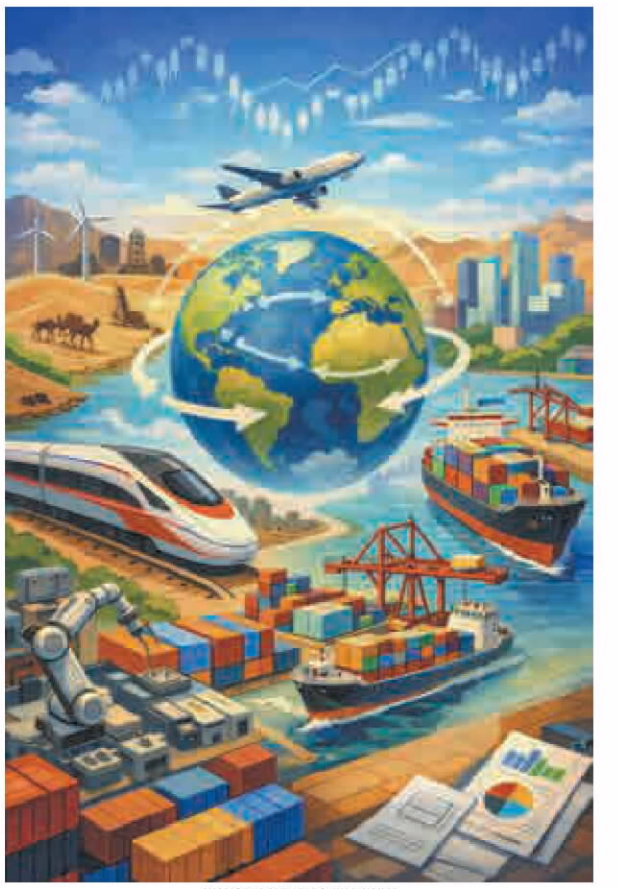
GLOBAL VIEWS

RONNIE LINS

Innovation as infrastructure

China's industrial modernization during the 15th Five-Year Plan period will bring about a shared endeavor for building technological capacity



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

The 2026 Government Work Report does more than review annual targets. It signals a structural shift in how China approaches development. The country now treats technological innovation and industrial upgrading not as isolated domestic priorities, but as core elements of a systemic development infrastructure.



The projected GDP growth rate of 4.5 percent to 5 percent for 2026 reflects a deliberate strategy. China is prioritizing resilience, quality and deeper integration between science, industry and markets. For countries across the Global South, this shift offers more than new trade opportunities. It introduces a governance model that supports development without producing ecological strain or structural dependency.

China has redefined productivity at its core. Instead of separating research, industrial scale and commercialization, the country now aligns these elements within a unified development framework.

This transformation already shows in the expansion of innovation capacity. China's R&D spending has reached around 2.8 percent of GDP, surpassing the average of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, while technology transactions continue to grow, strengthening the link between scientific research and economic application.

Public investment also plays a central role. Large-scale equipment upgrading programs do not simply modernize existing systems. They drive the digital transformation of traditional industries. Companies now deploy artificial intelligence, cloud computing and big data across manufacturing, logistics and supply chains. At the same time, China continues to strengthen advanced manufacturing clusters that combine quality standards, branding and intelligent production networks.

Beyond leading sectors, this transformation is increasingly reaching small and medium-sized enterprises, which are adopting digital tools to improve efficiency, reduce costs and integrate themselves into more advanced value chains. This diffusion of technology across different layers of the economy plays a central role in sustaining long-term productivity growth.

In parallel, the country is accelerating the development of future industries. It is making advances in fields such as quantum computing, next-generation telecommunications, advanced energy systems and brain-computer interfaces. Public and private capital supports these sectors through long-term investment structures designed to accommodate the longer cycles of deep-tech innovation.

This dual strategy ensures that productivity gains spread beyond high-tech sectors. The broader economy absorbs these gains, while new efficiency standards emphasize resource use, workforce capabilities and adaptability.

China has long recognized the gap between scientific discovery and large-scale application. The current framework addresses this challenge through institutional design rather than relying solely on funding.

The "AI Plus" initiative illustrates this approach clearly. The government is promoting large-scale deployment of AI across manufacturing, healthcare, logistics and public services. This creates stable demand for emerging technologies, reduces uncertainty and accelerates their commercial adoption.

In practice, this approach reduces the traditional fragmentation between innovation actors. Research institutions, technology companies and industrial producers now operate within more coordinated frameworks, supported by policy instruments that align incentives and reduce barriers to scale.

China has also elevated data to the status of a core production factor. Policymakers are supporting the development of high-quality data ecosystems, the expansion of computing infrastructure and improvements in mechanisms for valuing digital assets. Today, core digital economy industries already account for more than 10 percent of GDP, highlighting the central role of data in economic transformation.

At the same time, China strengthens intellectual property protection, improves capital market access for technology companies and encourages leading companies to organize innovation consortia. These measures connect research, production and commercialization more effectively.

As a result, innovation now operates within industrial standards, regulatory frameworks and public procurement systems. This integration accelerates market entry and ensures that domestic industries capture productivity gains before scaling internationally.

China does not regard external technological pressure as grounds for isolation. Instead, it pursues strategic autonomy while expanding openness in a more effective way.

The government continues to open sectors such as digital services, biotechnology and value-added telecommunications. At the same time, it strengthens domestic capabilities in key areas such as semiconductors, industrial software and advanced manufacturing equipment. This combination reduces vulnerability while maintaining international engagement.

Regional innovation hubs now play a central role in this strategy. Areas such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, the Yangtze River Delta and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area connect domestic innovation systems with global research networks. China is also promoting open-source AI ecosystems, joint laboratories and cross-border data governance initiatives.

This approach contributes to stabilizing global innovation systems by preserving channels for cooperation even under conditions of geopolitical uncertainty.

In the context of geoeconomic fragmentation, this model shows that technological sovereignty and international cooperation can reinforce each other. Shared infrastructure, transparent rules and mutual benefits create the foundation for stable collaboration.

China's transformation generates practical implications for developing countries. The 2026 Government Work Report points to concrete opportunities for cooperation.

First, integrating green transition and digitalization enables developing countries to bypass carbon-intensive stages of development. China has already scaled production in strategic sectors. Its output of new-energy vehicles has exceeded 16 million units, supported by expanding charging infrastructure.

Second, China's evolving approach to data governance and AI provides valuable reference points. Countries can adapt these frameworks to balance innovation, regulation and privacy within their own institutional environments.

For many developing countries, these opportunities go beyond access to technology. They also involve learning how to build institutional capacity, coordinate industrial policy and create long-term development strategies that integrate digitalization and sustainability.

Third, China does not frame cooperation as one-way technology transfer. It emphasizes co-creation, local capacity building and joint development. Platforms such as the Belt and Road Initiative, BRICS and the China-CELAC (Community of Latin American and Caribbean States) Forum increasingly reflect this approach, focusing on projects that generate both immediate results and long-term institutional gains.

For the Global South, the key lesson lies not in copying China's model, but in adapting its principles. Sustainable development requires strong institutions, long-term financing and cooperative governance structures.

As China continues to advance the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), it will offer more than its national development experience. It will create a scalable framework for building technological capacity in a complex global environment. In this context, innovation-driven industrial upgrading no longer represents a competitive race. It becomes a shared endeavor.

The author is the director of the China-Brazil Center for Research and Business. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

SHU QUANFENG

Rural development

Digital platforms and AI tools are bridging the distance for China's migrant rural residents, fostering participation and governance in the countryside

As the waves of urbanization and industrialization surge forward, rural development and vitalization become a shared mission for nations worldwide. The effective utilization of digital technology can play a pivotal role in this mission by mitigating collective action dilemmas and governance vacuums caused by population outflow in rural areas. China's newly released outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national social and economic development explicitly calls for deepening the construction of a digital China and enhancing the level of digital-intelligent development, while the 2026 No 1 Central Document highlights the implementation of high-quality development actions for digital villages. According to the 57th Statistical Report on China's Internet Development, 5G networks cover all towns and 95 percent of administrative villages in China, with rural internet penetration reaching 69.5 percent as of December 2025. The digital landscape in rural China has leaped forward over the past decade, accumulating valuable experience for combating rural development challenges and fostering revitalization.





SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

On the one hand, the widespread adoption of digital rural governance platforms connects the floating population online, solving the problem of insufficient participation in rural governance. Spatial barriers and spatiotemporal dislocation were once core issues hindering the cohesion of mobile societies. However, digital technology has broken these shackles, allowing discrete mobile forces to converge online. For instance, as of March 2026, over 88,000 villages and 16 million villagers nationwide have joined the "village-level service platform", a digital governance mini-program. On this rural office automation system, every village has a dedicated home page featuring columns for village affairs disclosure, deliberation and consultation, grievance feedback and participation rankings. Villagers working or living anywhere in the world can follow their home village's page on their phones to stay updated on local dynamics. They can participate online in the consultation, decision-making and supervision of public affairs such as infrastructure construction, public service provision and collective resource management, and are incentivized to actively donate to collective activities that improve their hometowns.

On the other hand, digital-intelligent tools represented by large language models deeply empower grassroots cadres, effectively helping them govern villages and meet villagers' needs. By December 2025, the user base for generative artificial intelligence in China had reached 602 million. A 2025 survey by the China Institute for Rural Studies at Tsinghua University showed that 66.9 percent of village cadres now use AI tools such as Doubao and DeepSeek in their daily work to assist with decision-making and management. They utilize these tools to design public activity plans, produce promotional videos for local specialty products, draft rural revitalization project proposals and analyze data on public demands.

However, integrating digital technology into rural society is a complex process that is currently in a "running-in period", facing multiple constraints regarding subject capability, technology application and institutional norms.

First, the digital literacy of rural cadres and villagers needs improvement. According to a 2026 report by China Internet Network Information Center, as of December 2025, the digital literacy and skills of rural residents lagged behind those of urban residents by 24.6 percentage points. China Institute for Rural Studies data from 2025 indicates that 31.1 percent of village cadres can barely use office software, and 10.3 percent do not know how to use WeChat to issue notices or mobilize the public.

Second, the misuse of digital governance tools is prominent. The redundant construction of various digital governance tools is severe; most villages are required to fill out data for more than a score of apps, with some exceeding dozens. This leads to "digital burnout" among cadres, affecting their physical and mental health and their willingness to serve the public.

Third, lagging regulation has spawned a series of social risks. Government regulation often trails behind the iteration of digital technology, leading to increasing social risks in rural areas such as information cocoons, group polarization and even AI fraud. These risks can easily erode villagers' trust in digital technology.

The 15th Five-Year Plan emphasizes the importance of creating a beneficial, safe and fair environment in the development of digital technology. Given that high mobility will be a long-term structural feature of China's rural society, future digital transformation needs to accelerate into a new stage of high-quality development to provide continuous momentum for reversing rural decline and promoting comprehensive revitalization.

First, rural revitalization hinges on human resources. This means increased investment in improving the digital literacy and skills of villagers, implementing special actions to enhance the digital leadership of rural grassroots cadres and carrying out customized cultivation in digital services, governance, mobilization and marketing.

Second, technology is key to vigorously promoting innovation in digital governance tools. There should be increased research support for agriculture-friendly digital technology innovation to improve the utility and ease of use of rural digital governance platforms. The construction of an intelligent, standardized rural governance platform system should be accelerated, making digital platforms a smart hub that truly transcends time and space to efficiently aggregate rural resources.

Third, institutional backup is needed to strengthen the standardized management of digital applications. This includes adhering to the principle of balancing regulation and support, strengthening the governance of false and harmful information in cyberspace, and building an agile and efficient digital governance institutional system. Equally important are algorithmic value orientation and humanistic care, ultimately promoting technology for good to provide institutional guarantees for cohesion in a mobile society.

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BUSINESS

Departure tax refund levels up for visitors

Upgrade to help convert inbound tourism boom into retail growth

By **LI JING**
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China has rolled out an upgraded nationwide departure tax refund policy aimed at making shopping easier for foreign visitors and converting rising inbound tourism into a new driver of domestic consumption.

The measures, jointly issued by the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Finance and the State Taxation Administration of China — alongside three other department bodies — represent a "2.0 version" of reforms first introduced in 2025 to improve China's departure tax refund system.

Officials say the latest upgrade focuses on expanding refund store coverage, reducing processing times and digitalizing procedures to improve the shopping experience for foreign visitors.

China's earlier reform package, released in April 2025, had already driven rapid growth in the program. National tax-refund sales nearly doubled in 2025 from a year earlier, while the number of foreign travelers claiming refunds rose to about 270,000, roughly three times the 2024 level.

"The departure tax refund system has entered a fast track," said Sheng Qiuping, vice-minister of commerce, at a conference on Monday.

Sheng said that the earlier measures, which lowered the minimum purchase threshold for refunds, raised the cash refund ceiling and expanded the number of participating retailers, combined with visa-free entry policies and improved payment services to boost inbound consumption.

The number of tax-refund stores nationwide has reached about 14,000, roughly four times the level at end-2024, Sheng added.

A major highlight of the upgraded policy is further optimization of the "buy and refund immediately" service, which allows overseas shoppers to receive their tax rebates directly at participating stores instead of waiting until departure.

Authorities plan to enable cross-regional recognition of the service, allowing travelers who obtain instant refunds at the point of purchase to complete verifications at a different departure port. The allowable departure period will also be standardized nationwide at 28 days.

Xie Wen, director-general of the goods and services tax department at the State Taxation Administration, said the program has already significantly boosted spending.

"After tourists receive tax refunds on the spot, it often stimulates further purchases," Xie said, adding that the number of users of the instant refund service surged 12.9-fold over the past year, while related sales and refund amounts rose more than ninefold.

The upgraded policy will also introduce a random inspection system for smaller claims. Starting July 1, purchases below 10,000 yuan ($1,380) will undergo spot checks instead of mandatory physical verifications — a move expected to shorten waiting times at departure ports.

> "More foreign visitors now come to China not only for sightseeing, but also to experience local lifestyles."
>
> **Yang Mu,** head of department of market operation and consumption promotion at the Ministry of Commerce

Authorities will also push forward paperless processing so that customs and refund agencies can verify refund applications and invoices online.

Experts say the policy marks a shift from merely simplifying procedures to strengthening the broader role of inbound consumption in China's economy.

"The core of the 2.0 reform is to move from 'process simplification' to 'value creation'," said Tian Lihui, a finance professor at Nankai University.

The reforms can reduce administrative friction while turning the tax-refund system into a platform for showcasing Chinese brands and culture to overseas consumers, Tian said.

The policy comes as inbound tourism to China continues to recover following a series of visa facilitation measures.

China has introduced unilateral visa-free policies for 50 countries and a 240-hour transit visa-free arrangement covering 55 countries in recent years.

In the first quarter, foreign nationals made roughly 8.32 million visa-free entries into China, making up 77.9 percent of all inbound foreign trips and representing an increase of 29.3 percent year-on-year, official data revealed.

Yang Mu, head of the department of market operation and consumption promotion at the Ministry of Commerce, said the surge in visitor numbers is changing consumption patterns.

"More foreign visitors now come to China not only for sightseeing, but also to experience local lifestyles," Yang said, adding that deeper cultural experiences and diversified consumption scenarios are becoming a growing part of inbound travel.

Officials say the upgraded tax-refund policy — together with improved payment services and expanded international flight connections — is expected to help convert the rising flow of visitors into sustained retail growth and strengthen the country's "Shopping in China" campaign aimed at attracting foreign consumers.



Inbound visitors line up for tax refunds at a Harmay store in Shanghai on April 23. CHEN YUYU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Landmark underway



China Railway Construction Corp Chairman Dai Hegen (second left) exchanges gifts with Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum (second right), chairman and CEO of Emirates Airline and Group, during the launch ceremony of the Emirates aircraft maintenance hangar project in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates, on Monday. The $5 billion mega project, built by State contractor CRCC, is expected to be one of the largest civil aviation maintenance facilities globally. With a construction area of 1.21 million square meters in Dubai South, the project — inked under the Belt and Road Initiative — will include eight heavy maintenance hangars and two paint hangars, capable of providing full-range services for 28 wide-body aircraft simultaneously upon completion in 2030. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Telecom giants launch AI token services

By **CHENG YU**
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China's telecom giants are racing to turn artificial intelligence into the country's next mass-market utility by selling tokens, the tiny units of computing consumption that power AI models, in a sign that the country's operators are trying to transform themselves from bandwidth providers into AI service brokers.

State-owned telecom carrier China Telecom announced on Sunday a series of trial token plans, offering consumers monthly AI usage packages starting at 9.9 yuan ($1.37) for 10 million tokens.

China Telecom's new plans cover both consumers and enterprise users. Small businesses and developers can purchase enterprise packages with up to 150 million monthly tokens for 39.9 yuan. The packages resemble mobile data plans, except the commodity being metered is AI computation instead of internet traffic.

In parallel, China Mobile launched a universal token service in Shanghai for consumer and office scenarios, allowing users to access different AI platforms under a single account and pay through phone bills.

The carrier partnered with Tencent Holdings to introduce an AI-native workspace platform targeting consumers and small businesses. The service offers 400,000 tokens for 1 yuan, with users able to switch between AI models under a unified pricing structure.

Wang Peng, a researcher of Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "Chinese telecom operators are extending from selling connections to selling AI services. They are now competing to build integrated platforms combining computing power, AI models, intelligent agents and service gateways."

"Unlike AI startups, telecom operators do not necessarily compete on the lowest token prices. Their advantage lies in nationwide infrastructure, government-backed cloud networks and cybersecurity services," he said.

Xu Zhixin, director at the China Industrial Control Systems Cyber Emergency Response Team's software research division, said: "Cloud expansion is inevitable for operators. At its core, this is still resource-based supply. Chinese telecom operators are not simply trying to become an AI-era 'pick-axe seller'".

Telecom operators are embedding themselves deep into China's AI infrastructure stack. To make that model work, China Mobile is building a closed-loop AI ecosystem, aggregating AI models on one end while linking them to devices and applications on the other.

Its newly launched Mobile Model Management Platform (MoMA) connects not only China Mobile's in-house large language model, but also more than 300 mainstream AI models, including DeepSeek, Qwen, Doubao and GLM.

Using what the company calls a centralized token management system, MoMA dynamically routes user requests to different models depending on demand, helping reduce per-token costs by more than 30 percent while cutting computing resource usage by over 50 percent, according to the company.

Latest data from the National Data Administration showed that daily consumption of tokens had surpassed 140 trillion as of March, a more than 1,000-fold increase from the 100 billion recorded at the beginning of 2024 and over 40 percent higher than the 100 trillion recorded at the end of last year.

"The surge signals that China's AI industry is expanding quickly and evolving from basic chat functions to more sophisticated systems capable of decision-making and task execution," said Liu Liehong, head of the NDA.

Shanghai seen playing major digital role

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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The Shanghai pilot program for international cooperation in the data sector was officially launched during the recent Tech Week Shanghai, where experts and business leaders from home and abroad called for more global exchanges and further ties in the fast-evolving artificial intelligence era.

With data becoming a key factor of production that drives economic and social development, digital cooperation is reshaping the landscape of global governance. As part of the global Tech Week series, the newly inaugurated Tech Week Shanghai aimed to build a platform that connects China and the rest of the world in data cooperation.

During the opening ceremony, Yu Ying, deputy head of the National Data Administration, said Shanghai stood among China's first batch of pilot cities for international cooperation in the data sector.

The city, which is aiming to become a global digital hub, has developed a substantive and well-defined implementation plan, outlining 17 specific tasks centered on leading infrastructure, mutual recognition of rules, platform empowerment and scenario integration.

Yu said she expects Shanghai to strengthen efforts in diverse aspects, including promoting interconnection with international data infrastructure, enhancing alignment of international rules and standards, fostering an international data service chain, supporting digital businesses in overseas expansion, and deepening opening-up and multilateral data cooperation mechanisms.

"China's digital economy is currently at a critical turning point in its global expansion, shifting from a focus on quantity to a focus on quality," said He Renlong, secretary-general of Shanghai Digital Enterprise Globalization Association.

Also, as overseas markets rapidly raise requirements for compliance, data sovereignty, localization and brand value, Chinese digital firms are changing their mindsets from merely selling products to participating in the globalization of industry chains, standards and the digital ecosystem, added He.

Southeast Asian countries continue to be the most popular destinations for digital companies in Shanghai to expand overseas, while Latin America and the Middle East are booming with rapid growth, followed by Central Asia, Africa, and Central and Eastern Europe, which are all emerging with great potential, said the association.

"Shanghai is home to a large number of global players, and is naturally well-connected with the world. For companies, going global is a long-term strategy. Amid the external uncertainties and various risks, we hope to support more local firms, especially small and medium-sized ones, to get rooted in overseas markets," said He.

Singapore has seen close international cooperation with Shanghai in the digital sector. Ville Kulmala, president of DAMA Singapore, sees the two sides as "similar" and the cooperation between them is "complementary and a very good match".

Kulmala said China has very good regulations, and is very smart with massive adoption and market management. Similarly, Singapore also has strong and transparent regulations. In the fast-moving AI era, one of the biggest challenges for companies in AI transformation lies in "data foundations and strategy".

"In China, you have companies natively born in the data era like Alibaba, and players like Huawei. They are doing huge business abroad, and helped companies become digitalized all over the world with their best practices," Kulmala added.

Milind, principal AI scientist at Mercedes-Benz, agreed with Kulmala that international data cooperation could find its way with technology to cross the existing "borders" or "national boundaries". They both see enormous common good and opportunities for all ahead, as the world today becomes more interconnected as a whole in the AI era.

"The speed of innovation in China is mind-blowing. We have to continuously keep learning from each other ... We learn together, grow together, and that is the most powerful way to move forward," said Milind.

China ends reliance on racing fuel imports

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China's self-developed 103-grade racing gasoline was officially put into use in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region on Saturday, filling the domestic gap and ending reliance on imports for top races.

Previously dependent on imported fuel, China has now mastered the core technology needed to self-develop and manufacture racing fuel by China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, or Sinopec, which meets premier standards and has entered mass production.

This breaks China's long-standing reliance on imported fuels for top-tier motorsport events and fills the void in domestically produced high-performance racing fuel, said the State refining giant.

It serves as a major milestone, indicating that the nation's oil refining technology has reached world-class standards, it said.

Previously, China's high-end racing fuel market relied heavily on imports, with some teams blending their own oil, leading to high costs and unstable supply chains. The launch of this domestic product changes this situation, as it meets top racing standards and realizes industrial mass production, marking China's mastery of core technology in high-grade racing gasoline, it added.

> This strategic pivot not only meets the rising international demand for eco-friendly and premium-quality goods, but also safeguards profitability in an increasingly crowded market."
>
> **Lin Boqiang,** head of China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University

Experts believe the initiative marks a milestone in the refining industry, boosting related industrial chains, as China is securing higher profits by targeting the markets for specialized chemicals and cutting-edge materials.

"This strategic pivot not only meets the rising international demand for eco-friendly and premium-quality goods, but also safeguards profitability in an increasingly crowded market," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Even with escalating global rivalry, Lin believes that China maintains a robust competitive edge thanks to its complete industrial supply chain, massive domestic consumer base, and continuous funding for new technologies and facilities.

According to Sinopec, the racing fuel is specifically designed to provide explosive power, rapid acceleration and smooth operation for high-speed, heavy-load motorsport engines.

Through integrated research and production, this premium fuel guarantees a stable, high-performance supply that aligns with rigorous professional racing and environmental standards.

A report by the China Petroleum and Chemical Industry Federation said the Chinese petrochemical sector will transform into a greener, more innovative and globally connected leader, as the nation navigates the worldwide shift in energy.

China's petrochemical industry has been investing heavily in green technologies and circular economy practices, aligning with the country's broad environmental goals and the global green push, said Fu Xiangsheng, vice-president of the federation.

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BUSINESS

Pet-friendly travel demand on upswing

Report says 71% of furry friend owners show interest in traveling with their animals; about half have paid for such services

By LI JING
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Dog owners bring their pets to a park in Anji county, Zhejiang province, on May 5, to participate in a dog beauty pageant. Anji county has been making various tourist attractions pet-friendly in recent years. PAN XUEKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY





Left: Tourists with their dog take a cable car ride at the Jiuziyan Scenic Area in Qingyang county, Anhui province, on Feb 9. CHU WEIWEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE **Right**: A man and his dog walk through the streets of the old town of Linhai in Taizhou, Zhejiang province, on May 4. YI FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

When Zhang Yi packed her bags for a recent holiday trip to the grasslands of the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, she made sure one companion was not left behind: her beloved Shiba Inu.

The Chongqing-based pet owner has traveled with her dog to more than 20 cities across China, usually by car. On this trip, the pair camped on the vast Hulunbuir grassland, where her dog ran freely around the prairie.

"I treat my dog as family," the 31-year-old said. "I'm busy with work most of the year, so traveling together is a way for us to spend more time together and for my dog to experience new environments."

Zhang is part of a growing wave of Chinese travelers who refuse to leave their "furry children" behind. Once considered a niche hobby among dedicated pet owners, traveling with animals is increasingly shaping China's tourism market, from hotels and campsites to transportation and destination services.

Data from online accommodation platform Tujia.com show that bookings for homestays labeled as "pet-friendly" during the five-day May Day holiday in 2025 rose more than 80 percent from a year earlier, while the number of such listings on the platform increased fivefold. Industry participants say the momentum has continued into 2026 as more travelers seek accommodations that allow pets.

The trend reflects a broader shift in consumer behavior as younger Chinese view pets less as animals and more as companions integrated into their daily lives.

"We see pet-inclusive travel as a structural trend rather than a short-term fad," said Kathy Jiang, a partner expert at consultancy Roland Berger. "It is driven by the growing perception of pets as family members and the consumption upgrade among younger pet owners."

China's tourism industry is now moving from simply allowing pets in certain venues toward actively designing services around them, Jiang said, although standards and supporting facilities remain uneven.

China's broader pet economy provides a powerful backdrop. The 2026 China Pet Industry White Paper (Consumer Report) said the number of pet dogs and cats in the country's urban areas exceeded 120 million, with the market for pet-related consumption reaching about 312.6 billion yuan ($45.92 billion) in 2025. The market is expected to expand further to 405 billion yuan by 2028.

The report found that 71 percent of pet owners expressed interest in traveling with their animals, and about half had already paid for pet-related travel services.

Tourism operators say the change is already visible in bookings. At the Hu Resort in Beijing, which began developing pet-friendly services in 2019, demand has risen sharply in recent years. Shang Li, the resort's marketing manager, said inquiries, visitor numbers and bookings for pet-friendly rooms during this year's May Day holiday all doubled from a year earlier.

Shang said most guests traveling with pets are young urban professionals aged 25 to 40, who treat their animals as family members and typically seek short leisure breaks in suburban destinations.

Compared with ordinary guests, these travelers often stay longer, return more frequently and spend more on dining and other services, she added.

Travel agencies are experimenting with niche offerings. Outdoor travel platform Youxiake.com launched a pet travel brand in 2024, offering short-distance hiking and holiday itineraries designed for travelers with pets.

Li Yunzi, the company's general manager, said professional pet travel involves far more than simply allowing animals to join a trip.

"It means designing the experience from a pet's perspective rather than treating them as passive companions," Li said in an interview with The Economic Observer, noting that routes are screened to ensure suitable terrain, rest stops and outdoor space for dogs.

Meanwhile, local governments and tourism operators are increasingly trying to capture a share of the growing market.

More than a dozen Chinese provinces and cities have introduced policies encouraging the development of pet-friendly tourism as part of the broader pet economy. Measures range from supporting pet-themed events to encouraging hotels, scenic areas and campsites to develop dedicated facilities.

For now, most pet travel in China remains short-distance and car-based. On highways and in suburban campsites during the May Day holiday, it was common to see pets accompanying their owners. Many travelers prefer driving to nearby destinations, which allows flexibility and avoids complicated transport restrictions.

Cross-province trips by air or train remain far less common.

Li Mengran, marketing manager at Beijing-based travel agency Utour, said the company's dedicated pet travel brand PetGo — launched in January — has seen steadily rising inquiries from travelers hoping to bring pets along.

However, actual bookings did not increase significantly during the recent May Day holiday because of soaring airfares.

"The main customer group for pet travel is young travelers, who tend to be price-sensitive," Li said. "During holidays, air ticket prices rise sharply. That filters out many potential customers even if interest is high."

Pet owners also tend to prioritize keeping their animals close throughout the journey. If airlines only allow pets to travel as checked cargo, many customers abandon the idea entirely.

"The possibility of pets staying in the cabin is often the first question travelers ask," Li said.

Transportation rules have long been one of the biggest bottlenecks for pet travel in China, though recent policy changes suggest gradual improvement.

In April, China expanded a pet transport service on its high-speed rail network, allowing pets that meet certain requirements to be checked as cargo on more than 200 train routes across more than 120 stations, according to China Railway Express.

Airlines are also experimenting with pet-friendly services. Carriers such as China Southern Airlines and Xiamen Airlines have launched limited trials allowing small pets in aircraft cabins on selected routes, while some airports in cities including Shenzhen and Guangzhou in Guangdong province have introduced pet lounges and specialized check-in counters.

These developments are gradually removing some of the logistical barriers for travelers hoping to bring pets along.

Industry experts say the impact of pet travel extends well beyond tourism itself.

Jiang of Roland Berger said the sector could stimulate a wider supply chain, from travel gear and in-car pet equipment to smart wearable devices and pet healthcare services.

At destinations, the trend may encourage scenic areas to develop pet-walking trails, campsites to offer dedicated facilities and local businesses to expand into services such as grooming, pet photography and post-trip health checks.

"In essence, travel spending shifts from 'one person' to 'one person plus one pet', which significantly raises the average spending per visitor," Jiang said. "It can also help destinations attract off-season traffic."

Despite the rapid growth, the industry still faces major challenges.

China lacks unified rules governing pet access to hotels, scenic areas and transportation, meaning travelers often have to confirm policies repeatedly before departure.

"In Europe and the United States, pet-friendly travel is already integrated systematically into transportation, accommodation and public spaces," Jiang said. "In China, the biggest problem is that policies remain inconsistent and sometimes change without clear notice."

Emergency services, transport connections and deeper experience offerings also remain underdeveloped, making it difficult for travelers to enjoy a seamless end-to-end journey with their pets.

For Zhang Yi, the Shiba Inu owner from Chongqing, the progress is nevertheless visible.

"China still has a long way to go in becoming fully pet-friendly," she said. "But compared with a few years ago, the environment for traveling with pets has clearly improved."

Booming Chinese pet sector driving innovative health, nutrition solutions

By LI JING



A scientist examines a sample with laboratory equipment in the office of Danish biosolutions company Novonesis in Beijing's Haidian district in 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As Chinese pet owners increasingly demand science-backed nutrition rather than traditional pet food, global biotechnology suppliers are moving to tap into a domestic pet economy projected to grow significantly by 2028.

Danish biosolutions company Novonesis has made China a priority market for its new pet business unit launched in 2025.

The company, formed in 2024 through the merger of enzyme producer Novozymes and probiotic specialist Chr. Hansen, positions itself not as a pet food brand, but as an upstream biotechnology supplier, providing enzymes and microbial solutions for pet nutrition and health.

Its entry reflects a broader shift in China's fast-growing pet economy, where global pet firms are increasingly targeting the country not only as a consumer market, but also as a base for research, production and partnerships with local brands.

"China is both a growth engine and an innovation testing ground for pet nutrition solutions," said Jack An, head of sales for animal biosolutions in the Asia-Pacific region at Novonesis.

China has become the world's second-largest pet market, fueled by rising urban incomes and shifting attitudes toward pet ownership among younger consumers who increasingly treat animals as family members.

The 2026 China Pet Industry White Paper (Consumer Report) stated that the number of pet dogs and cats in the country's urban areas exceeded 120 million in 2025. Spending on pet-related consumption reached approximately 312.6 billion yuan ($45.92 billion) in 2025 and is expected to grow to around 405 billion yuan by 2028.

The market is also evolving rapidly. "Consumers are moving away from marketing claims toward ingredients, scientific evidence and measurable benefits," An said. "That trend creates opportunities for upstream biotechnology."

Unlike multinational pet-food giants such as Mars Incorporated or Nestle Purina PetCare, Novonesis focuses on supplying functional ingredients, particularly enzymes and probiotics, that manufacturers incorporate into finished products.

Its first products launched in China target two common concerns among pet owners: digestive health and hairball management in cats.

One solution uses keratinase enzymes designed to break down ingested hair in cats' digestive systems, potentially reducing hairball formation. Another is a probiotic blend based on bacterial strains developed by Chr. Hansen, aimed at stabilizing gut microbiota and improving immunity in dogs and cats.

An said the dual "enzyme plus microbe" technology platform reflects the combined strengths of the merged companies. "The combination allows us to design more targeted functional solutions, from digestion to nutrient absorption," he said.

To stay competitive, foreign firms are increasingly localizing their supply chains, and Novonesis has expanded its manufacturing and innovation footprint in China.

Novonesis employs more than 1,000 people in the country and operates multiple facilities, including enzyme production sites in Tianjin and Suzhou, Jiangsu province, as well as a microbial manufacturing base in Shenyang, Liaoning province. Its regional headquarters and research center are located in Beijing.

Most products for the Chinese pet market are already produced locally, and the company is considering additional capacity expansion as demand grows.

Beyond production, An said collaboration with Chinese partners — from pet food brands to universities and research institutes — is increasingly central to its strategy.

"China's market moves very fast," he said. "Working with local partners allows us to translate laboratory science into scalable commercial solutions more quickly."

Industry analysts say China's pet sector is entering a more mature phase, characterized by stricter regulatory oversight and greater emphasis on scientific validation.

Research from Euromonitor International shows premiumization and functional nutrition are key drivers of growth in the global pet food market, a shift that is becoming increasingly evident in China as pet owners treat animals more like family members.

At the same time, competition is intensifying as domestic brands rapidly improve product development and marketing capabilities.

An acknowledged that the sector still faces challenges, including product homogeneity and the difficulty of translating laboratory research into stable, large-scale manufacturing.

"From the lab to mass production, maintaining consistent performance and compatibility with different formulations is one of the biggest technical hurdles," he said.

Still, he sees China's pet market as offering long-term structural growth rather than a short-term consumption trend.

"The shift toward more scientific and functional nutrition is only beginning," An said. "For biotechnology companies, China is one of the most dynamic places in the world to innovate in pet health."

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CHINA

Celebrity kick-off



Former English soccer star Michael Owen carries a bamboo pole delivering lychees from the Maoming Team as a gift to the Guangzhou Team before their match held in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Sunday. Owen was invited to make a special appearance to kick off the match in the third round of the 2026 Guangdong City Football Super League, or Yuechao, which features 21 teams from across the province and includes over 800 players. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Shanghai to step up efforts for robust GDP and tech growth

New quality productive forces to push city's development in next five years

By SHI JING in Shanghai
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Shanghai will step up support for new quality productive forces during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, as they are expected to serve as key engines for the city's high-quality development, the city's top officials said at a municipal news conference on Monday.

While Shanghai has set a target of 5 percent annual GDP growth over the next five years, its role as an international hub for technological innovation should be further consolidated, Shanghai Mayor Gong Zheng said.

Total social research and development expenditure will account for more than 5 percent of the city's GDP by 2030, he said.

To achieve these goals, Shanghai will further leverage enterprises to spearhead innovation, while improving the efficiency of transforming scientific and technological achievements into practical applications.

"Smart, green and integrated" will characterize the optimization and upgrading of the city's industrial structure, Gong said.

Shanghai will also build a pioneering zone for basic research. National-level laboratories based in the city will take the lead in advancing basic research, while mechanisms facilitating interdisciplinary coordination will be improved, he said.

Scientific data sharing and exchanges will also become more efficient so that Shanghai can better integrate into the global innovation network, Gong added.

As rapid advances in artificial intelligence are driving industrial transformation worldwide, Shanghai will seize the opportunity to build an economy powered by intelligent technologies, said Tang Wenkan, director of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Economy and Informatization.

Key industries including integrated circuits, high-end equipment manufacturing and automobiles will each foster 10 benchmark enterprises, Tang said.

By the end of the 15th Five-Year Plan period, Shanghai's factories are expected to deploy at least 100,000 humanoid robots. The penetration rate of AI agents among industrial enterprises with annual sales revenue of at least 20 million yuan ($2.9 million) is expected to exceed 80 percent, he added.

Shanghai also aims to cultivate a number of blockbuster applications and professional service providers in knowledge-intensive sectors such as legal and accounting services.

As AI coding becomes another major trend, local companies specializing in AI-native industrial software and AI-upgraded traditional software are expected to emerge, Tang said.

In addition, the city plans to establish closed-loop laboratories for new materials and biomedical companies, incubating up to 100 star projects.

Shanghai will better coordinate the development of open-source foundational models, commercial foundational models and sector-specific models, while promoting the sound development of high-performance AI computing chips, high-quality datasets and high-efficiency AI computing clusters, according to Tang.

These efforts will support model iteration and upgrades, as well as the large-scale application of embodied AI, he said.

Shanghai will issue 1 billion yuan in vouchers for companies to access computing power, datasets and models through pay-after-use arrangements or automatic qualification mechanisms, Tang added.

Liu Jian, director of the Shanghai Municipal Development and Reform Commission, said the city will optimize the layout of computing power infrastructure to improve the efficiency of cross-regional computing power resource allocation amid growing demand.

More than 300,000 highly skilled professionals in related fields will be introduced to Shanghai over the next five years, Liu said.

Shanghai will also increase imports of high-end equipment, core components and materials, as well as advanced technologies and equipment, to better support the development of new quality productive forces and industrial upgrading, said Shen Weihua, director of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce.

Judicial authorities pledge to protect cultivated land

By CAO YIN
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China's judicial authorities have committed to strengthening the protection of cultivated land as part of efforts to ensure food security and reinforce the legal foundation for sustainable agricultural development.

The Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate recently jointly issued a 21-article judicial interpretation aimed at addressing the illegal occupation of cultivated land, facilitating the efficient handling of related administrative, civil and criminal disputes, and further unifying adjudication standards, thereby effectively safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of farmers.

For example, the interpretation explicitly prohibits acts such as occupying cultivated land to build structures or graves, digging sand, quarrying, mining, taking soil, and contracting for the sale or lease of houses built on such land. It requires courts to void contracts involving such acts.

According to the interpretation, which took effect on Monday, if the illegal occupation of cultivated land causes environmental pollution or ecological damage that harms the interests of the state or the public, prosecutors are allowed to initiate public interest litigation.

It stipulates that those who commit the crime of illegal occupation of agricultural land while also engaging in environmental destruction or illegal mining should face harsher punishment. Acts such as refusing to rectify illegal land occupation after being ordered to do so by administrative authorities, violently resisting or obstructing government officers, or bribing the officers will also be deemed serious offenses, leading to more severe penalties.

In addition, the interpretation strengthens oversight of law enforcement personnel. It clarifies that government officers who engage in malpractice for personal gain or abuse their power by illegally approving the expropriation or occupation of cultivated land, causing serious consequences while also accepting bribes, should face harsher punishment for multiple crimes concurrently.

"Cultivated land is the backbone of food production, so stronger legal measures must be used to enhance its protection and improve its quality, as required by the central authorities," said Geng Baojian, a member of the judicial committee of the SPC. In January, the central leadership explicitly called for resolute action against the destruction of cultivated land and the illegal construction of houses on rural farmland.

Geng noted that Chinese courts have continuously strengthened the adjudication of cases involving cultivated land in recent years to ensure the security of land resources, food and the ecosystem. Data shows that between 2020 and 2025, courts countrywide concluded nearly 240,000 administrative cases, around 400,000 civil cases and more than 45,000 criminal cases related to this field.

To improve the efficiency and quality of adjudication, the top court has publicized a number of landmark cases and formulated various judicial policies and documents, including those addressing criminal cases involving damage to land, grasslands and forests, as well as rules on handling illegal structures on occupied farmland, according to Geng.

Yu Shuangbiao, deputy head of the legal policy research office of the SPP, highlighted the timeliness of the new judicial interpretation. He said allowing prosecutors to initiate public interest litigation against the illegal occupation and destruction of cultivated land is a significant step toward strengthening environmental protection through legal oversight.

He emphasized that the move also implements the Ecological and Environmental Code, which was adopted in March as China's second law titled a "code" and serves as the legal foundation in this field.

Yang Jianbo, head of the research office, revealed that Chinese prosecutors have also formed collaborative mechanisms to protect cultivated land by launching special campaigns with other government departments.

"For example, we've worked with the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs to support the development of high-standard farmland," he added. "We've joined forces with the Ministry of Natural Resources to establish a land enforcement mechanism aimed at strengthening the protection of cultivated land and safeguarding public and state interests."

Chaoyang district plans a global hub for toy IPs

By YANG CHENG
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Beijing's Chaoyang district has unveiled a three-year action plan to turn itself into a global hub for trendy toy intellectual property, targeting industry revenue of more than 50 billion yuan ($7.35 billion) by 2028 with annual growth of no less than 20 percent.

The plan, released on Monday during the ongoing 2026 China New Cultural and Creative Market & Trendy Toy Carnival, outlines ambitions to incubate at least 10 blockbuster toy IPs and build the district into a center for leading companies, immersive consumer experiences and overseas brand expansion.

Yin Yuan, deputy district head of Chaoyang, said the government will introduce targeted support measures covering original design, enterprise cultivation, technological innovation, product launches and talent development.

"We aim to establish a full-chain support system spanning creation, commercialization, consumption, international expansion and related services," Yin said. "The policies are designed to help companies reduce costs, improve efficiency and strengthen their global competitiveness."

The district also announced on Monday the launch of an international industry organization aimed at bringing together leading companies and promoting cooperation across the trendy toy sector.

During the event, Hu Jian, vice-president of Pop Mart International Group and general manager of Pop Mart City Park, which is located within Chaoyang Park, said: "The park opened a new area in late April featuring the IPs of Labubu and Dimoo, along with captivating attractions and 17 new interactive games to enhance engagement and storytelling, creating a thematic world for visitors to fully immerse themselves in the vibrant narratives of its IPs."

The fully renovated Pop Mart City Park is set to open on July 30 with upgraded facilities, becoming a new engine driving the district's efforts to promote local IPs.

The carnival, regarded as China's first national-level event dedicated to cultural creativity and trendy toys, opened on May 15 at Chaoyang Park and will run through Sunday. Covering about 66,000 square meters, the event features exhibitions, creative products, intangible cultural heritage displays and digital technology showcases.

Several leading museums, including the Palace Museum, the National Museum of China and the Sanxingdui Museum, are participating in the event. In addition, examples of 43 national, provincial and municipal-level intangible cultural heritage crafts are on display.

China to study human embryo models in space

By LI MENGHAN
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The successful launch of the Tianzhou 10 cargo spacecraft on May 11 carried human embryo models into space. This marks the world's first in situ experiment to explore how microgravity and cosmic radiation affect early human development under space conditions — a crucial step toward understanding whether humans can one day live and reproduce in space.

The mission is expected to help scientists establish a technical framework for studying artificial embryo development beyond Earth.

Rather than being real human embryos, these are "embryo-like structures" created in a laboratory using stem cells. They closely mimic the structure of a natural early human embryo but carry fewer ethical restrictions, can be produced in large quantities, and offer highly reliable, repeatable results.

Crucially, these models possess the ability to mimic early cellular growth and follow the most critical stages of early human development. However, they are not real embryos and cannot develop into a human being.

Yu Leqian, a professor at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Institute of Zoology and head of the project aboard Tianzhou 10, said these models cover the developmental stage from day 14 to 21 after fertilization.

"This stage is a critical window in early human development, during which the building blocks for future organs begin to form, and the entire body axis — which determines the head and the tail — is established," Yu said. He noted that any disturbance at this stage could have a profound impact on an adult individual.

"Therefore, these models were brought to space to explore whether life, which has evolved under gravity for hundreds of millions of years, is affected by its sudden absence," he added.

Ground-based simulations cannot fully replicate the unique environment of space.

The Tianzhou 10 launch provides a rare, true microgravity environment complete with actual space radiation. The embryo models are expected to grow naturally in orbit. A preprogrammed system will automatically replace the liquid culture nutrients every day, allowing the models to complete five days of development. Afterward, the samples will be frozen and stored, ready for analysis upon their return to Earth.

Two specific types of models have been sent to the Chinese space station, Tiangong, to study key milestones in early life. The first is a peri-implantation model, which mimics the critical phase where an embryo attaches itself to the uterine wall. The second is a peri-gastrulation model, which replicates gastrulation, a fundamental event in early development where a single layer of cells reorganizes into the distinct layers that will eventually form different tissues and organs.

"By comparing embryo development in space with that on the ground, we can investigate how the space environment impacts critical events in human development," Yu said. "We can also assess how accurately these models can substitute for natural embryos in space studies, thereby laying a technical foundation for future research."

Yu highlighted that the study will help reveal the risks and challenges humans might face during long-term space habitation, particularly regarding reproduction. Furthermore, by comparing space-grown models with those on Earth, the research could provide fresh insights into which human diseases are linked to abnormalities during the earliest stages of life.

Icebreaker at home



The polar research icebreaker *Xuelong 2*, or *Snow Dragon 2*, returns and docks at its home base in Shanghai on Monday, marking the successful conclusion of China's 42nd Antarctic expedition. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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POLICY REVIEW

Plan to supercharge services potential

State Council aims to grow scale, increase quality of promising consumption sector

By **WANG KEJU**
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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

China has rolled out a set of guidelines to upgrade its services sector, where significant consumption potential remains to be unlocked to help rebalance the world's second-largest economy and sustain its long-term growth, economists and executives said.

For Chinese consumers, the shift promises more choice, higher quality and greater convenience, they noted. For domestic and foreign service providers alike, China's fast-expanding services market means broader development opportunities.

In late April, the State Council, China's Cabinet, released plans to improve the capacity and quality of the services sector, with the goal of growing its total scale to 100 trillion yuan ($14.65 trillion) by 2030.

Dedicated efforts will be made to steer producer services toward "greater specialization and higher positions in the value chain", according to the plans, while making consumer services "more quality-oriented, diversified and convenient".

More "China services brands" will be fostered by 2030, with the sector's global competitiveness and influence significantly enhanced, and people's sense of gain steadily improving, the plans said.

In recent times, China has attached greater importance to the development of its services sector. The country held its first national conference on the services sector in early April, while its latest five-year plan also calls for improving the sector's quality, efficiency and competitiveness.

China's services sector has achieved steady growth in recent years, with its value-added reaching 80.9 trillion yuan in 2025, accounting for 57.7 percent of GDP and contributing 61.4 percent to economic growth, data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed.

Enhancing producer services has become a central pillar of China's services sector development, with executives pointing to significant untapped potential that could boost growth and drive industrial transformation.

China's producer services sector, which includes logistics, finance, R&D, design and IT services, accounted for less than 35 percent of GDP in 2025, said Jean Lu, Standard Chartered Bank's CEO for China, noting that in advanced economies, that figure typically ranges from 40 to 50 percent.

"This gap indicates that China's manufacturing supply chains still have substantial room to extend into service-related activities, offering considerable growth potential for the economy," Lu said.

Xu Shaofeng, senior vice-president of Schneider Electric, said that the services sector can help manufacturing move toward higher-end, smarter and greener production through technology empowerment, value enhancement and business model innovation.

This, in turn, boosts product value, brand visibility and supply chain efficiency, while manufacturing upgrading creates even broader space for service providers, Xu said.

"Many companies now face challenges in their transformation, making their need for professional services more urgent than ever. Services have shifted from a 'nice-to-have' to a 'must-have' for competitiveness and value creation," Xu added.

The value added of information transmission, software and information technology services rose 10.6 percent year-on-year in the January-March period, while leasing and business services expanded 12.2 percent, according to the NBS.

In addition to boosting producer services, emphasis should also be given to consumer services, as China's service retail sales grew 5.5 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, outpacing goods retail by 3.3 percentage points.

"In recent years, as living standards have risen, Chinese households have shifted from a goods-dominated consumption model to one where goods and services carry equal weight," Kong Dejun, director-general of the Ministry of Commerce's trade in services department, said at a February news conference.

From 2020 to 2025, per capita spending on services grew at an average annual rate of 8.5 percent, ministry data showed. Its share of total household expenditure rose by 3.5 percentage points over the same period, reaching 46.1 percent in 2025.

Mao Yibing, president of Marriott International Greater China, said that in the consumer services sector, China's market is unleashing new opportunities. Demand for quality consumption remains strong, and consumers are paying increasing attention to experiences.

The vast potential of China's leisure travel market is particularly evident, with weekend getaways, family trips, cultural exploration and sports entertainment emerging as key priorities for Chinese travelers, Mao said.

Mao noted that the hotelier will continue expanding its presence in first-tier and emerging first-tier cities, popular tourist destinations, and across business and leisure travel segments, aiming to capture a larger share of one of the world's fastest-growing service consumption markets, she added.

Greater openness is also imperative to advance the high-quality growth of the services industry, as the country will steadily expand its pilot opening-up programs in areas including value-added telecommunications, biotechnology and wholly foreign-owned hospitals, according to the State Council plans.

China will also improve the management of the negative list for cross-border trade in services and build demonstration zones for the innovative development of trade in services.

"By orderly guiding more foreign-funded enterprises to participate in the development of China's services sector, we can effectively improve the quality of service supply," said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"Foreign companies entering the Chinese market gain vast opportunities, bring advanced concepts and technologies, and create complementarity and synergy with local firms," Zhou added.

Alex Gu, senior vice-president of Medtronic, said that China has been continuously improving the development environment for foreign-funded medical service providers and supporting their introduction of advanced overseas medical technologies and services to the Chinese market.

Last year, Medtronic launched its first digital medical innovation hub in China, focusing on the development of disease management solutions powered by artificial intelligence and big data.

"Leveraging this center, we hope to explore more personalized, intelligent and efficient treatment options, and transform Chinese medical practices into innovative models with global significance," Gu said.

Policy Digest

Blueprint to strengthen oversight of healthcare fund

The National Healthcare Security Administration has issued a five-year action plan for 2026-30 to enhance the supervision and efficient use of the healthcare security fund, with the goal of establishing a comprehensive regulatory system by 2030.

Key measures outlined in the plan include intensifying on-site inspections, empowering oversight using technology such as big data and artificial intelligence, and improving the long-term legal framework.

Official data shows that as of the end of 2025, China's basic medical insurance fund recorded 3.5 trillion yuan ($514 billion) in revenue and 3 trillion yuan in expenditure, with over 1.33 billion people enrolled nationwide.

Regulators put safety of new energy vehicles in spotlight

Chinese regulators have called for the strengthened safety management of new energy vehicles to ensure the sector's healthy development, according to a recent video conference jointly held by three government bodies.

The meeting was attended by officials from the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, the State Administration for Market Regulation, and the National Fire and Rescue Administration.

Relevant automakers and power battery enterprises are required to take primary responsibility for product quality and safety, as well as to strengthen risk prevention in research and development, production, supply chain and after-sales services, the conference heard. Companies were urged to avoid false or exaggerated promotion.

The regulators vowed to jointly conduct inspections on potential safety hazards and look into product defects, and severely crack down on violations to ensure sound industrial development.

Campaign launched to regulate certification bodies

The State Administration for Market Regulation has issued a work plan for a nationwide campaign aimed at raising the bar for certification bodies.

The campaign outlines 15 measures across four key areas: tightening market access, standardizing certification practices, enhancing professional capabilities, and strengthening supervision.

Key actions include stricter qualification reviews, unified national certification rules, support for leading certification bodies, and improved risk monitoring and smart regulation. The initiative seeks to promote the healthy and orderly development of the certification service industry.

Official data shows that as of the end of 2025, China had over 1,200 certification institutions.

Initiative guides survey, zoning of agricultural climate resources

China has launched a nationwide initiative to survey and zone its agricultural climate resources, following an implementation plan jointly issued by the China Meteorological Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs.

According to the plan, the survey is scheduled to be largely completed by 2027, and the zoning is expected to be fully completed and put into use between 2026 and 2029. The three tasks — survey, zoning and application — will be carried out concurrently.

Key outcomes will include detailed climate zoning maps for five major agricultural categories — comprehensive agriculture, cropping systems, animal husbandry, fisheries, and facility agriculture — as well as for 25 key crops, covering national, provincial, city and county levels. The plan also calls for the establishment of a supporting database and an integrated service platform.

CHINA DAILY

Emotional spending key to balancing economy

By **WANG KEJU**

From blind boxes and concert tickets to anime merchandise and AI-powered companions, a wave of spending driven by emotional satisfaction is sweeping across China, reshaping the nation's consumer landscape from a niche trend into an important economic driver, analysts said.

The term "emotional consumption" refers to spending driven by feelings of pleasure, identity, social connection or stress relief, rather than basic functional needs.

Wei Jianguo, former vice-minister of commerce, said the trend is not a short-lived fad but a natural outcome of China's ongoing consumption upgrade.

"The days when consumption was simply about acquiring things are fading," Wei said. "The new consumer wants to feel something — joy, nostalgia, excitement. Delivering those feelings is not just good business; it is essential for macroeconomic balance.

"Emotional consumption is a trillion-yuan new growth pole to unlock China's future market," Wei added.

China's market for emotional consumption is projected to exceed 4.5 trillion yuan ($620 billion) by 2029, up from 2.72 trillion yuan in 2025, according to a report released by iiMedia Research in mid-May.

Multiple factors are fueling the rise. As consumers become more affluent, their spending priorities are shifting from basic goods to experiences, personal fulfillment and mental well-being, said Jiang Zhao, an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

The concert economy, for example, has exploded. A three-show run by a top artist can draw hundreds of thousands of out-of-town fans, generating ripple effects on transportation, accommodation and dining, he added.

During the five-day May Day holiday earlier this month, Beijing staged 332 commercial performances totaling 1,684 shows, generating ticket revenue of about 260 million yuan, according to online travel platform Trip.com Group.

One act alone — the Taiwan rock band Mayday — played three concerts that attracted more than 150,000 fans. For many of those attendees, a three-hour show became the catalyst for a 72-hour in-depth exploration of Beijing, helping push the city's tourist arrivals and consumption to record highs.

Jiang also noted that the younger generations, in particular, are willing to pay a premium for products and services that deliver happiness, nostalgia or a sense of belonging.

Nearly nine out of 10 young Chinese have spent money on emotional consumption. Nearly 40 percent do so frequently and about one-fifth of young consumers report engaging in emotional consumption every day, according to a two-year tracking study by the Shanghai Youth and Children Research Center and the social platform Soul App.

The study found that the post-1995 and post-2000 generations together account for nearly 70 percent of emotional consumption, with the post-2000 cohort showing the highest frequency.

This year, for the first time, emotional consumption was explicitly mentioned in multiple local government work reports. Jiangxi province pledged to foster new business models and "formats for emotional consumption", for instance.

The policy shift signals that emotional consumption has evolved from a market-led phenomenon into a State-backed lever for expanding domestic demand, experts said.

Zhang Wenkui, a researcher at the Development Research Center of the State Council, said that China's consumption of goods is already on par with developed nations in many respects.

"The real gap lies in service consumption," Zhang said, noting that China's value-added services account for less than 60 percent of GDP, compared with about 70 percent in developed economies.

Zhang said that expanding service consumption — including but not limited to emotional spending — is "the critical breakthrough" for rebalancing China's economy and making growth more sustainable.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



Unearthing life in the mists of time

Archaeologists in Luoyang have uncovered the layout of an ancient residential neighborhood, shining light on politics, religion and society, **Wang Ru** reports.

History books record emperors, wars and political systems. But how did people actually live? Where did they sleep, walk, and pray? The answers often lie not in texts, but beneath the soil in the silent ruins of ancient cities.

Now, for the first time, Chinese archaeologists have fully uncovered the layout of a *fang* (traditional Chinese residential unit) from the Sui (581-618) and Tang (618-907) dynasties in Luoyang, Henan province, which was the eastern capital of the two dynasties.

The era saw the *lifang* system implemented by the rulers as an urban planning mechanism that divided the capital city into walled residential wards called *fang*, with strictly controlled access via gates and curfews to reinforce social order and administrative management.

Zhengpingfang was one of the 103 residential units in the capital then, located near the central axis of the city, south of the Luohe River. As the *fang* had records of what it contained in the Tang era, but no existing aboveground architecture when archaeologists started excavation in 2020, it provided an excellent chance for them to carry out an archaeological project around this area.

In the past six years, they have gained a panoramic view of the organization of the *fang* and the evolution of the architectural complexes within the area, thereby gaining a more thorough understanding of Sui and Tang governance, says Shi Zishe, head of the archaeological team at the site.

According to historical texts, a typical *fang* was square, with each side about one *li* (approximately 530 meters) long. Inside, east-west and north-south streets crossed like a chessboard, with walls on all four sides and a gate in the middle of each.

Zhengpingfang basically follows this layout, with its north-south side measuring 533.6 meters and its east-west side 464.6 meters. Archaeological investigations show that the inner road network changed over time, from a cross shape to a T-shape, with nearly half of the east-west road occupied by a large complex that covered the entire western half of the *fang* area in its later years.

Archaeologists also found that the complex's northern wall broke through the ward's original northern boundary, extending about two meters into a road. This was strictly forbidden in the early and middle Sui-Tang periods.

So who was powerful enough to break the rules? By consulting historical records, archaeologists believe it was a residential complex of Princess Taiping, the beloved daughter of Tang emperor Li Zhi and empress Wu Zetian.

"Although we haven't yet found direct evidence such as inscriptions, the layout of the complex, its specifications and the unearthed artifacts all match historical descriptions," says Shi. "Therefore, we believe it was the princess' residence as recorded."

Princess Taiping was the only daughter of the imperial couple who grew to adulthood. Just like her mother, she was ambitious and deeply involved in political struggles. For a time, she was one of the most powerful figures in the Tang court, although she would eventually lose a political struggle to her nephew, Li Longji.



The princess had gifted the complex to her elder brother Li Dan, who later changed the *fang* into a Taoist abbey named Anguo Temple after he ascended the throne. Under the reign of Emperor Li Longji, it was changed into a Taoist abbey for female priests, including Princess Yuzhen, a sister of Li Longji.

Shi says they have found that the Taoist temple as a whole features a multi-courtyard layout consisting of three parallel east-west parts. The central part is an axial courtyard centered around a large square hall, with well-proportioned buildings arranged in an orderly manner.

The southern part of the complex was a garden, in which there was a lake with three artificial hills.

"Since the Wei (220-265), Jin (265-420), and Southern and Northern Dynasties (420-581), people often created a garden in their residence. It became a popular tradition," says Zheng Guoqi, another team member from the Luoyang City Cultural Relics and Archaeology Research Institute.

The lake and three hills were not just decorative. Instead, they carried deep Taoist symbolism. The lake represented the East Sea, home to the immortals. The three hills stood as Penglai, Fangzhang and Yingzhou — the three mythical mountains where celestial beings are said to live. This tradition, which began in the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), was often followed by the royal family to express their desire for immortality.

"This excavation has, for the first time, revealed the complete layout of an ancient garden built following this idea," Shi says.



Top left: A bird's-eye view of the Zhengpingfang site in Luoyang, Henan province.
Left: Technicians excavate a sacrificial pit containing animal bones at the site in 2023.
Middle and above: Part of a five-directional tomb-guarding stone and an eave tile found at the site.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In the southeastern part of the site, archaeologists found special architectural foundations believed to be Guozijian (the Imperial College) and a Confucius temple. The northeastern part yielded well-organized courtyards, probably residences of officials, based on records.

"Altogether we have found remains of over 100 rammed earth buildings from the area and many daily necessities like ceramic and pottery vessels, suggesting the *fang* was once a populated place," says Zheng.

"It's a rare chance for us to excavate a *fang* from the Sui and Tang periods," says Shi. "Zhengpingfang boasts a rich array of buildings, from the government's ritual and religious complexes to residences of civil and military officials. With that diversity, it's a representative example of the many *fang* units that once made up the city."

He says that, in the past, they have excavated some parts of other wards, like the Longxing Temple in Ningrenfang and the old residence of Tang poet Bai Juyi in Lyudaofang, but they have never unveiled another *fang* as complete as this one.

"The ancient *fang* units were like modern subdistricts," says Shi. "No two were the same. Back then, each *fang* was unique, just like the subdistricts we see today."

From 605, when Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty ordered the construction of Luoyang as the Sui's eastern capital, Luoyang became an important city for the Sui and the subsequent Tang Dynasty.

The city further flourished under the rule of Empress Wu, who wanted to defy the tradition that only men could rule. She therefore distanced herself from the Tang royal family, which was based in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi province), to establish a new political order. She chose Luoyang as her capital city and called it the "divine capital".

The archaeological dig at Zhengpingfang is another highlight of the studies carried out on Luoyang during the Sui and Tang periods, which archaeologists have worked on for decades.

Shi says their earlier efforts have basically provided knowledge about the layout and evolution of the ancient city, as archaeological work has previously been carried out on the ruins of the palace complex, one of Sui's largest granaries called Hanjia and the *lifang* areas to the south and north of the Luohe River.

Shi says the team will continue excavating the northeastern part of the *fang* to learn more. They also plan further work at Lyudaofang, a ward with no official buildings, but one where Bai Juyi's poems vividly capture the dynamism of everyday life.

"With the refined tastes of literati and the vibrant realities of everyday life, we believe that Lyudaofang is also well worth archaeological efforts," says Shi.

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Hidden *Diamond Sutra* found at Longmen Grottoes

By **WANG RU**

In the early morning of March 28, workers involved in a conservation project at the Liuzuota area of the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province, climbed onto scaffolding to inspect potentially dangerous rocks and crevices on the cliff face, as they did every day.

But this time, some of them noticed traces of characters on a vertical cliff face about 30 meters above the ground. They immediately reported the find to professionals at the Longmen Grottoes Academy, which oversees this UNESCO World Heritage site.

"I was very excited to hear the news," says Zhao Shumei, a researcher at the academy. "The engravings were so high up that people normally walked right past without knowing of their existence. We immediately searched our database to see if this site had been documented before."

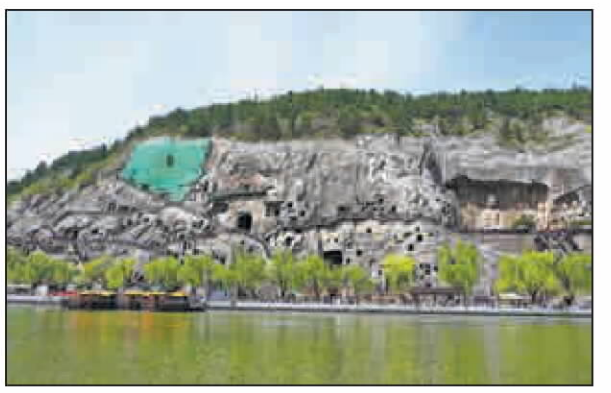
After careful identification and comparison, researchers confirmed a new engraving of *The Diamond Sutra* on the cliff face of the grottoes.

Located about 30 to 40 meters south of the iconic giant statue of the Lushena Buddha, the newly discovered text is written in *kaishu* (regular script) from the Tang Dynasty (618-907). The brushwork is vigorous and clearly visible. It records a version of *The Diamond Sutra* translated by the Buddhist scholar Kumarajiva from the Later Qin period (384–417) of the Sixteen Kingdoms (304–439), and its upper part remains well-preserved.

Zhao says that after careful analysis, they believe the engraving was probably originally in a niche, but over time, the niche gradually eroded away, leaving only part of its ceiling to protect the upper part of the carving from the wind and sun.

"From the early 5th century, when the sutra was first introduced to China, to the Tang Dynasty, six Chinese versions of it appeared, among which the Kumarajiva version was the earliest," says Ma Chaolong, deputy director of the academy's center for cave temple protection research and heritage monitoring.

Kumarajiva translated the sutra in Chang'an (present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi province) in 402. It was translated in simple yet eloquent words that even ordinary people could understand. Under the reign of Tang emperor Li Longji, the version was officially circulated throughout the dynasty and became widespread, Zhao says.



Next to the engraving are three grooves believed to have been used for burying the ashes of Buddhists, suggesting they were probably related. Zhao says they will explore the possible connection between the sutra and these grooves.

"Normally, carving sutras on the cliff, just like building Buddhist statues, shows Buddhist practitioners' faith in their religion," says Zhao. "We infer that the combination of the grooves and the carving may indicate the Buddhists' wish to attain enlightenment through spiritual practice, with the firm belief that upon rebirth, they will dwell alongside the Buddha."

As of now, the Longmen Grottoes have yielded five carvings of *The Diamond Sutra* and the newly discovered one is among the best-preserved.

"We previously found a carving of *The Diamond Sutra* in Grotto No 429, which contains mostly the latter part of the sutra. The new discovery mostly presents the first half, so it complements and enriches *The Diamond Sutra* findings at Longmen," says Zhao.

This discovery is the latest in a series of surprising finds during recent conservation efforts at the grottoes. Over the past years, Zhao says they have also found traces of gold on the face of the Lushena Buddha, suggesting the statue may have been covered in gold leaf. In addition, a Bodhisattva statue was found to have eyeballs made of glass.

"The discoveries are closely related to our careful checks of potential risks. Each year, in different areas of the grottoes, we inspect every inch of the cliff surface to check whether the unstable rocks have been reinforced and if crevices have been filled and protected. Otherwise, they could endanger both the caves and visitors," says Zhao.



Left: The west hill of the Longmen Grottoes in Luoyang, Henan province.
Above: The newly discovered carvings of *The Diamond Sutra* on the cliff face of the grottoes.
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LIFE







Above: Performers with the Xixia Imperial Tombs resort in Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, interact with the audience on May 5. **Top right:** The roly-poly dancer attracts numerous excited visitors at Tang Paradise, a sprawling cultural theme park in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, in July 2024. **Right:** A tourist plays a game with NPC performers at the Xixia Imperial Tombs resort.
PHOTOS BY XINHUA

Lollipop sparks tourism debate

China's fast-growing NPC performances are under scrutiny after a performer's interactions with visitors triggered criticism over how far immersive experiences should go, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

A viral video of a costumed performer feeding candy to a tourist has forced China's immersive tourism industry to ask a difficult question: where does hospitality end and impropriety begin? A bell rings. A curtain parts. A young man in a crimson-and-black robe steps out, smiling. He lifts a red veil, bites a lollipop and leans toward a visitor.

Phones rise across the crowd.

The performer, known by the stage name Little Yellow Fish, became one of the most recognizable non-player characters (NPCs) at Gexian Village Resort in Shangrao, East China's Jiangxi province. His performances relied on improvisation and close interaction with visitors.

For young women, he might drape a red veil over their heads, lightly touch a lollipop to their cheeks or interlace fingers. For young men, the interactions were often more playful, including mock kisses through a veil or exaggerated teasing.

The formula worked. Clips spread rapidly across Douyin, China's version of TikTok, helping turn the resort into a viral tourist destination.

Then came the "blackfish". On May 1, People's Daily's Minsheng Weekly published a commentary citing Little Yellow Fish as an example of tourism performances that blurred the line between entertainment and inappropriate behavior in pursuit of online traffic. The following day, both the performer and the resort issued public apologies.

The changes were immediate. The lollipop is now handed directly to visitors rather than shared through physical interaction. The resort also announced revised performance guidelines, expanded cultural training for NPC actors and a long-term public feedback mechanism.

"We extend our sincerest apologies to netizens and tourists," the resort said in a statement.

The incident has drawn attention to one of the fastest-growing sectors in China's tourism industry: immersive NPC performances designed to turn scenic areas into interactive experiences.

The new economy

China's tourism market continues to expand. During the five-day May Day holiday, domestic trips reached 325 million, up 3.6 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. Tourism spending rose 2.9 percent to 185.5 billion yuan ($27.1 billion).

At the same time, travelers are increasingly seeking interactive and emotionally engaging experiences rather than traditional sightseeing alone.

According to market consultancy iiMedia Research, China's "emotion economy" — consumer spending driven by emotional connection, social interaction and immersive participation — reached 2.31 trillion yuan in 2024 and is projected to grow to 4.5 trillion yuan by 2029.

NPC performers have emerged at the center of that trend. Scenic areas across China now employ actors portraying historical, literary or fictional characters who interact directly with tourists. A successful NPC can generate repeat visits and, in some cases, nationwide online attention.

The rapid growth of the industry has produced sharply different styles.

Some performances rely heavily on exaggerated physical interaction and short-video appeal. Others focus more on storytelling and cultural interpretation.

In Tangshan, in North China's Hebei province, for example, an NPC portraying the Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Li Bai has become a popular attraction by improvising classical poetry, exchanging couplets with visitors and offering humorous advice to young tourists. The character has drawn repeat family visitors without relying on controversy or provocative interactions.

The commercial impact of successful NPC performances has been significant.

In Kaifeng, in Central China's Henan province, Wansui Mountain resort introduced a matchmaking character based on Wang Po from the classic Chinese novel *Outlaws of the Marsh*, also known as *The Water Margin*. The elderly matchmaker character became a viral sensation online. According to the resort, annual revenue reached 1.27 billion yuan in 2025, up sharply from three years earlier. The resort now stages more than 2,000 performances daily and employs over 1,000 NPC performers.

> "Not every destination has world-famous natural scenery. In a highly competitive market, relying only on landscapes is no longer enough."
>
> **Zeng Bowei,** researcher with Beijing Union University

In Changchun Zoological and Botanical Park, in Northeast China's Jilin province, a performer portraying the Monkey King from *Journey to the West* gained national attention after joking during a performance that snacks, including dry rice crackers thrown by visitors, were "too dry". The clip spread widely online, and the performer later became known as "Snow Cake Monkey" after those crackers. The park authorities expect annual attendance to reach 3 million visitors in 2025, compared with around 700,000 previously.

For Zeng Bowei, director of the research center for China's tourism economy and policy at Beijing Union University, the NPC boom reflects broader changes within China's tourism market.

"About 80 to 90 percent of China's roughly 16,000 A-grade scenic spots face a certain degree of homogenization," Zeng says. "Not every destination has world-famous natural scenery. In a highly competitive market, relying only on landscapes is no longer enough."

He points out that demand for immersive participation accelerated after the pandemic.

"Tourists no longer simply want to sightsee, they want interaction and participation. NPCs meet that demand," he explains.

At the same time, growing competition among scenic areas has increased pressure on operators to attract online attention.

"Trip numbers are increasing, but per capita spending is declining. Operators are under pressure to find lower-cost ways to generate visibility," he adds.

The boundary question

The debate surrounding Little Yellow Fish also revealed divided public opinion online.

While some commentators supported tighter oversight of tourism performances, many young social media users defended the interactions as voluntary and harmless.

Zeng believes the controversy reflects the lack of clear industry standards.

"Personally, I do not support this kind of performance style," he says bluntly.

"But the challenge is that there is no clearly defined boundary. Certain behavior may not violate regulations, yet some people still consider it vulgar or inappropriate."

He cautions against discouraging innovation altogether.

"If every attempt at innovation immediately becomes a public controversy, operators may become afraid to experiment at all," he says.

Industry observers say the rapid expansion of NPC tourism has outpaced the development of professional training and oversight systems.

Wu Guoping, a senior official with the China Tourism Association, has proposed formally recognizing NPC performance as a profession, including the establishment of training programs, industry standards, and stronger labor protections.

Experts concur that the most sustainable NPC performances are those closely tied to local culture and storytelling rather than short-lived online trends.

Zeng considers that successful characters should reflect the history and identity of their destinations while offering different forms of interaction for different visitor groups.

"Not every NPC needs to rely on exaggerated performances. Some can succeed through language, knowledge or cultural interpretation," he says.

In its apology letter, Gexian Village Resort claims that it will place greater emphasis on local cultural themes, including tea culture, Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279) poetry and traditional crafts.

For China's tourism industry, the debate surrounding a single lollipop performance has become part of a broader discussion about how immersive tourism should develop as the market continues to grow.

The lollipop was a warning, not a verdict. For China's fast-growing immersive tourism industry, it became a test of how far performance, intimacy and online attention can go before the experience stops feeling welcoming.

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Holiday travel shifts to rural, industrial and cultural experiences

Long queues at famous tourist attractions are no longer the defining image of China's holiday travel season as more travelers seek immersive, personalized experiences beyond traditional sightseeing.

From county getaways and industrial heritage sites to museums and art galleries, China's tourism market during the recent May Day holiday showed growing signs of diversification, with travelers increasingly drawn to experiences that felt more interactive, immersive, and rewarding.

In Diaoyuan Village in east China's Jiangxi province, the holiday atmosphere was filled with the laughter of families participating in rural activities. Adults and children caught chickens and fish, harvested vegetables, and immersed themselves in pastoral life.

"No long lines, no crowds. Big cities rarely offer this kind of fun and relaxation. I wanted my child to experience the simple joys of rural life," says Zhang Qiongyi, a tourist from Guangdong province.

This experience reflects a broader trend in the rise of county tourism, as travelers increasingly bypass crowded metropolitan areas in favor of smaller, lesser-known destinations that offer a slower pace.

According to Tongcheng Travel, an online Chinese travel agency, bookings for travel products related to county-level destinations jumped 128 percent year-on-year during the holiday, outpacing growth in provincial capitals.

The growing demand has also spurred a supply-side upgrade. Counties are improving infrastructure and creating unique cultural tourism IPs, such as local cuisine, farm experiences and folk events, to offer distinctive travel options.

High-quality accommodation is rapidly expanding into lower-tier markets. Data from Tongcheng showed a 76 percent year-on-year increase in bookings for high-end hotels and a 92 percent year-on-year surge for homestays in county-level regions during the holiday, with some fully booked two weeks in advance.

This holiday, Zhou Junyu, a primary school student from Jiangsu province, marveled at the vintage cars and smart workshops in Changchun, Jilin province, which is widely known as the cradle of China's automobile industry.

"I love studying cars. Seeing the history and technology here is so cool," says Zhou, who was visiting China's leading automaker, FAW Group.

The company has transformed key industrial landmarks into an integrated tourism and educational program featuring automobile history, manufacturing processes, brand culture, and hands-on activities. Since July 2024, the tour routes have welcomed more than 350,000 visitors.



Visitors enjoy various activities at the Detian Transnational Waterfall Scenic Spot in Chongzuo, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on May 4. ZHAO JINGWU / XINHUA

Jilin province is turning its industrial heritage into vibrant cultural attractions. It is not alone in China's latest travel trend, as once-dreary assembly lines filled with noise and machinery have evolved into must-see destinations for travelers nationwide.

Through interactive activities, science lectures and face-to-face discussions with engineers, visitors can dive deep into the workings of intelligent manufacturing.

Official data showed that by the end of 2025, China had 264 national-level and nearly 500 provincial-level industrial heritage projects.

The market size of the country's industrial tourism industry is expected to exceed 300 billion yuan ($44 billion) by 2029.

"Industrial tourism is a nexus where secondary and tertiary industries converge," says Chen Wei, an expert from Tsinghua University. "As a strategic move in building a modern industrial system, it can fuel consumption, expand domestic demand and promote industrial science education."

Driven by rising cultural tastes, many young Chinese are now turning museums and galleries into social spaces. Zhang Yutong, a student of Shenyang City University who often visits art galleries and museums, is one of them.

"Among my friends, the most popular way to hang out is going to exhibitions," she says. "It offers a chance to deepen our bond. Exploring the stories behind the exhibits together and sharing our thoughts is much more rewarding than ordinary entertainment, and it helps bring people closer together."

"For young people, visiting exhibitions is a lifestyle that integrates socializing, leisure and self-expression," says Si Yawei, an associate professor at Liaoning University. "It builds a relaxed bridge for social interaction based on shared cultural experiences."

The trend is also boosting the cultural economy, as young visitors sample venue-exclusive food and drinks and purchase creative souvenirs.

Data from a joint report by Dianping, a popular review platform in China, lifestyle platform Meituan, and ticketing platform Maoyan showed that user-generated content related to exhibitions and museums grew by 24 percent year-on-year in 2025.

Observers believe this year's holiday travel trends point to a growing appetite for deeper, more meaningful and diverse leisure experiences.

Value-added tax invoice data released on May 6 by China's State Taxation Administration showed sales revenue in consumption-related industries rose by 14.3 percent year-on-year during the May Day holiday, while cultural services surged by 42.3 percent.

According to Dai Bin, president of the China Tourism Academy, the integrated development of culture and tourism will be a focus for boosting the tourism sector during China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. Efforts should be made to create new cultural experience venues and novel tourism consumption settings for visitors.

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CULTURE

A young maestro on a global stage



After an electrifying mainland debut, Finnish conductor Tarmo Peltokoski launches his inaugural season with the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra

By **CUI XIAOHUO**
for China Daily

Wearing a pitch-black dress shirt and dark-rimmed spectacles, 26-year-old Tarmo Peltokoski returned for his fifth curtain call before an enthusiastic audience that broke into sustained applause. It was an explosive mainland debut for the Gen Z conductor at the Xinghai Concert Hall in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on April 26. Grasping the conductor's score of Dmitri Shostakovich's *Symphony No 11 in G Minor*, he held it high above his head before clutching it tightly to his chest. The audience reciprocated with passionate shouts of bravo.

The next day, pictures and videos of Peltokoski filled Chinese social media, but as if nothing had happened, the young star from Vaasa, Finland, appeared at The Peninsula Hong Kong where screens displayed huge posters of him. A special launch event marked the start of his inaugural season as music director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra, his third music director post since leading the Orchestre National du Capitole de Toulouse and the Latvian National Symphony Orchestra, first as music director, and then as conductor laureate.

"I'm mortified to be in a room with so many giant heads of myself," he says to enthusiastic attendees, including orchestra principals, board members and key sponsors. "I'm trying to bear with it. I'm honored and excited to present our first real season together," says Peltokoski, in casual business attire.

Starting to learn to conduct from the Finnish pedagogue Jorma Panula at barely 14, Peltokoski was dubbed "a talent of the century" by the German newspaper Tagesspiegel. Panula and Peltokoski come from the same region of South Ostrobothnia in Finland, Peltokoski says, and speak the same Finnish dialect.

"He's always been very warm to me. I think we've found some sort of familiarity of spirit," he adds. Most recently, the student visited the teacher in December 2025 at the 95-year-old's home, tucked among trees near Helsinki.

The son of a Filipino nurse and a Finnish engineer and sport shooter, Peltokoski broke new ground when he was named principal guest conductor of the prestigious Deutsche Kammerphilharmonie Bremen orchestra, the first person to hold such a position in its history. He was just 21.

In Hong Kong, a new odyssey set off in Asia. For the occasion, the April 27 launch event featured a cinematic video filmed on the top of the harbor-facing Peninsula hotel. Bernhard Fleischer, the orchestra's chief executive, did not want the video to resemble a "going to work" day, so orchestra members changed from dress attire to something smart and casual. In the musical background, the orchestra performed excerpts of *Siegfried und Brunnhilde* from Richard Wagner's *The Ring: An Orchestral Adventure*, arranged by Henk de Vlieger, and recorded live by Deutsche Grammophon. Peltokoski, in similar attire, figuratively "landed" on the helicopter pad and walked toward the orchestra members who gathered to meet the conducting star.

"I will lead six programs featuring masterpieces that are especially close to my heart," says Peltokoski about his new season's highly anticipated repertoire, featuring symphonic canons by Bruckner, Mahler, Strauss, and Wagner, whose musical world inspired his childhood dream of becoming a conductor 15 years ago.

Before learning to conduct with Panula, Peltokoski used to play Wagner's operas on his home piano and sing the German lyrics. His teacher trained him through the symphonic repertoire, which required a deep understanding of orchestral instruments, especially the strings. In the new season, music lovers will get a taste of his musicality in Anton Bruckner's *Symphony No 7 in E Major* and Richard Strauss' *Vier letzte Lieder* ("Four Last Songs"), with soprano Asmik Grigorian, scheduled for January 2027 in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. Another key highlight includes Gustav Mahler's *Symphony No 8 in E-flat Major* which marks the orchestra's completion of all of Mahler's symphonies.

Speaking of the upcoming European tour, Peltokoski says "the main dish" will be Wagner's *The Ring: An Orchestral Adventure*. The touring repertoire also includes Bruckner's *Symphony No 4 in E-flat Major*, and a newly commissioned *Waltz of the Rolling Giants* by composer Yao Chen. Peltokoski, no mean pianist himself, will join concert pianist Martin Helmchen in Camille Saint-Saens' *The Carnival of the Animals*. As a cultural ambassador, the orchestra will travel to eight cities in Spain, Germany, Finland and Austria, sponsored by the China National Arts Fund, making debuts at prestigious venues like Berlin's Berliner Philharmonie, Elbphilharmonie Hamburg, Vienna's Wiener Konzerthaus, and Musiikkitalo in Helsinki, where Peltokoski once learned how to conduct.

With 40-plus foreign members, the orchestra's Chinese mainland tour is another major highlight, marking the 30th anniversary of Hong Kong's return to China. Peltokoski will conduct for three nights in a row at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in April 2027 for his debut before a Beijing audience. A weighty program includes Mahler's *Symphony No 2 in C Minor*, *Resurrection*, collaborating with the China NCPA Orchestra and Chorus along with soprano Louise Kwong and contralto Wiebke Lehmkuhl. The Beijing programs also prominently feature Vaughan Williams' *Symphony No 4*, Esa-Pekka Salonen's *Cello Concerto* with Finnish cellist Senja Rummukainen, and Wagner's *Tristan und Isolde: Prelude* and *Lohengrin: Prelude*.

For the Shanghai audience, the orchestra will join the Music in the Summer Air festival, led by the orchestra's principal guest conductor Yu Long, in 2027. For the entire season, as many as 12 orchestral concerts will showcase collaborations between the orchestra and major Chinese mainland cities.

With almost a full house, the concert on the afternoon of April 26 in Guangzhou was a prelude to upcoming excursions to the mainland. In the first half, Peltokoski and the orchestra collaborated with violinist Leila Josefowicz in the *Violin Concerto* written for her by renowned Finnish conductor and composer Esa-Pekka Salonen.

In a front-row seat, Salonen himself listened to the program, before taking the stage and thanking the overjoyed audience. Also a student of Jorma Panula, Salonen has taught Peltokoski in conducting master classes. "I'm a big fan of Tarmo," Salonen told attendees at a salon event at the concert hall. "He's a very interesting, thoughtful musician. And he's so young. What we are hearing now is already very, very good, but I cannot even imagine what it will be like 20 years from now."

In the second half, Salonen listened on, as Peltokoski led the orchestra in Shostakovich's *Symphony No 11, The Year 1905*. With his baton, Peltokoski built up the electrifying tension in the one-hour acoustic tragedy, gesturing like an Olympic fencer, bending and lunging. In the words of an orchestra member, it was an emotionally charged journey "from simmering chill to burning fire".

"His baton direction was meticulously precise right from the start," said Liu Zitong, a conducting student from Shanghai.

"This live performance was even more stirring than the recordings we've heard," said Fang Taozhi, 18, and Wu Anyi, 17, two local students who came together.

Xu Nuo, an engineer from Xi'an, wore a commemorative brooch to the concert to show her love for music. "I was moved to tears in several movements. The orchestra conveyed something indescribably depressing but touching. The final 40 seconds of the echoes simply seemed eternal," she said.

"When someone is so convincing, with a mind so deep, sharing knowledge that requires years and years of studying, you completely forget that he is actually 26," said Lorenzo Iosco, chairman of the artistic committee and associate principal bass clarinet of the orchestra. "It's just extraordinary, and this is just the beginning," he added.

Back in The Peninsula Hong Kong and surrounded by huge posters of his son, Peltokoski's father, Raine, is picked out of the crowd. "As a boy, he loved music. He just loved music. But he was — one word: shy. And it's hard to believe today," he says.

The author is a freelance writer for China Daily.





From top: Tarmo Peltokoski (center) joins orchestra members on top of The Peninsula Hong Kong during a photo shoot launching his inaugural season as music director of the Hong Kong Philharmonic Orchestra. KEITH SIN / FOR CHINA DAILY Peltokoski at the Xinghai Concert Hall in Guangzhou on April 26. Peltokoski (front) holds up the conductor's score of Shostakovich's *Symphony No 11 in G Minor* during the curtain call. PHOTOS BY DESMOND CHAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Performing arts academy blends tradition with digital innovation

HONG KONG — At the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, students are taught that to innovate, one must first master the ancient. As the institution climbs the global rankings, it is becoming a high-tech laboratory for the future of Asian culture.

In a city known for its vertical skyline and its role as a dynamic link bridging different regions, the HKAPA stands as a quiet yet powerful force for cultural integration. Here, the air is filled with the scent of sawdust from traditional carpentry workshops and the soft hum of high technology, a microcosm of Hong Kong's broader ambition to maintain its status as the world's "international education hub".

In March, the institution quietly achieved a milestone that extended far beyond its Wan Chai campus: the QS World University Rankings placed its performing arts program 10th globally and 1st in Asia. For Anna CY Chan, director of HKAPA, this is not just about prestige; it is a validation of a pedagogical philosophy that emphasizes both "deep roots" and "wide horizons".

While the global arts scene often pursues the "new" with great enthusiasm, the HKAPA operates on a principle of groundedness. "Students must first learn traditional skills to strike deep roots," Chan insists. "Only with sufficient artistic heritage can innovation have a soul."

This is not mere rhetoric. For Kelly Or, a fourth-year student in the School of Theatre and Entertainment Arts, the journey to the cutting edge began with the humble "mortise and tenon" joint and the manual crafting of coconut husk rope. These are the ancient foundations of stagecraft, taught with the same rigor as modern digital engineering.

The academy's curriculum is a deliberate integration of diverse cultures. In a recent crossover concert titled *Anime in Viaggio*, the piercing, melodic heights of Cantonese opera were paired with the rhythmic, improvisational vitality of jazz. It was a performance that served as a vivid metaphor for the city itself: two distinct musical languages not merely coexisting, but complementing one another.

In March, the HKAPA threw open its doors to the public, offering over 100 free performances and exhibitions that showcased this duality. In the main foyer, the classic opera *Divine Maiden Strewing Flowers* came to life; with a flick of her "water sleeves", a performer's graceful turns and subtle smiles captured the essence of traditional Eastern aesthetics.

Yet, only a few steps away in the School of Film and Television, crowds queued to experiment with AI-generative tools and virtual filming techniques. Here, technology translated touch into imagery in an instant, a moment where tradition and modernity did not just coexist, but quietly merged.



> "Students must first learn traditional skills to strike deep roots. Only with sufficient artistic heritage can innovation have a soul."
>
> **Anna CY Chan,** director of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts

However, in the School of Film and Television, the "traditional" gives way to what the faculty calls "hardcore" art. Here, a hyper-realistic virtual simulation of the Yee Wo Street footbridge, a Causeway Bay landmark, comes to life. This is not just a student project; it is a collaborative platform for virtual production that allows filmmakers to move seamlessly from the neon-soaked streets of Hong Kong to a sci-fi dystopia in a single frame.

"We want students to master traditional filmmaking while simultaneously designing for the era of the miniseries and new media," explained Terry Lam, dean of the School of Film and Television.

Crucially, the academy is addressing a key concern of the 21st century: artificial intelligence. Lam proposes a "human-in-the-loop" philosophy. In a world of algorithmic generation, the HKAPA argues that empathy remains the unique trait that cannot be replicated by technology. "Work is for people," Lam notes. "Only humans can endow a piece of art with the empathy it requires."

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region government is now establishing the "Study in Hong Kong" brand to further develop Hong Kong into an international hub for education. According to director Chan, the academy's nonlocal student body has consistently remained between 20 percent and 25 percent, attracting talent from the Chinese mainland and Southeast Asia, as well as Europe and North America. This global diversity is mirrored in the faculty, who hail from various countries and regions around the world.

The academy's influence is now extending toward the under-construction Northern Metropolis. The planned Northern Metropolis University Town is envisioned not just as a school, but as a "creative incubator" and a "green art theater".

The goal is a "complementary development" in the best sense, a campus that complements the Wan Chai headquarters by focusing on sustainability and resource sharing, serving as a gateway for Hong Kong's talent to flow into the Greater Bay Area and beyond.

For students like Dani Wen, a Master of Music student from the mainland, the appeal lies in this very spirit of breaking boundaries. "The atmosphere is inclusive, the teachers respect open creativity," she says. Before she writes for a Western symphony orchestra, she is tasked with composing for a Chinese orchestra, a cross-cultural training ground that ensures the next generation of artists are not just performers, but cultural communicators.

In a globalized arts landscape, the academy's value lies in its refusal to choose between the old and the new. By grounding its digital evolution in physical heritage, the institution demonstrates that the future of Asian culture is not found by moving away from tradition, but by looking deeper into it.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL

SGA's reign as league's MVP continues

OKC star wins top award for second straight season


Oklahoma City Thunder guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander celebrates with fans after Game 4 of a first-round NBA playoffs series against the Phoenix Suns on April 27 in Phoenix. AP

He's the best player on the best team. And the voters say he's the best player in the league, too. Again.

Shai Gilgeous-Alexander of the reigning NBA champion Oklahoma City Thunder won the NBA's Most Valuable Player on Sunday for the second consecutive year. He became the 18th player to win at least two MVP awards, and the 14th to win them in back-to-back fashion.

"Basketball's obviously a team sport," Gilgeous-Alexander said Sunday night in a celebration at the Thunder practice facility, surrounded by teammates — all in new Burberry trenchcoats, a gift from the now two-time MVP.

"All the numbers, all the accolades, everything that I do on the court, if we won 10 games, I wouldn't be in this conversation. So, thank you guys so much. I love you guys."

The win for Gilgeous-Alexander, who is Canadian, marks the eighth consecutive time that the NBA's MVP was born outside the US. The run started with Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo (born in Greece, of Nigerian descent) in 2019 and 2020, then Denver's Nikola Jokic (Serbia) in 2021 and 2022, Philadelphia's Joel Embiid (born in Cameroon, but has since become a US citizen) in 2023 and Jokic again in 2024.

And in 2025 SGA was the MVP, as he is now in 2026.

"Who he is has never changed," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "I think he's touched up the edges on his game, his leadership and on his perspective, just like anybody else that's coming of age."

Jokic was second and San Antonio's star French center Victor Wembanyama placed third.

Gilgeous-Alexander got 83 of a possible 100 first-place votes. Jokic received 10 and Wembanyama got five. Luka Doncic of the Los Angeles Lakers was fourth in the voting and Cade Cunningham of the Detroit Pistons was fifth.

Cunningham got two first-place votes — the first by a US-born player since 2021.

Jaylen Brown of the Boston Celtics was sixth, and Kawhi Leonard of the Los Angeles Clippers and Donovan Mitchell of the Cleveland Cavaliers tied for seventh with one fifth-place vote apiece.

International players went 1-2-3 in the voting for the fifth straight season:

- Last season the order was Gilgeous-Alexander first, Jokic second and Antetokounmpo third.
- In 2024, it was Jokic, then Gilgeous-Alexander and Slovenian Doncic.
- In 2023, it was Embiid, then Jokic, then Antetokounmpo.
- In 2022, it was Jokic, then Embiid, then Antetokounmpo.

"So many NBA players don't get opportunity," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "Who knows where I'd be without it."

Gilgeous-Alexander and Wembanyama will face off Monday night, when the Thunder and Spurs open Game 1 of the Western Conference finals in Oklahoma City. NBA Commissioner Adam Silver is expected at Monday's game to formally present Gilgeous-Alexander with a trophy for the third time in 12 months — the MVP award last May, the NBA Finals MVP award last June, and now this.


Shai Gilgeous-Alexander poses with teammates Jalen Williams (left), Isaiah Hartenstein (second from left), Chet Holmgren (center back), Jaylin Williams (second from right), and Jared McCain (right) in Burberry trenchcoats on Sunday in Oklahoma City. AP


Shai Gilgeous-Alexander holds his son Ares Alexander before a news conference after being named the NBA MVP on Sunday in Oklahoma City. AP


Shai Gilgeous-Alexander during Game 2 of a second-round NBA playoffs series against the Los Angeles Lakers on May 7. AP

Jokic not winning the award continues an odd trend: those who average a triple-double, often thought of as the holy grail of in-game accomplishments, almost never win MVP.

Jokic had the seventh instance of a player finishing a season averaging a triple-double — at least 10 points, 10 assists and 10 rebounds per game — by putting up 27.7 points, a league-best 12.9 rebounds and a league-best 10.7 assists per game.

It wasn't good enough for MVP. Russell Westbrook averaged a triple-double four times and won MVP only once in those years. Oscar Robertson averaged a triple-double in 1961-62; he didn't win MVP that season. And now, Jokic has done it twice — with no MVPs to show for it, though he has won the award on three other occasions.

Gilgeous-Alexander insists that he doesn't play for individual honors, but for team trophies.

"The way things are run in this organization and this city, it breeds success," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "It's no coincidence."

The MVP win is Gilgeous-Alexander's second major individual award this season; he was also voted the league's Clutch Player of the Year by an overwhelming margin — he got 96 of 100 first-place votes in that balloting, paying tribute to how great his performances tend to be in the final five minutes of close games.

Then again, he's pretty good no matter how much time is on the clock.

Gilgeous-Alexander was second in the league with 31.1 points per game, second only to Doncic and his 33.5-point average. He also extended his NBA-record streak of regular season games with at least 20 points to 140 and counting; it'll carry into next season as well.

He's delightfully boring — one of the few mid-range specialists in the game, someone who excels at drawing fouls, isn't a look-at-me type and gives some of the most thoughtful answers of anyone in the league. Emotions aren't worth his time; staying calm is always his preferred move.

And he believes in the Thunder way, that the sum of the parts is the only real key to winning.

"Some of it is just luck," Gilgeous-Alexander said. "As an NBA player, you have no control over other grown men in this business and I'm just lucky enough to be surrounded by great human beings, from the front office, coaching staff, to the guys that I play on the court with every night. We all want to see the next man win and do whatever it takes, ultimately, to win. We have that common goal. And, yeah, I can't take credit for that. It's more than me, it's bigger than me."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Mitchell makes the breakthrough, helping the Cavs reach the conference finals


Cleveland Cavaliers guard Donovan Mitchell attempts a shot against Detroit Pistons guard Daniss Jenkins in Game 7 of a second round NBA playoffs series in Detroit, Michigan, on Sunday. REUTERS

For Donovan Mitchell, a breakthrough moment has arrived.

He's going to the conference finals for the first time, and the series will begin at Madison Square Garden — a bonus for the native New Yorker.

In his ninth season, Mitchell has reached the NBA's final four.

He and the Cleveland Cavaliers rolled past the Detroit Pistons 125-94 on Sunday night in Game 7 — on the road, no less — of their Eastern Conference semifinal series.

Their reward is a trip to New York for Game 1 of the East finals against the Knicks on Tuesday.

Mitchell had 26 points, seven rebounds and eight assists in Sunday's romp. And, when his night was over with 4:01 remaining, he had handshakes and hugs for anyone wearing Cleveland colors.

He leaned down to wrap his arms around a seated Cavs coach Kenny Atkinson, who said before the game that he wanted Mitchell to be himself in Game 7.

The result?

"It was better than Donovan Mitchell," Atkinson said. "Is that possible? It started with him, his defense, rebounding, and then when he gets in the paint and starts making other people better, you know, the dishes to our big guys, that was the key, I felt like, to the game. He had complete control of the game."

Mitchell was brought to Cleveland in September 2022 in a trade with Utah, with the Cavaliers betting — correctly, it turned out — that he would be the last piece of their post-LeBron James rebuild and help them return to the playoffs.

They got to the first round in 2023, then lost in the second round in 2024 and 2025. This year, the conference finals await after the third-biggest road win a team has ever had in a Game 7.

Mitchell has been an All-Star in each of the last seven seasons, was one of eight players to receive at least one vote in this year's MVP balloting and will likely be an All-NBA pick for the third time.

But there was a void — the deep playoff run.

Not anymore.

"Couldn't be happier for him, to make that next step," Atkinson said. "He's going home to New York. He kept this thing together this year when things weren't going great. He was the beacon, the light ... he carried us on the court."

The Cavs' Sam Merrill, who grew up in Utah and was a Jazz fan when Mitchell was there, added: "You're not going to find a guy more happy for him than I am, but I know he wants more. We all want more."

There were so many near-misses for Mitchell along the way. Mitchell's Utah team wasted a 3-1 lead in the 2020 playoff bubble against Denver in the West semifinals, falling in seven games. A year later, the Jazz were up 2-0 in the second round against the Los Angeles Clippers, who ended up winning in six. He got hurt at the same stage against Boston, as that series fell apart for Cleveland in 2024, and last year the Cavaliers went 0-3 at home in the second round against Indiana on the way to a five-game ouster.

He was part of a No 1 seed in 2021, part of a No 1 seed again last year, and never got out of the second round. Until now.

Jarrett Allen and Merrill each added 23, as the fourth-seeded Cavaliers ousted the East's top seed to set up the series with the third-seeded New York Knicks.

"We just knew that we had to get the job done. We knew that we had to bring a lot of force," said Allen. "It's a tough arena to win in, but we knew that every single possession, every single play was super important."

Evan Mobley had 21 points and 12 rebounds for the Cavaliers, who advanced to the conference finals for the first time since 2018 and the ninth time in team history. It's their deepest run since James' final season with the franchise.

Daniss Jenkins scored 17 points, and Cade Cunningham and Duncan Robinson each finished with 13 for the Pistons, who fell one win shy of their first conference finals appearance since 2008, after forcing the decider with a Game 6 victory on Friday.

The Cavs dictated the pace from the opening tip and never allowed the Pistons to gain traction, then blew open a convincing Game 7 performance when Mitchell scored 15 in the third quarter.

Detroit was outscored in the paint 58-34 and made only 35.3 percent of its field goal attempts, compared to Cleveland's 50.6 percent.

Cleveland capitalized on cold shooting by the Pistons in the opening quarter, turning missed shots into transition baskets, while building an early advantage. The Cavs led 31-22 going to the second, and after Detroit had the first two baskets, Cleveland quickly seized control with a 24-9 run. The Pistons' offensive struggles only deepened and the Cavs continued to shoot efficiently as they built a commanding 64-47 lead into halftime.

The Cavs kept rolling in the second half and led by as many as 35 points. The closest the Pistons were able to get in the half was within 17 in the third quarter.

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, MAY 20, 2026

Xi calls for even higher quality ties

Russian President Putin's state visit to address issues of mutual concern

By **MO JINGXI** and **ZHANG YUNBI**



President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony for Russian President Vladimir Putin outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

President Xi Jinping called on China and Russia to drive the development and revitalization of their respective countries through comprehensive strategic coordination of even higher quality, and work to make the global governance system more just and reasonable.

Xi made the remarks on Wednesday when meeting with Russian President Vladimir Putin, who arrived in Beijing on Tuesday for a two-day state visit.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

Xi said China-Russia relations have come this far step by step precisely because the two sides have kept deepening political mutual trust and strategic coordination with unyielding tenacity, and expanded cooperation with a drive to always scale new heights.

It is also because the two countries have defended international justice and fairness and advanced the building of a community with a shared future for humanity with unflappable resolve, he said.

Xi noted that the international situation is fluid and turbulent, marked by resurging unilateralism and hegemonism.

Yet peace, development and cooperation remain the aspiration of the people and the prevailing trend of our times, he said.

As permanent members of the UN Security Council and important major countries in the world, China and Russia should take a strategic and long-term perspective, drive the development and revitalization of their respective countries through comprehensive strategic coordination of even higher quality, and work to make the global governance system more just and reasonable, Xi said.

The two heads of state also agreed to further extend the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

Xi said that 25 years ago, China and Russia signed the treaty, establishing in legal form the institutional foundation for long-term good-neighborliness, friendship and comprehensive strategic coordination. Since then, China-Russia relations have achieved leapfrog development, he said.

He noted that the international landscape has undergone profound changes, and the world faces the risk of sliding back into the law of the jungle. Against this backdrop, the advanced nature, scientific value and practical significance of the treaty have become even more prominent, Xi said.

Xi said that China supports the further extension of the treaty and is ready to work with Russia to uphold its spirit and firmly advance the two countries' back-to-back strategic coordination.

The treaty was last extended on June 28, 2021, when Xi and Putin held talks via video link and issued a joint statement ahead of the 20th anniversary of its signing.

Prior to his departure for Beijing, Putin delivered a video address in which he said, "I'm delighted to be visiting Beijing once again at the invitation of my longtime good friend, the President of the People's Republic of China, Xi Jinping."

On Sunday, both Xi and Putin sent congratulatory letters to the 10th China-Russia Expo, which opened on the same day in Harbin, the capital of Northeast China's Heilongjiang province.

Russia's TASS news agency quoted Putin as saying in his video address that regular mutual visits and Russia-China top-level talks "are an important and integral part of our joint efforts to promote the entire range of relations between our two countries and unlock their truly limitless potential".

Bilateral relations today "have reached a truly unprecedented level", Putin said.

The special nature of the ties "is reflected in the atmosphere of mutual understanding and trust, in the commitment to pursuing win-win and equitable cooperation, in conducting respectful dialogue, and in supporting each other on matters affecting the core interests of both countries, including protection of sovereignty and state unity", he added.

Addressing a regular news briefing on Tuesday in Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said that during the state visit, the two presidents "will exchange views on bilateral relations, cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of mutual interest".

A survey report on Sino-Russian youth friendship and cultural exchanges, which was released last week by Renmin University of China, showed that 87.5 percent of young people in Russia and 85.5 percent of young people in China view the two countries' relations as "friendly".

Guo said the findings illustrate the high level of China-Russia ties.

"Under the strategic guidance of President Xi and President Putin, the China-Russia everlasting friendship will enjoy even greater popular support, and the youth in both countries will join hands and inject fresh vitality into our comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era," he added.

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WORLD WATCH
By Warwick Powell

Relationship matures into cornerstone of security and stability

Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to Beijing on Tuesday and Wednesday marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the 2001 Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, which underscores a relationship that has matured into a strategic cornerstone of Eurasian — and by extension, global — security and stability.

Far from a mere tactical partnership born of convenience, the Russia-China partnership is deepening across economic, energy, security and multilateral dimensions, driven by shared interests in an emergent, yet unstable, multipolar world.

At its foundation lies robust economic complementarity and interdependence. Bilateral trade has expanded dramatically over the past decade. It surged after 2022, reaching a record $244.8 billion in 2024 before moderating to approximately $228.1 billion in 2025 amid shifting global energy prices and demand adjustments, according to statistics from China's General Administration of Customs. This represented a slight contraction of about 6.8 percent year-on-year, marking the first decrease in five years after a record-breaking period fueled by post-2022 Western sanctions.

Russia supplies critical energy resources. Crude oil exports to China exceeded 108 million metric tons in 2024, while China provides manufactured goods, vehicles and technology. Chinese exports to Russia include cars, electronics and machinery.

*See **Visit**, page 3*

Couples pick dates that sound like love to marry

By **LI LEI**
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Couples across China are rushing to tie the knot on Wednesday and Thursday — May 20 and May 21 — two dates that sound like "I love you" when said aloud in Mandarin, with marriage registration slots fully booked weeks in advance in several major cities.

In Chinese, "520" is pronounced similarly to the Mandarin equivalent of "I love you", making May 20 a sought-after day for registering marriages. The following day, May 21 — or "521" — carries a similar meaning, offering a popular and much-needed alternative.

All slots in the 15 marriage registration offices in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, were fully booked for May 20 by the first week of this month, as they were in Shenzhen. In Nanjing, Jiangsu province, more than 1,400 couples had reserved May 20 as their chosen date by late April, with scenic registration sites such as the Confucius Temple already at capacity. Some locations were fully booked for May 21 as well. Wuxi, another city in Jiangsu, has no online slots left for May 20, though local authorities said that couples could still register as walk-ins.

For one Beijing-based couple, securing a May 20 slot required a midnight digital scramble. Guo Xiangyu, 30, a doctoral student from Xi'an in Shaanxi province, and Yan Xin, 34, an internet worker from Baoji, also in Shaanxi, booked their appointment two weeks in advance. The couple and both sets of parents logged into the system at midnight across PCs and mobile devices, and Yan managed to secure a slot. "We expected it to be crowded, so we feel very lucky," she said.

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INSIDE
Jointly realizing a clean and beautiful world
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SANYA BECOMES A TCM PARADISE

Holistic health practices holding sway over holidaymakers to the tropical city

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

For many foreign tourists, Sanya in southern China's Hainan province is a tropical dream: soft sandy beaches, coconut groves and a gentle sea breeze.

However, a growing crowd is discovering that the real Sanya comes with a twist — usually of muscles and joints.

Instead of lounging on a beach towel, they lie on a therapy bed; instead of sipping cold coconut water, they take slow sips of bitter herbal tea — all the while dotted with fine acupuncture needles. And somehow, they love it.

Five years ago, Alina Dudko from Saint Petersburg in Russia tried acupuncture for the first time to address some of her health issues.

"I felt a bit dizzy, which scared me," she recalled, adding that the doctor also prescribed a course of herbal decoctions to take, something she was skeptical about at first.

"But after about five acupuncture sessions, I noticed positive changes in my condition, so I decided to fully commit to the treatment," she added.

Today, Dudko, who now speaks fluent Chinese, has chosen to work as a therapy translator at a traditional Chinese medicine clinic near the Dadonghai scenic area in Sanya.



A Russian tourist takes a selfie by the seaside at Wuzhizhou Island scenic area in Sanya, Hainan province, last year. YUAN YONGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Acupuncture and herbal decoctions, which she once doubted, have become what she calls a self-care habit. "TCM teaches us to look at health in a holistic way, not to fix problems only after they appear, but to take care of ourselves in advance through lifestyle, diet, rest and emotional state. I really agree with this philosophy," she said.

Her daily work now includes talking with patients, accompanying them during consultations, facilitating communication between them and the TCM practitioners, and explaining the basic principles of their treatments in plain, accessible language.

"I place great importance on honest, smooth communication with the patients. I avoid complex terminology. I strive to be a bridge between practitioner and patient, to help people understand why a holistic approach to their health is so important," she said.

This is the sixth year since the 30-year-old settled down in the coastal city, which offers a perfect balance of work, health and quality of life.

"I really love the climate here. I love the feeling of being close to nature. I also love that I can combine work with plenty of rest. Here, people pay more attention to their physical condition, their health and their inner balance," she added.

With the development of the Hainan Free Trade Port and a visa-free policy now applicable to citizens of 86 countries, more foreign tourists, mostly from Russia, frequent the clinic, observed Wu Chunmei, a colleague of Dudko.

"Because winters in Russia are long, locals generally suffer from excessive cold and dampness in the body, rheumatic joint pain and back strain. They come to Sanya during the winter to escape the cold and enjoy the warm climate, so it's very convenient for them to get TCM treatments at the same time," Wu said.

According to Zang Jinpeng, a practitioner at Sanya Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital, the city's unique environment is naturally suited for wellness and recovery. As early as the early 2000s, a large number of foreign tourists began visiting Sanya and gradually came to experience and appreciate TCM.

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CHINA-RUSSIA TIES

Sun Zhuangzhi

People's bonds strengthen bilateral relationship

As we commemorate the 30th anniversary of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation in 2026, the timing of Russian President Vladimir Putin's visit to China is particularly significant.

Over the years, people-to-people cooperation has been a vital component of bilateral relations between China and Russia, reflecting the evolution of ties from good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation to a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era.

As China-Russia relations have grown stronger and cooperation has expanded, people-to-people exchanges have become essential for developing a new model of major-country relations. They have reinforced the social foundation for high-level cooperation.

Unlike China's commercially driven exchanges with Western countries, which can be disrupted by political factors, its people-to-people cooperation with Russia has consistently been government-led and worked seamlessly alongside political and economic collaboration.

In today's rapidly changing international landscape, where "public opinion warfare" and "information warfare" are constantly reshaping perceptions, China-Russia cooperation has shown remarkable resilience. People-to-people exchanges have played a key role, with advances in technology and transportation significantly enhancing cultural cooperation and interactions.

These exchanges have profoundly affected bilateral relations, including political and economic ties.

In fact, people-to-people exchanges have emerged as a new form of diplomacy, distinct from traditional diplomacy in participants, forms, concepts and objectives.

Alongside cultural diplomacy, this people-to-people diplomacy has gained prominence. Russian scholars note that China-Russia cultural and people-to-people cooperation is systematic and continually enriched with new content, representing a planned and comprehensive interaction.

Since establishing a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era in 2019, China-Russia people-to-people cooperation has focused on in-depth, quality development, creating broader opportunities for growth.

In June 2021, the two heads of state issued a joint statement commemorating the 20th anniversary of the treaty, emphasizing the need to expand exchanges in education, academia and culture and enhance the role of cultural centers, friendship associations, and social organizations.

In recent years, both countries have strengthened collaboration in higher and vocational education, scientific research, culture, arts and sports, fostering the growth of cultural and educational endeavors.

New cooperation models and channels are being explored, such as using the internet to enhance media collaboration and cultural showcases, and increasing youth exchanges, especially among students, to cultivate talent with global perspectives and cross-cultural communication skills.

Tourism and public health exchanges have become new focal points.

As the international landscape and inter-state relations evolve, China-Russia bilateral cooperation has increasingly incorporated rich people-to-people elements at both global and regional levels.

The two countries have jointly opposed the politicization of health issues in multilateral forums, supported each other's initiatives internationally, and collaborated on ensuring biosecurity and building a global health infrastructure.

During their respective presidencies of the SCO and BRICS, China and Russia hosted hundreds of events, many of them focused on people-to-people exchanges.

Both countries have encouraged their youth to actively engage in multilateral activities organized by BRICS and the SCO.

Following the launch of the Belt and Road Initiative, its principles of people-to-people connectivity have gained Russian support, particularly the emphasis on mutual respect and learning among civilizations.

This approach lays the groundwork for broad partnerships and facilitates bilateral exchanges in education, sports, and culture.

As close neighbors, China and Russia benefit from geographical and cultural advantages that enhance their cooperation.

Extensive people-to-people exchanges have fostered closer ties between their populations. Polls indicate that mutual favorability is rising, which is crucial for stable and friendly state-to-state relations.

Data from the Levada Center show that Russian society's attitude toward China has undergone positive changes, with a consistently high proportion holding a favorable view of China for over a decade.

In May 2020, an online survey conducted by the China-Russia Committee for Friendship, Peace and Development showed that 93.1 percent of Chinese respondents held a non-negative view of Russia while 82.6 percent of Russians felt the same about China.

A 2024 Levada Center poll found that while Chinese goods remained the top interest for Russians at 29 percent, travel and natural scenery at 27 percent and traditional Chinese medicine, culture, art, literature and films at 25 percent, were close behind, with gaps narrowing significantly.

With the mutual visa exemption and the official launch of the China-Russia Years of Education, efforts to enhance people-to-people connectivity have received strong policy support. Various mechanisms have been established, and the number of councils under the China-Russia Committee for Friendship, Peace and Development has steadily grown.

Additionally, 15 university alliances in similar disciplines have been formed. Both sides are actively engaging in technological innovation cooperation, enhancing connectivity in the digital sector, and complementing each other's strengths.

This "new infrastructure" has emerged as a fresh growth point, marking a new stage in the development of bilateral relations.

People-to-people interactions are a crucial pillar of the China-Russia strategic partnership that guarantees everlasting friendship between the two countries.

A key indicator of this is the shift from a top-down approach to a dynamic, two-way interaction driven by both top-down and bottom-up forces.

This has led to comprehensive, wide-ranging and multi-level cooperation.

People-to-people exchanges and friendship can transcend differences in systems, civilizations and ideologies, providing stable and robust endogenous momentum for bilateral relations.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

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

Andrey Kortunov

Sino-Russian ties a boon for the world

State officials and prominent politicians from Beijing and Moscow have consistently tried to allay the enduring fear of some Western countries that China and Russia may forge a political and military alliance.

Neither China nor Russia has such a plan or aspiration. Both nations are more than happy with the current arrangement in their bilateral relations, with both sides attaching high value to their respective sovereignty.

Furthermore, China and Russia might hold different positions on some specific issues. The two might even be competitors in some international markets.

However, such disagreement or competition does not prevent Beijing and Moscow from working together on many other issues, where their interests and positions coincide or overlap.

One must also mention that in terms of bilateral trade, mutual investments, industrial cooperation, cultural and human interaction, China-Russia cooperation lags significantly behind that between China and both the European Union and the United States.

More Chinese tourists flock to the US than to Russia. There are many more Chinese students and scholars in Western universities than in Russian higher education institutions.

On the other hand, at least a part of the Russian political class and the intellectual community there consider their country to be an organic part of the European civilization. Finally, neither Beijing nor Moscow displays any intention to impose their respective values, political systems or principles of governance on Western nations or on anyone in the world.

And yet, the "ghost of a new axis" continues to haunt some Western statesmen.

Global Lens

Where does this fear come from? The most natural answer would be that this is a typical manifestation of the age-old conventional Western hypocrisy.

Indeed, the Western "ruling circles" have always needed an "external threat" to justify more military spending, to rationalize forging new military blocs and to ostracize those reaching out to their competitors and adversaries.

This old logic, however, cannot be taken for granted any longer.

Reference to an "emerging China-Russia axis" comes in handy when some politicians try to push for NATO's globalization; the trilateral AUKUS partnership between Australia, the United Kingdom and the US; the trilateral US-Japan-Republic of Korea security cooperation framework; or even the expansion of the Quad alliance among Australia, India, Japan and the US.

Scapegoats are always in demand in global politics, and some Western politicians can hardly find a better excuse than Moscow and Beijing to methodically and relentlessly consolidate against the vast Eurasian landmass. This fear apparently stems from an ancient vision in international relations that if any two nations are getting close, they must be doing so to oppose a third party. This is also the thinking of those who treat international politics as a zero-sum game.

This old logic, however, cannot be taken for granted any longer. By extending this strange logic, would the world be safer, more stable, secure and prosperous if the China-Russia strategic partnership were to fall apart?

Would the Western nations benefit from if they "succeed in" driving wedges between Beijing and Moscow? Instead, any such conflict would only become another source of regional and even global instability, generating many more risks and challenges for everyone in the world, including Western nations.

In an era marked by interconnectedness and interdependence, international relations cannot continue to be treated like a "zero-sum game", even if this was the case earlier. Today, we either win together or lose together.

No wonder, Beijing has always welcomed Moscow's efforts to reengage in bilateral dialogue with Washington, while in Moscow they have always been sympathetic to Beijing's attempts to resolve its trade disputes and geopolitical tensions with the US.

Besides, the whole assumption that Moscow and Beijing are working together to create more problems for some Western powers reflects an arrogant "West-centered" view of the world.

Even if the West did not threaten the two nations at all, Moscow and Beijing would still have many reasons to cooperate with each other. These are two big nations with a shared border, with complementary economies, and similar views on many regional and global problems.

It is worth mentioning that the Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation Between the People's Republic of China and the Russian Federation, which opened a new era in bilateral ties, was signed way back in the summer of 2001 — long before Beijing and Moscow began encountering difficulties in their respective relations with some Western powers.

The aggressive posture of some Western powers is undoubtedly one of the factors shaping the China-Russia partnership, but this is by no means the only or decisive factor. One can assume that over time, the significance of this exogenous factor will go down, not up.

These days one can argue that a major problem in international relations is the absence of fear, which earlier used to act as a deterrent against military confrontation between major powers.

However, irrational and unfounded fears are no less dangerous — they can obscure vision, distort realities and trigger irrational impulsive decisions fraught with perilous repercussions for all humankind.

The author is a member and former director general of the Russian International Affairs Council.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Sergey S. Tsyplakov

Energy cooperation fuels growth amid uncertainties

Instability and uncertainty in the global economy and international trade continue to intensify, unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, and the international trading system itself is facing serious challenges.

The escalation of tensions in the Middle East and the blockade of shipping in the Strait of Hormuz have demonstrated the vulnerability of global industrial supply chains and the unreliability of established transport corridors.

All these create serious global and regional risks, further increasing the urgency of ensuring economic security and enhancing economic resilience at both the national and multilateral levels.

Russia and China are the largest countries in Eurasia and share a long border.

Over the past 30 years, the two countries have deepened their comprehensive strategic partnership and cooperation.

The established multi-layered mechanisms of China-Russia cooperation — a key element of which is the guiding role of the two countries' leaders and the inherent economic complementarity between the two countries — create unique opportunities to jointly and effectively address risks in those key areas of economic security.

Global Lens

Energy security is a key aspect of economic security.

Within the overall framework of China-Russia economic cooperation, interaction in the energy sector and the large-scale joint projects currently underway, are of paramount importance for both countries.

A key feature of the China-Russia energy partnership is its multi-sectoral nature, with cooperation expanding in sectors such as oil, natural gas, coal and nuclear energy.

In the future, it could extend to renewable energy as well.

China has been Russia's largest trading partner for many years, while Russia has become one of China's major energy suppliers.

The importance of the Chinese energy market for Russian companies has always been high, but in recent years, amid the sharp deterioration of Russia-European Union relations, the forced disruption of years-old supply chains, and the wave of anti-Russian sanctions, this importance has increased even further.

Russia, in turn, remains an important external energy supplier for China, particularly in crude oil and natural gas and is also among the major coal suppliers to China.

Some experts say that Russia has one-sided dependence on China in the energy sector.

These opinions are, to put it mildly, biased and incorrect.

In reality, we see an interdependence that generally serves the interests of both countries, as it increases the resilience of their economies in the face of external shocks and serves as one of the pillars of the entire Sino-Russian partnership of strategic coordination.

The extensive material basis for a Russian-Chinese energy partnership has already been established, and the common goal for the next few years should be joint work on new projects and further improvement of existing cooperation mechanisms.

Given the strategic role of the energy sector in the economy, a necessary prerequisite for the further sustainable advancement of energy cooperation is its high degree of alignment with national economic development priorities and programs.

In this regard, it should be noted that China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) has generated considerable interest among Russian experts and business circles.

For the first time, the Five-Year Plan sets the strategic goal of transforming China into an energy powerhouse and outlines paths for the large-scale expansion of the new energy sector.

Both countries should continue measures to further deepen the energy partnership between the two sides.

At the same time, it would be a gross oversimplification to reduce the Russian-Chinese energy cooperation to increasing energy trade volumes.

The cooperation should be comprehensive, encompassing production and logistics chains along their entire length, as well as financing and payment systems.

Given persistent geopolitical tensions, the importance of ensuring the security and sustainability of transport routes is growing.

Both countries should jointly develop a cross-border pipeline network and alternative Arctic shipping routes.

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CHINA-RUSSIA TIES



Russian children make dumplings on Monday at a youth exchange center in Heihe, Heilongjiang province. The seventh edition of the China-Russia Youth Exchange Event opened in Heihe to promote the exchange and preservation of culture and the arts of the two countries. QIU QILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Educational exchanges bear fruits

Student enrollments hit record, joint institutions thrive and research relations reach new heights

By ZOU SHUO
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The expanding educational cooperation between China and Russia is delivering tangible results, with a record number of students crossing borders, new joint institutions thriving and collaborative research reaching new heights, which in turn is contributing to stronger mutual understanding and the building of a shared future, experts said.

As the China-Russia Years of Education unfold and bilateral student exchanges exceed 80,000, both countries are set to strengthen their educational partnership, transforming people-to-people exchanges into a foundation of enduring friendship, they added.

At the Harbin Institute of Technology, or HIT, in Heilongjiang province, which is a pioneer in China-Russia higher education cooperation, the number of Russian students reached a record high of 2,081 in 2025.

The university has established partnerships with 44 Russian institutions, including Lomonosov Moscow State University and Bauman Moscow State Technical University, and has signed 116 cooperation agreements to date. Over the past decade, HIT has admitted more than 9,000 Russian students, ranking it first among Chinese universities in terms of Russian student enrollment, according to the university.

"The university is committed to further deepening cooperation with Russia in the fields of education, science and technology, and talent cultivation, and to becoming a pioneer in China's new frontier of opening up to the north," said Chen Jie, Party secretary of HIT.

In 2011, HIT and Bauman Moscow State Technical University jointly initiated the establishment of the Association of Sino-Russian Technical Universities, the first such association between the two countries.

The association now comprises 80 member institutions and more than 2.2 million enrolled students. It has hosted nearly 100 major events focused on technology, innovation and youth exchanges, benefiting more than 100,000 students and faculty members from both countries, Chen said.

Shenzhen MSU-BIT University — the first Sino-Russian cooperative university jointly set up by the government of Shenzhen in Guangdong province, the Beijing Institute of Technology and Lomonosov Moscow State University — has seen remarkable growth since its official establishment in October 2016.

Li Hezhang, president of Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, said that enrollment went up from 899 to 4,458 during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, marking a nearly fivefold increase. "The university is committed to cultivating high-quality, innovative talent proficient in three languages, familiar with both China and Russia, and strong in professional expertise," he said.

The institution has established five Sino-Russian joint research centers and two key laboratories under China's national key research and development program, Li said, noting that its faculty includes 20 academicians from China and abroad, and its students have won more than 500 awards in high-level academic competitions over the past five years.

He added that the university has sent about 1,200 students to Lomonosov Moscow State University for exchange programs, 167 of whom have received government scholarships.

Li Yuyao, 22, an economics major at Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, spent a semester at Lomonosov Moscow State University in 2025, thanks to a government-funded scholarship program. "The immersive environment with Russian professors and classmates helped me progress quickly," she said.

During her stay in Russia, she traveled to Moscow, St. Petersburg and Lake Baikal. "Most Russian people we met were very friendly. Some even asked to take photos with us on Red Square," she recalled.

Fluent in Chinese, English and Russian, Li Yuyao said she hopes to pursue a career in multinational trade.

For Viktoriia Dragun, a second-year chemistry student from Russia at Shenzhen MSU-BIT University, coming to China was a life-changing decision.

"I started learning Chinese at age 12 because I love the language — it sounds beautiful and mysterious," she said. "Chinese people are very warm and inclusive. They understand I'm a foreigner, so they're patient when my expression isn't perfect."

Dragun plans to apply for postgraduate studies at Tsinghua University. "As I have come to China, I want to experience studying at the best university here," she added.

Liu Limin, president of the China Education Association for International Exchange, who studied in Russia as a government-sponsored doctoral student in the 1980s, said that his more than 40 years of study and work have been closely related to China-Russia educational exchanges, and that he has dedicated his career to fostering bilateral educational ties.

"An educational exchange is the most lasting, the warmest and the most powerful form of people-to-people bond," he said. "The launch of the China-Russia Years of Education comes at a historic moment and provides a new window for the all-around upgrading of cooperation."

Liu said that his association has helped build a comprehensive cooperation network between the two countries, covering higher education, vocational training, basic education and youth exchanges.

Key achievements include the Luban Workshop, which aligns China's vocational education standards and training system with Russia's industrial demands; the "thousand schools hand in hand" initiative, which is planned to pair more than 1,000 primary and secondary schools over five years; and the China-Russia children's creative festival, which has received about 55,000 student submissions.

Looking ahead, Liu emphasized the need to transform short-term activities into long-term mechanisms. "True cooperation is not a passing trend, but a steady, lasting flow," he said.

Liu also called for aligning Russia's strengths in mathematics, physics, astronautics and art with China's advantages in artificial intelligence and digital education. "We must cultivate young talent to become ambassadors of China-Russia friendship for generations to come," he said.

Visit: Security and energy cooperation forms a vital pillar

From page 1

Infrastructure linkages reinforce these ties. The Power of Siberia pipeline has already transformed energy flows, and Power of Siberia 2 — with its potential annual capacity of 50 billion cubic meters via Mongolia — would promise further integration.

Investment flows, while fluctuating, demonstrate commitment. Cumulative Chinese direct investment in Russia has been estimated in the tens of billions of yuans, with sectors such as energy, manufacturing and logistics being prominent. Joint projects span high-tech, agriculture and aerospace.

People-to-people exchanges have increased. Tourism is rebounding strongly. Chinese visitors accounted for over 50 percent of foreign tourist trips to Russia in 2025 (around 834,000 trips), while Russian outbound travel to China rose 33.6 percent, according to Interfax Information Services Group. Mutual flows are projected to grow significantly.

Educational ties are equally promising. In the 2024-25 academic year, over 56,000 Chinese students studied in Russia and more than 21,000 Russians in China, Valery Falkov, Russian minister of science and higher education, told the media last year. Both sides aim for 100,000 total exchanges by 2030, supported by over 200 joint programs, he said. These exchanges foster mutual understanding and build the next generation of professionals invested in the partnership.

Security and energy cooperation through the Shanghai Cooperation Organization forms a vital pillar. Originally focused on countering terrorism, extremism and separatism, the SCO has evolved into a comprehensive platform for Eurasian stability. The 2025 Tianjin Summit marked a significant expansion of its remit, particularly in energy and development finance.

China drove the launch of dedicated SCO energy and green-industry cooperation platforms, alongside commitments to jointly add tens of gigawatts of solar and wind power capacity across member states over the next five years. Beijing pledged 2 billion yuan ($294 million) in grants for 2025 and 10 billion yuan in loans over three years to support these initiatives. The SCO Development Bank, agreed to at the Tianjin summit with seed capital and loans pledged by Beijing, is an emerging multilateral institution championed by China to fund regional infrastructure and provide an alternative to Western-led financial systems.

This builds on longstanding efforts. SCO frameworks have long facilitated coordination on oil, gas and resource development among countries like Russia, Kazakhstan and China. Traditional hydrocarbon projects — pipelines, exploration and joint infrastructure — now sit alongside a growing emphasis on renewables and green transitions, creating a balanced, resilient energy architecture for Eurasia. The Tianjin outcomes further institutionalize this collaboration, enabling financed cross-border projects enhancing connectivity and reducing vulnerabilities. Russia and China, as western and eastern bookends of the SCO, provide the strategic depth and resources to drive this consolidation, turning Central Asia and beyond into a zone of coordinated development rather than competition.

Multilaterally, BRICS and the SCO enable the quiet advancement of alternatives to Western-dominated institutions: National currency settlements, development financing and coordinated positions on global governance.

In a world of flux — shifting deterrence architectures, Middle East reconfiguration and Eurasian integration — the Russia-China strategic partnership provides continuity and predictability. It does not seek dominance but equilibrium — a stable Eurasia as the foundation for global security. By anchoring economic flows, diversified energy security through both traditional and emerging sources via SCO mechanisms and multilateral forums, this partnership mitigates instability on its peripheries and offers a counterweight to unilateral pressures.

As Putin visits Beijing, the message is clear, that this relationship is not reactive but constitutive of an emerging order. Eurasian consolidation is advancing not despite global headwinds but through them. Putin's Beijing visit is less about immediate headlines than about the quiet, steady forging of a framework that will shape international stability for decades. The deepening ties — measured in trade volumes, energy cooperation, student exchanges, SCO energy platforms and shared security visions — signal a partnership built to endure, benefiting not only the two nations but the broader quest for a balanced, multipolar world.

The author is an adjunct professor at Queensland University of Technology in Australia and former policy adviser to former Australian prime minister Kevin Rudd. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Veteran diplomat calls himself 'native of Beijing'

By JI HAISHENG
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Minutes after Andrey Denisov, former Russian ambassador to China, received the Outstanding Diplomat Medal in Beijing on Monday, a group of journalists gathered around him seeking interviews.

The seasoned diplomat switched effortlessly among Chinese, Russian and English as he fielded questions — from his personal bond with China to the broader Sino-Russian relationship and the visit by Russian President Vladimir Putin.

"I am happy to be in Beijing these days," said Denisov, who refers to himself as "a native of Beijing". Having lived and worked here for more than two decades, he said that a profound sense of hometown nostalgia feels only natural.

Beijing, he once said, remains his favorite among the many Chinese cities he has visited. In past interviews, he has spoken of strolling through the *hutong*, traditional alleys in Beijing, near the Bell and Drum Towers and the Houhai area, and of holding a special affection for Beihai Park — a quiet retreat in the heart of the bustling Chinese capital.

This connection is rooted in a journey that began half a century ago. Denisov first arrived in Beijing in 1973 as a young student-interpreter, and he served as Russia's ambassador to China from 2013 to 2022. At his inaugural news conference in May 2013, Denisov struck the audience with a disarmingly personal touch, when he opened his remarks with a warm everyday Chinese greeting, signaling his deep integration into the country.

Over the following nine years as ambassador, Denisov was a key figure in the bilateral relationship, working to advance cooperation across fields and strengthen people-to-people friendship and trust. Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi once praised him as "a good friend, an old friend and a true friend of the Chinese people".

Denisov participated in nearly every interaction between the Chinese and Russian heads of state in recent years. Speaking of Putin's visit to China on Tuesday and Wednesday, Denisov said he has great expectations. "As the international situation is now tense, I hope this visit will contribute to easing international tensions," he said.

> "The world needs China, and it needs China's contribution to peace and peaceful development."
>
> **Andrey Denisov,** former Russian ambassador to China



"The fact that there are quite a number of visits here in China in spring underscores the role of China as both an actor and a key player in the international arena," Denisov said. "The world needs China, and it needs China's contribution to peace and peaceful development." He stressed that Putin's visit is part of that broader effort.

With bilateral relations, cooperation in various fields, and international and regional issues of mutual interest on the two leaders' agenda, Denisov said, "I'm quite sure, as a former ambassador, that everything will be accomplished in a real form."

Quoting the Chinese maxim that "practice is the sole criterion for testing truth", Denisov said that, based on his many years of stay in China and his sustained efforts to advance bilateral relations, he can affirm that this partnership is both broad and deep in its development.

"We are two big countries. We are not allies, but we are very close. In some areas, our relationship is even stronger than just an alliance," he said, adding that he is convinced the two countries will have a good future. He also expressed confidence that the partnership will yield more positive outcomes.

Looking ahead, Denisov pledged to continue "serving the people wholeheartedly", drawing inspiration from the fundamental purpose of the Communist Party of China.

Exploring the future



A visitor seeks information from exhibitors on Sunday at the 10th China-Russia Expo in Harbin, Heilongjiang province. The event, which opened on the same day and runs through Thursday, has gathered more than 1,500 enterprises from 46 countries and regions. The expo covers an area of 55,000 square meters and sheds spotlight on future industries such as intelligent equipment, digital security, green building materials and new energy storage. CAO JIANXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Health: Climate, TCM network draw intl visitors

From page 1

The proportion of days with excellent air quality exceeds 99 percent annually and the island boasts abundant coastal zones, forests and hot spring mineral resources, as well as over 133,000 hectares of land under cultivation for Chinese medicinal herbs.

In addition, TCM hospitals, therapy clinics and wellness institutions spread across urban and rural areas form a TCM network that covers everything from basic therapies to high-end services.

Sanya Traditional Chinese Medicine Hospital alone has served over 130,000 overseas visitors from more than 40 countries and regions.

Zang noted that the hospital has established a professional TCM health assessment center which uses the four diagnostic methods of TCM, namely inspection, auscultation and olfaction, inquiry and palpation, along with specialized instruments for constitution identification.

What travelers find here is no fleeting novelty, but a quiet cultural immersion that increasingly feels like a "very Chinese moment".

Lie down. Receive the fine needles. Sip the dark decoction. Experience the *tuina* massage. Then let the island do the rest.

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WORLD

UK's election swings signal European shift

Outcome reflects rightward drift and political fragmentation, experts say

By YANG RAN
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The recent local and regional election results in the UK signal a notable shift in the nation's political landscape, with far-right parties making unprecedented gains at the expense of traditional powerhouses.

Experts note this outcome mirrors a broader trend of rightward drift and political fragmentation occurring across Europe, driven by growing public dissatisfaction with the political and social status quo.

The results from Britain's local and regional elections, released on May 9, saw far-right Reform UK score its biggest breakthrough yet. Across around 5,000 council seats in 136 English councils, the party gained over 1,400 seats and took control of 14 councils, while Labour lost almost 1,500 seats.

Cui Hongjian, a professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University's Academy of Regional and Global Governance, said the message from the election results is that the traditional two-party system in Britain is under strain, and political fragmentation and polarization are continuing to rise. He said this trend mirrors the broader rightward shift seen across European politics in recent years.

This phenomenon of surging far-right parties challenging established political forces is not unique to the UK alone. In Germany, the far-right Alternative for Germany has evolved from a fringe protest party into a major political force, with an INSA survey from April putting its support at a record 28 percent — ahead of Chancellor Friedrich Merz's conservative CDU/CSU bloc.

France, while exhibiting a slower transformation, is also witnessing a normalization of the far right. The far-right National Rally is now France's largest parliamentary party and enjoys high standing in the polls, signaling its potential to significantly influence future elections. Similarly, in Portugal, the far-right Chega party has experienced an impressive rise in popularity since its founding in 2019.

Sense of discontent

Wu Huiping, deputy director of the German Studies Center at Tongji University, said the rightward shift is a widespread and persistent trend across Europe in recent years. She attributed this trend to a widespread sense of social discontent.

Many countries are grappling with deep-seated problems in the social, economic, and security spheres, fueling public discontent with establishment parties and paving the way for rightwing populist and far-right forces to gain ground, she said.

She said even some center-right parties, sensing voter anger over issues like immigration, have shifted to the right to some extent, accelerating the overall political realignment. In some cases, even left-wing populist parties have adopted what she described as "left-wing conservatism" on certain sociocultural issues, further contributing to the rightward drift.

Jian Junbo, director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the rise of far-right and populist parties reflects the failure of traditional parties to adequately address the pressing concerns of ordinary people.

"For example, economic stagnation, livelihood issues, and immigration issues are all major concerns for the people. Traditional parties have failed to solve these problems, which has led to the increasing popularity of these far-right parties," he said.

According to a report released in April by the Centre for Research and Analysis on Migration at RFBerlin, the number of immigrants living in the European Union reached a record 64.2 million in 2025, an increase of about 2.1 million from the previous year.

Experts also point to a growing trend of political polarization across Europe, making it increasingly difficult for centrist parties — once dominant in major European nations — to survive.

The results of the French municipal elections, held in March, showcased this dynamic, with left-wing alliances scoring victories, the far-right National Rally making local gains, and the ruling coalition suffering losses.

Jasna Plevnik, president of the Geoeconomic Forum Croatia, said this trend does not lead to optimism. "The centrists have given up their political identity, turned their neoliberal ideas into a soft right-wing framework and formed contradictory political coalitions to stay in power," she said. "In that context, voters would rather vote for true right-wing or left-wing parties."

Looking ahead, analysts anticipate a continued shift toward conservatism and even populism across Europe, with potentially complex implications.

Cui Hongjian suggested that the rise in conservative-populist governments, with their stance of prioritizing their own country, could lead to protectionist policies in trade and a more negative attitude toward international engagement.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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World Health Organization workers mobilize essential medical supplies and emergency kits at Jomo Kenyatta International Airport in Nairobi, Kenya, on Monday, to support the regions affected by the Ebola outbreak. WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION VIA REUTERS

Africa ramps up Ebola response as cases rise

By SHARON NAKOLA
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Countries across Africa and beyond are intensifying measures to prevent and control the latest Ebola outbreaks in Central and East Africa, which have killed more than 100 people, following the World Health Organization's declaration of a public health emergency of international concern.

DR Congo's Health Minister Samuel Roger Kamba said on Tuesday that the death toll had risen to 131, with 513 suspected Ebola cases. Uganda has so far reported two confirmed cases and one death.

The outbreaks, linked to the Bundibugyo strain of the Ebola virus, have triggered heightened surveillance, emergency preparedness and border screening measures across the region.

Africa CDC warned that insecurity in eastern DR Congo, mining-related mobility, weak infection prevention systems and intense cross-border movement near Uganda, Rwanda and South Sudan could accelerate the spread of the virus if response efforts are not strengthened quickly.

Abdalla Hussein, Doctors Without Borders' desk manager for South Sudan, warned on Tuesday that insecurity and weak surveillance systems in conflict-affected areas could allow Ebola infections to spread undetected. He said fragile healthcare systems in affected countries would require strong international support to manage the outbreak effectively.

"All the conditions we have discussed today — armed conflict, limited access and poor surveillance in some areas — make detection and response much more difficult," Hussein said, adding that humanitarian agencies were preparing for the possibility of wider regional spread, including into South Sudan.

Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya said: "The confirmation of the *Bundibugyo ebolavirus* in interconnected countries reminds us once again that Africa's health security is indivisible."

Action urged

"We must act early, act together and act based on science," he added.

Kaseya said Africa CDC had activated emergency coordination mechanisms to mobilize financial and technical resources, reinforce laboratory and surveillance systems and support preparedness activities in neighboring countries.

The African Union Commission Chairperson, Mahmoud Ali Youssouf, called for stronger continental solidarity and coordination to contain the outbreaks, describing them as a major public health concern requiring coordinated continental action.

"The protection of African lives and the safeguarding of our continental health security remain our highest priority," Youssouf said.

The WHO said on Monday that nearly 12 metric tons of emergency medical supplies had been delivered to support response efforts in DR Congo within 24 hours.

The WHO dispatched 4.7 metric tons of medical supplies and equipment to Bunia, while another 7 tons arrived from Kinshasa alongside 35 WHO experts and first responders deployed to affected areas.

Meanwhile, the East African Community Secretariat has urged member states to strengthen surveillance, improve emergency preparedness and intensify cross-border coordination following confirmation of the outbreak in eastern DR Congo.

In Kenya, the Ministry of Health has directed county governments and border authorities to heighten surveillance and screening measures, particularly in areas with significant cross-border movement and international travel.

Beyond Africa, the United States Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also announced enhanced travel screening measures after a US healthcare worker tested positive for the Bundibugyo strain.

Ebola is a severe viral disease transmitted through direct contact with bodily fluids of infected people, contaminated materials or infected animals.

Shooting in mosque leaves 5 dead

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Three worshippers and two teenage suspects were killed on Monday in a shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego that authorities are investigating as a possible hate crime, according to police and local media reports.

The violence erupted shortly before noon at the mosque in San Diego's Clairemont neighborhood, prompting a large-scale law enforcement response and alarming Muslim communities across California.

San Diego Police Chief Scott Wahl said officers arrived within four minutes after receiving reports of an active shooter at the center. Police found three adults fatally shot outside the mosque, including a security guard whom officials credited with helping prevent additional casualties.

"The security guard played a pivotal role in keeping this from being much worse," Wahl told reporters at a news conference.

As officers searched the mosque and the surrounding area, additional reports of gunfire emerged several blocks away. Authorities later found the two suspects, aged 17 and 18, dead inside a vehicle from apparent self-inflicted gunshot wounds, police said.

Investigators are examining whether anti-Muslim extremism played a role in the attack. According to the Los Angeles Times, investigators discovered anti-Islamic writings, hate-related material and a suicide note referencing racial pride inside the suspects' vehicle. Authorities also believe that at least one of the firearms used may have belonged to a parent of one of the suspects.

The Federal Bureau of Investigation is assisting local police in the investigation, which authorities said is being considered a hate crime until proven otherwise due to the location of the attack.

The Islamic Center of San Diego, one of the region's largest mosques, also operates an accredited Islamic school. Police evacuated students and staff members during the incident, and community leaders later confirmed that no children were injured.

"This is obviously very alarming," said Deana Helmy, chair of the Islamic Shura Council of Southern California. "This is a house of worship. There's a school with children there who are trying to learn."

Taha Hassane, imam of the mosque, said the shooting had deeply shaken the local Muslim community.

"We have never experienced a tragedy like this before," Hassane said. "It is extremely outrageous to target a place of worship."

The attack occurred during a holy period in the Islamic calendar during which Muslims around the world prepare for the Hajj pilgrimage.

Civil rights groups, including the California chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, said they are working with mosques statewide to review security measures following the shooting.

California Governor Gavin Newsom and San Diego Mayor Todd Gloria said they had been briefed on the incident and thanked first responders for their efforts.

Authorities said the investigation remains ongoing as police seek to determine the circumstances and motives behind the attack.

Agencies contributed to this story.



Two women embrace following the shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego in California on Monday. ZOE MEYERS / AFP

Household debt in US hits record $18.8 T

By BELINDA ROBINSON
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US household debt hit an all-time high of $18.8 trillion in the first quarter of the year, a report by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York found, as some Americans found it increasingly difficult to pay their bills and manage their debts.

The findings from the quarterly report on household debt and credit, released in mid-May by the Federal Reserve Bank of New York's Center for Microeconomic Data, found that Americans owed money on mortgages, credit cards, autos and student loans. The overall increase in debt was driven by higher balances on auto loans and mortgages.

"It's a struggle to keep our finances in check," Sarah, 39, a married mother-of-two from Brooklyn, New York, told China Daily. She admitted feeling "embarrassed" about how high her debt was.

"With our mortgage payment and what we owe on our credit cards, student loans and the cost of having two young kids under five, it's a lot. We feel like we're barely above water some months. My husband works full-time, I'm a freelancer. It gets me down, yes."

The New York Fed said that mortgage balances rose $21 billion in the first quarter and totaled $13.19 trillion at the end of March.

Credit card balances fell by $25 billion but stood at $1.25 trillion.

Auto loan balances increased by $18 billion to $1.69 trillion in the first quarter of the year.

Student loan balances were described as flat, decreasing by $6 billion to $1.66 trillion.

But 10 percent of student loan balances were delinquent, up from 9.6 percent in the fourth quarter of 2025.

"Student loan delinquencies are returning to pre-pandemic levels," Daniel Mangrum, a research economist at the New York Fed, said in a statement.

Despite this, the report found that, overall, Americans' credit was "stable".

However, it warned that those who will feel the most strain are the young and low-income households.

Carlos Savala, 71, originally from Costa Rica, lives in Manhattan, New York in subsidized housing. The retiree is fed up with the cost of everything, especially food, and gets free meals from a food pantry in midtown three days a week.

"Everything is expensive! It all costs more to me, especially food. I don't cook. This place helps me out on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. I'm very thankful to them for what they do," Savala said. "On the other days, when they're not open, I go to other places ... You've got to pull back on the nice things to afford the basics and your bills."

The rise in household debt came as inflation rose for a second consecutive month, data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics shows.

The Consumer Price Index rose at a seasonally adjusted 0.6 percent in April, making the one-year pace 3.8 percent — its highest level since March 2023.

Rising gasoline and energy costs linked to tensions in the Middle East contributed to the increase in inflation, according to analysts.

The national average cost of a gallon of regular gas was $4.53, the highest level since 2022, the American Automobile Association said on Tuesday.

Arnold P., 55, an economist and financial advisor from Brooklyn, New York, withheld his surname to protect the anonymity of his clients. He advises clients on tight incomes to focus on paying the essentials first and then tackle their debt.

"I see a lot of people who have massive amounts of debt," he said. "It's usually a mortgage, or rent, credit card debt and college loans combined, which means they find that their debt-to-income ratio is too high, exceeding 40 to 50 percent. Some are in serious financial trouble. Many really need my help."

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WORLD

Washington halts attack as talks gain pace

Standoff shifts toward diplomacy after Gulf push points to 'acceptable' offer

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

US President Donald Trump said he was deferring a "planned" military attack on Iran, which was supposed to take place on Tuesday, following "serious negotiations" with Gulf states that would be "acceptable" to Washington and its allies.

In a social media post, Trump said he had been asked by the leaders of Qatar, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates to "hold off" the strikes as "a deal will be made" that would be acceptable to the United States, its allies and "countries in the Middle East and beyond".

"This deal will include, importantly, no nuclear weapons for Iran!" he wrote on Monday, adding that he had instructed the defense secretary, the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the US military "to be prepared to go forward with a full, large-scale assault of Iran, on a moment's notice, in the event that an acceptable deal is not reached".

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian said a dialogue "does not mean surrender".

Iran enters into dialogue "with dignity, authority, and the preservation of the nation's rights", he said on X, adding that under no circumstances will Tehran retreat from the legal rights of the people and the country.

"We will serve the people with logic and with all our might, to the end, and safeguard the interests and honor of Iran," he said.

Major General Ali Abdollahi, commander of Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters, warned the US and its allies not to repeat a "strategic mistake" and miscalculation against Iran, as a renewed act of aggression would be met with a "swift, decisive, powerful and extensive" response.

The US and Iran have been threatening each other as they tussle with one another over sticking points in a stalled ceasefire deal and control over the Strait of Hormuz.

Meanwhile, US Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer announced on X that Senate Democrats would force an eighth vote on a War Powers Resolution this week, which aims to curtail the president's capacity to wage war against Iran.

Schumer called for Republican support for the resolution and to "end the war (and) get our troops out of harm's way".

Trump's approval rating has dipped to a record low amid the war against Tehran, according to a New York Times/Siena poll published on Monday.

Overall, 64 percent of respondents said it was wrong for the US to go to war with Iran, while 30 percent said it was the right decision. The majority of Republicans polled thought it was the right decision, while 73 percent of independents considered it as the incorrect decision.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi told the Parliament's national security commission that Iran is not going to give up on its right to enrich uranium, Al Jazeera reported. The US has insisted that Iran must stop enriching uranium for the next two decades.

Blockade of strait

Iran has also asked the US to end its blockade of the Strait of Hormuz, but the US has said that Iran must first reopen the strait before it will do so.

Farhan Haq, deputy spokesman for the United Nations secretary-general, had earlier said the UN does not want any particular entity to restrict access to the strategic waterway.

"Ultimately, for us, we want to make sure that there's no constraint to freedom of navigation on the high seas and on the Strait of Hormuz," he said.

Rasha Al Joundy, a senior researcher at the Dubai Public Policy Research Centre, told China Daily that it is "obvious" that the US does not want to restart the war, especially if there is a possibility for a deal with Iran.

"Trump has a very difficult situation. If he starts the war again, it would mean a more dangerous one, in terms of targets and reactions," she said. "Then, in terms of the global economy, he needs this deal to come through and to be valid."

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com

Kicking up dust



A masked cyclist rides through a dust-choked street during a severe sandstorm in Najaf, Iraq, on Monday, as sweeping clouds of dust triggered more than 800 suffocation cases across the country. Dust storms are common in Iraq, often triggered by desertification, sparse vegetation cover and prolonged droughts. ANMAR KHALIL / AP

China's multilateral approach commended at forum

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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China's initiatives to promote multilateral cooperation and governance contribute to global peace and development toward a shared future, experts said at a forum in Hong Kong on Tuesday.

"It is no doubt that we are living in a world where no single power can resolve all problems and that unilateralism is not an answer," said Irina Bokova, former director-general of UNESCO and a senior adviser to the Board of Directors of the Europe-Asia Center.

In her special address at the 2026 Hong Kong Forum on Cooperation and Development, Bokova said the China-proposed Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and Global Governance Initiative support multilateralism, a concept at the core of the United Nations Charter.

Romano Prodi, former prime minister of Italy and former president of the European Commission, said via video, "Peace must be built step-by-step from dialogue, through mutual respect and through the willingness to listen."

With Europe and China both playing crucial roles on the global stage, Prodi said he hopes the two sides will continue to cooperate to create a peaceful environment for the world.

In a keynote address, Ivan Polyakov, vice-president of the Russian International Affairs Council, said that multilateralism is of utmost importance for creating a new and sustainable information space. Ties between media networks lie in the existence of common channels, exchange and shared values, he said.

Polyakov, also chairman of TV BRICS, said the multilingual international platform has united more than 100 media outlets worldwide, with the materials distributed to about 80 countries.

Josef Gregory Mahoney, a professor of politics and international relations at East China Normal University in Shanghai, highlighted the significance of China's new internationalism in global affairs, saying it stands in sharp contrast to the binary, us-versus-them mindset of certain countries.

> "It is no doubt that we are living in a world where no single power can resolve all problems and that unilateralism is not an answer."
>
> **Irina Bokova,** former UNESCO director-general

China's initiatives have always aimed for a shared future for humanity and the actualization of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, he said.

Cheung Kwok-kwan, deputy secretary for justice of the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, said the city can also contribute to the building of a community with a shared future for humanity under "one country, two systems".

For example, he said the launch of the International Organization for Mediation in Hong Kong last year is important for improving global governance and promoting world peace and stability, with the city ranking second-most preferred seat of arbitration globally in the 2025 International Arbitration Survey.

Echoing the view, Chow Man-kong, a professor of practice in the Department of Data Science at City University of Hong Kong, said he believes the city will be able to demonstrate to the world its strength and capabilities as an international legal and dispute-resolution hub.

"It will further promote the vision of win-win cooperation and shared development within the international community," said Chow, who is also chairman of the Greater Bay Area Development Foundation.

Themed "Cooperation and Development: Advancing the Building of a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity", the forum was organized by the Academy of Contemporary China and World Studies, Peace Research Institute Hong Kong, and China-Europe-America Global Initiative, bringing together more than 100 participants from nearly 10 countries.

Debris of disaster



Firefighters stand beside the rubble of a collapsed apartment building from the Wilhelmian era (1888-1918) in Goerlitz, Germany, on Monday, as rescue crews searched for three missing residents. Police said a gas explosion may have caused the collapse. PAUL GLASER / DPA

G7 finance chiefs meet in Paris to tackle energy crisis

By **EARLE GALE** in London
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Finance ministers and central bank governors from Canada, the European Union, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom and the United States met for a second day of talks in Paris on Tuesday, seeking solutions to high energy prices caused by the Iran war.

The G7 finance ministers' meeting came a year on from Washington's imposition of tariffs on Western allies and in the wake of an economic crisis of its making, with attendees saying they hoped the US would realize multilateralism was the way forward.

Roland Lescure, France's finance minister, told The New York Times that negotiations to reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which has been effectively closed because of the conflict, clearly need international cooperation.

"When we saw that, we felt that more than ever the G7 had a role to play, and that engaging in conversations, multilateral if possible, was the right way of addressing this," he said.

As he arrived for the talks, he added, "We're going to show that multilateralism is useful and that it works."

Lescure acknowledged on Tuesday that two days of talks were "sometimes difficult", even as the group agreed a statement committing to multilateral cooperation in combating growing economic risks.

"We have had frank, sometimes difficult, direct discussions to find long-term and short-term solutions to major global economic challenges in order to guarantee economic stability," he said after a meeting of the finance ministers, including US Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent.

However, the final communique of the G7 ministers reaffirmed "our commitment to multilateral cooperation in addressing risks to the global economy".

Bessent led the US delegation at the talks, which included regular G7 members as well as Brazil, India, Kenya, Qatar, South Korea, Syria, the United Arab Emirates and Ukraine.

The meeting came in the wake of the International Monetary Fund warning that damage to global oil markets caused by the blockage of the Strait of Hormuz could slow growth, fuel inflation and cause a global recession.

At Monday's session, the ministers highlighted growing concern about a sell-off of bonds and public debt for fear of impending inflation caused by the war.

Joachim Nagel, the head of Germany's central bank, told Reuters that policymakers want to calm markets and give them positive momentum.

The finance ministers also planned to use the gathering to coordinate critical raw material supplies.

However, Tuesday's session began with the EU criticizing the US' new 30-day extension of its sanctions waiver, which allows purchases of Russian seaborne oil.

Washington said the move was aimed at lowering energy prices.

AFP contributed to this story.

Cuba warns US military action would cause 'bloodbath'

HAVANA — Cuba's President Miguel Diaz-Canel said on Monday that any US military action against Cuba would lead to a "bloodbath" with incalculable consequences for regional peace and stability.

"The threats of military aggression against Cuba by the world's most powerful country are well known," Diaz-Canel wrote on X. "Such threats already constitute an international crime."

Cuba "does not represent a threat, nor does it have aggressive plans or intentions against any country", he added.

Cuba is already suffering a "multidimensional aggression" by the United States and has the "absolute and legitimate right" to defend itself from any military action, he said.

The comments came after US outlet Axios reported on Sunday that Cuba had acquired more than 300 military drones and had discussed plans to use them to attack US targets, citing classified intelligence.

Havana said Washington was fabricating a case to justify potential military intervention.

Tensions between the two countries have risen sharply in recent days. The US government imposed sanctions on 11 Cuban officials on Monday, including the country's communications minister and several military leaders, and its main intelligence agency.

Washington had earlier imposed an oil blockade on Havana by threatening sanctions on countries supplying it with fuel.

Cuba has received no oil shipments since a Russian tanker delivered around 700,000 barrels — about two weeks' worth for the island country of 10 million people — in late March.

Diaz-Canel said on Monday that the US executive order that "pursues and threatens" third parties who wish to sell fuel to Cuba was "immoral, illegal and criminal".

Also on Monday, a ship laden with humanitarian aid from Mexico and Uruguay arrived in Havana to help ease the spiraling crises.

The ship, which departed from a Mexican port, includes personal hygiene items and 1,700 tons of grains, powdered milk and other food items, according to Cuban state media.

Cuba's food industry minister, Alberto Lopez Diaz, said the items arrive "at a time of great economic hardship".

AGENCIES—XINHUA



A ship laden with humanitarian aid from Mexico and Uruguay arrives in Havana, Cuba, on Monday. XINHUA

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COMMENT

Editorials

China-Russia ties benefit both sides, and are stabilizing force in a turbulent world

Russian President Vladimir Putin's state visit to China on Tuesday and Wednesday carries practical significance for the future development of bilateral ties and for global stability.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination, the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation and the year to kick-start events of the China-Russia Years of Education. The steady advancement of relations between the two nations demonstrates the significance of the high-level exchanges between Beijing and Moscow.

In a video address delivered on Tuesday before his visit to China, Putin noted that "regular mutual visits and Russia-China top-level talks are an important and integral part of our joint efforts to promote the entire range of relations between our two countries and unlock their truly limitless potential".

Under the strategic guidance of head-of-state diplomacy, bilateral ties have maintained stability, continuously deepening practical cooperation across different sectors.

In the process, the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era has achieved sustained development, presenting itself as a reference for a new type of major-country relationship featuring non-alliance, non-confrontation and non-targeting of third parties.

Pragmatic cooperation remains one of the most dynamic pillars of bilateral relations. In recent years, China-Russia trade has maintained robust momentum despite a complex external environment. The structure of bilateral trade is also undergoing continuous optimization, with cooperation extending beyond traditional energy and raw materials to emerging sectors.

The political mutual trust and economic cooperation between the two neighbors reinforce one another in a virtuous cycle. The structural complementarity of the two economies is increasingly evident and is being effectively translated into tangible benefits for both peoples.

The people-to-people dimension of bilateral cooperation is also flourishing. Cultural exchanges between the two peoples have become increasingly vibrant, thanks to a series of new policies facilitating communication.

Chinese tourists are visiting Russia in growing numbers, while more Russian people are traveling to China for sightseeing, business and cultural exchanges. Such interactions further strengthen the social foundation of bilateral friendship and inject new vitality into the long-term development of the relationship.

Beyond bilateral cooperation, China and Russia maintain close coordination on international and regional affairs. The two countries share similar or convergent positions on many major global issues, firmly supporting the purposes and principles of the United Nations Charter, advocating a multipolar world order and promoting greater democracy in international relations. Within multilateral mechanisms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China and Russia work closely together to defend multilateralism, oppose unilateral actions and hegemonic practices, and promote greater representation for developing countries in global governance.

Against the backdrop of rising protectionism, unilateralism and geopolitical fragmentation, the China-Russia relationship serves as a stabilizing force in a turbulent world.

During Putin's visit, the two heads of state will exchange views on bilateral cooperation in various fields and on international and regional issues of mutual interest. As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said, the two sides will take the opportunity of Putin's visit to continue deepening and elevating relations, so as to inject more stability and positive energy to the world.

The China-Russia relationship reflects the sovereign choices of two independent nations pursuing development, security and mutually beneficial cooperation based on their own national interests and the broader interests of regional and global stability.

As the two countries commemorate important historical milestones in bilateral ties, it is anticipated that Putin's visit will further deepen strategic coordination, expand practical cooperation and inject greater certainty and positive energy into a volatile world.

WHA's rejection of Taiwan proposal justified

No matter what the Democratic Progressive Party authorities of Taiwan say or do to whitewash their secessionist scheme, it does not change the fact that Taiwan is part of China, and the trend toward China's national reunification is irresistible.

The international community has consistently said no to any notion of "Taiwan independence". The latest decision by the 79th World Health Assembly to reject the proposal for the Chinese island to participate in its plenary session in Geneva as an observer underscores this.

For the 10th consecutive year the WHA has upheld the one-China principle, as enshrined in United Nations resolutions and other instruments of international law, by denying Taiwan's participation. This consistent stance of the WHA demonstrates the widespread recognition of China's sovereignty over the island and the importance of adhering to international law.

The refusal to entertain proposals that suggest Taiwan holds a status implying "statehood" is a testament to the organization's respect for China's sovereignty and territorial integrity.

The DPP's separatist stance has eroded the political foundation necessary for Taiwan's participation in international organizations such as the WHA as an observer. Its attempts to "internationalize" the Taiwan question by pushing for the island's participation in global forums under the guise of being an "independent nation" have failed to gain traction. The few parties that support this are simply using the island as a card to serve their own narrow interests. "China's Taiwan region, unless given approval by the central government of China, has no basis, reason or right to participate in the WHA," a spokesperson for the Chinese Foreign Ministry said on Monday.

The rejection of Taiwan's participation in the WHA shows that the majority of the international community recognizes and upholds the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 and WHA Resolution 25.1, which affirm the government of the People's Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.

The special arrangement allowing Taiwan to participate in WHA activities as an observer under the name "Chinese Taipei" was made on the basis of the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle. This policy was upheld by the Ma Ying-jeou authorities from 2009 to 2016.

This political foundation facilitated Taiwan's participation in international organizations in a reasonable and appropriate manner, while extensive cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation conducted in various fields enhanced the well-being of residents on both sides.

Claims that Taiwan's exclusion from the WHA creates "gaps" in global health security are politically motivated falsehoods. Under the one-China principle, Beijing has made arrangements for Taiwan's participation in global health affairs. Health experts from Taiwan can attend the technical meetings of the World Health Organization, and there are mechanisms for information exchange under the International Health Regulations.

In the past year alone, 18 medical and health experts from Taiwan have participated in WHO technical activities, covering critical areas such as immunization strategy, vaccine development, mental health, and digital health. This demonstrates the central government's commitment to addressing the health concerns of Taiwan compatriots and ensuring their well-being.

Taiwan enjoys unimpeded and full-fledged information exchange mechanisms with the WHO and countries worldwide. This ensures that Taiwan can promptly access and report information related to health emergencies, allowing it to remain integrated in global health efforts.

Additionally, the two sides across the Taiwan Strait have established information-sharing mechanisms for infectious disease outbreaks and have held events such as the Hospital CEO Forum. The record shows that the central government cares deeply about the health and welfare of Taiwan residents and is prepared to do everything possible for their benefit.

If the DPP authorities want to return to the WHA, they must adhere to the 1992 Consensus and stop the reckless push for "Taiwan independence". The DPP authorities' current approach of seeking to tie their political goal to the well-being of Taiwan residents only leads to international isolation.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Tokyo's draft defense white paper self-serving melodrama

Japan has always had a flair for melodrama. The draft of Tokyo's 2026 defense white paper, released this week, reads like a screenplay in which China looms in every Pacific wave and cloud.

The paper warns of China's "increasing military activities" and cites the simultaneous deployment of two Chinese aircraft carriers in the Pacific as though Beijing had parked them beside Tokyo Disneyland.

What Japan tries to portray as "menacing behavior" is nothing more than routine military exercises and legitimate maritime rights-protection operations carried out by China in proper sea areas.

But in Tokyo today fear is the cryptocurrency of choice. And no country in the region has learned to monetize fear more elegantly than modern Japan.

The right-wing forces in Japan have spent years polishing the "China threat" narrative the way a pottery master perfects the glazing on a cup: meticulously, obsessively and with spiritual devotion.

Every law enforcement patrol of China in its own waters becomes a "provocation". Every naval exercise on the high seas becomes an existential "threat". The result is a national atmosphere in which Japan's military expansion is presented as a "moral" necessity.

The irony, of course, is thick enough to spread on toast.

Japan — the nation whose Imperial Army once rampaged across the Asia-Pacific — now speaks with grave "concern" about regional militarization while steadily loosening the restraints of its own pacifist Constitution. Over the past decade, Tokyo has transformed its defense posture at breathtaking speed: bigger military budgets, missile exports, long-range strike capabilities, aircraft-carrier conversions, hypersonic weapons programs, stockpiles of nuclear materials.

Japanese leaders insist this build-up is "exclusively defensive". Yet, "defense" increasingly appears to involve aircraft carriers, offensive missile systems and regional military integration with the United States' geopolitical game. The language is technocratic, but the trajectory is unmistakable: Postwar restraint is quietly giving way to "normalized" remilitarization.

The US has long encouraged Japan to "do more" militarily in the region. Tokyo's draft defense white paper fits neatly into that script. China becomes the indispensable "villain" needed to justify Japan's moves.

But the public is not entirely convinced. Japan's military expansion has repeatedly triggered domestic unease and protests. The ghosts of Hiroshima and Nagasaki are not abstractions in Japan; they are family memories.

There is another uncomfortable truth buried beneath the draft defense white paper's alarmism: The international community sees very clearly that the current tension in Japan-China relations is caused by Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi's dangerous and erroneous remarks on the Taiwan question made last November during a Diet session. The Japanese government's subsequent attempts to distort facts and pose as the victim have truly made it a disgrace in the eyes of other nations.

Japan condemns regional tensions while actively participating in increasingly assertive security arrangements with the US and the Philippines, with China as the intended target. It issues warnings about instability, even as its own policies risk accelerating an arms race across East Asia. It calls for peace, yet its politicians continue to pay tribute or offer sacrifices at the Yasukuni Shrine, where convicted World War II war criminals from Japan are openly honored. This is the geopolitical equivalent of throwing gasoline near a bonfire while lecturing others about fire safety.

The real danger is the emotional climate the Takaichi government is trying to create. Asia does not need another century organized around paranoia and military blocs. It certainly does not need Japan — a nation that inflicted one of the world's most painful wartime histories — edging toward remilitarization under the banner of "defense".

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Education must adapt to AI-led transformation

Editor's note: *The rapid rise of artificial intelligence has deeply affected the education system, the labor market and the training of talent. Redstar News spoke to Han Xibin, a senior fellow at the China Association for Educational Technology, on how AI education needs to consider the broader context of industrial change and economic restructuring. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China is actively promoting AI education, but it emphasizes the need to proceed "prudently". For younger children, the use and study of AI should take place under the guidance of teachers and parents.

At the early stage, the goal is primarily to stimulate the curiosity and interest of the student. More structured and knowledge-based learning is introduced in high school, where education focuses on developing the ability to collaborate effectively with AI systems, alongside strengthening critical thinking and creativity.

One growing area of attention is the integration of science education with general AI literacy. Earlier phases of educational digitalization mainly leveraged technology to enhance students' learning and communication abilities. The current AI revolution, however, is reshaping the underlying logic of education itself. Students must be trained to use AI as naturally and easily as they use pen and paper.

Education has two core functions. One is to nurture children's intellectual and emotional development and support their healthy growth. The other is to prepare young people to meet the needs of society.

By the university stage, however, education must also address the employability of the student. In this sense, AI is less capable in areas related to the humanities and human development, and works more effectively in disseminating knowledge.

Education, however, is more like agriculture than industry. Agriculture depends on the right environment, such as temperature, sunshine and water. If universities focus only on delivering knowledge, AI might indeed do that more efficiently. But universities also bear the greater responsibility of cultivating top-tier talent. That requires providing students with personalized environments and long-term support that machines alone cannot offer.

From a broader perspective, AI has already become an unavoidable force shaping society. Its influence first emerged in the economy and industry, and is now profoundly transforming the labor market. On the one hand, major internet companies are streamlining their workforces. On the other, the rise of the one-person company model is accelerating. Both trends reflect how AI is reshaping work structures and redefining job requirements.

Traditionally, companies relied on standardized job systems built around fixed responsibilities assigned to individuals because such structures were easier to manage and evaluate. AI has disrupted this model by breaking jobs down into specific tasks.

At the same time, new forms of employment are emerging. These new roles often require hybrid skill sets such as combining technical expertise, management capabilities and proficiency in using AI tools.

Non-standardized jobs are generally more difficult to replace than standardized ones. After training AI systems to handle repetitive tasks, many companies find that replacing more flexible and complex work is often too costly or impractical given current application limits.

Whether education systems can keep pace with such rapid and complex transformations remains an open and deeply important question. Education, therefore, must be examined within the broader context of industrial change and economic restructuring.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

DIMITRI DE BOER

Code green

China's environmental codification provides a foundation for its continued green development



China passed the Ecological and Environmental Code in March, covering climate action, nature protection and pollution control. It lays a strong legal foundation for China's push toward green and low-carbon development. This is not just good for the environment; it's smart governance.

With the global supply of fossil fuels in disarray, China's rapid advances in the deployment of renewable energy are already helping shield the country from the worst shocks. The share of clean energy in China and the sector's contribution to economic growth have been rising consistently in recent years. Electric cars and scooters now dominate the streets, and are rapidly incorporating cutting-edge features such as self-driving technology. Modern public transport systems are also being rolled out at a rapid pace, reducing the reliance on personal vehicles. By now, the share of oil and gas in China's primary energy supply is substantially lower than that in the United States and the European Union.

China is proving to the world what environmental advocates have been saying for decades: Green and low-carbon development can be firmly intertwined with economic growth, innovation, energy independence, improvements in living standards and long-term sustainability.

China's adoption of the Ecological and Environmental Code provides a solid legal basis upon which it will continue on its green development path, no matter the external circumstances. It mandates the Chinese government to "actively participate in and play a leading role in global climate governance". This is significant, especially in the face of certain other major economies retreating from multilateralism and global environmental governance. The code also provides a much-needed legal basis for China's national carbon market, which is the largest in the world.

The code gives greater certainty to China's implementation of international conventions on climate change, biodiversity and desertification, by legally mandating the government to fulfill its obligations under international treaties. And it will promote new conventions, such as the one on plastics which is currently being negotiated, and the newly ratified treaty to protect the high seas, known as the Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction Agreement. China's role is indispensable in addressing the rapid loss of fish in the oceans.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

I've lived in China for almost 25 years, and personally experienced the remarkable improvements in environmental quality.

The most obvious change has been the reduction in air pollution. In late 2013, the government started to disclose real-time air quality data. Back then, Beijing's sky would regularly turn gray and hazy, as the air quality index maxed out at 500. This went viral on newly available social media, sparking a national public outcry, which greatly strengthened the government's resolve to tackle the problem. An intense campaign followed, and the average annual PM2.5 density dropped from 89.5 micrograms per cubic meter in 2013 to 58 mcg/cu m in 2017, and further to 27 mcg/cu m in 2025.

Similarly, remarkable improvements have been made in surface water quality, afforestation, biodiversity conservation, waste management and more. Tangible progress is being made in the building of a "Beautiful China". Although there are still instances of pollution and much more work needs to be done, most of the time we can see blue skies and breathe fresh air.

And then there is the energy transition. Solar and wind are being deployed at truly astonishing rates. In 2025, China's clean energy electricity generation from hydro, nuclear, wind, solar and other sources reached 4.25 trillion kilowatt-hours, a year-on-year increase of 14.4 percent. To better manage the variable output of these new power sources, the deployment of grid-level energy storage is now a top priority. In the coming years, technological improvements and economies of scale are also expected to result in a rapid lowering of the cost of battery storage.

This combination of affordable renewables and power storage is poised to profoundly change the world. In the near future, building a brand new solar or wind power plant with storage capacity is going to be cheaper than running an existing coal-fired power plant. At that point, a large number of fossil fuel projects will become loss-making assets.

With all the upheaval in global energy markets, energy security has risen to the top of national priorities.

Structural dependence on fossil fuels is leaving societies and economies exposed to shocks that drive insecurity, higher costs and greater fragility. That dependence can be cut by accelerating the shift to clean, renewable and resilient energy systems.

Oil and gas markets are volatile, politicized and conflict-prone. Building more fossil fuel infrastructure perpetuates external dependence and carries increasing financial risk, on top of aggravating the climate disaster.

To my surprise, some in the international community argue that it would be risky for their economies to be dependent on imported solar panels, wind turbines or batteries. The current situation is a perfect illustration of how this argument doesn't make sense. Supply disruptions of oil and gas are leading to very real economic disruptions, especially in developing economies from Southeast Asia to Africa. High oil and gas prices are also driving up energy bills in the US and Europe.

By contrast, renewables, once installed, keep producing power at almost no cost, helping to shield against these impacts. Plainly put, a disruption in the supply of oil and gas risks grinding economies to a halt, whereas a shortage of solar panels only risks causing economies to miss their climate targets.

Renewables are also much more dependable in a situation of conflict. Fossil and nuclear power plants are large facilities, which makes them vulnerable to attacks. Nuclear is a very scary source of power in a conflict situation, given that damage to a facility could lead to a nuclear disaster with lasting regional consequences.

China's progress in green technologies has long been underestimated by policymakers and incumbent industries in advanced economies. However, it can no longer be ignored. Now is the time to take a clear-eyed view of these successes, and build upon China's experience.

Economies around the world, including developing and emerging ones, have the potential to play a greater role in rapidly growing global green tech supply chains. By working with China, some have the opportunity to leapfrog past fossil fuels, directly into resilient low-carbon economies.

There is much room for cooperation.

The author is the chief representative for China at ClientEarth, and the special advisor to the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

HU JUN

Jointly realizing a clean and beautiful world

China's vision of an ecological civilization provides thought leadership and practical solutions for global climate governance



Planet Earth is under strain from a "triple crisis" of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. However, rising unilateralism and protectionism have led to faltering multilateral cooperation, posing severe challenges to global environmental governance.

In response to the call for advancing sustainability worldwide, China has presented itself not only as a participant but also as a key contributor to global environmental governance guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization.

Climate action has been integrated into China's broader ecological strategy and economic planning, as is concisely illustrated by the concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". Under the overarching targets set for achieving carbon peaking before 2030 and carbon neutrality before 2060, China emphasizes both mitigation and adaptation, aiming to build a climate-resilient society, while coordinating efforts to cut carbon emissions, reduce pollution, pursue green development and boost economic growth.

As China accelerates its green transition, it has built the world's largest renewable energy system and the most complete new energy industrial chain. This has pushed the global cost of wind and solar power down by more than 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively, over the past decade. More than half of the world's electric vehicles are on Chinese roads, and the country accounts for roughly one-fourth of the world's newly added green space through afforestation. Together, these form a Chinese solution to climate change.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Against the backdrop of a turbulent international landscape, global climate governance is at a critical crossroads. China continues to back the multilateral framework centered on the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement.

In September 2025, President Xi Jinping announced China's updated Nationally Determined Contributions climate pledge, including the first-ever absolute, economy-wide emissions reduction target covering all greenhouse gases. The renewed ambition signals China's commitment to addressing climate change in collaboration with other countries, providing the much-needed predictability amid geopolitical uncertainty.

Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization also provides theoretical contributions and practical leadership and has opened new avenues for global dialogue on environmental governance. International interest has shifted from observing China's progress to exploring the methodology and worldview behind it.

Some scholars have argued that President Xi's insight of treating lucid waters and lush mountains as "invaluable assets" is a reconceptualization of the relationship between economic growth and environmental protection. They are increasingly interested in how such ideas are translated into actionable, measurable and transferable policies. China's approaches are gaining attention as a development paradigm with universal value, particularly among other countries in the Global South seeking practical governance experience.

To that end, Chinese institutions have stepped up theoretical research on Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and have summarized China's ecological conservation approaches and local best practices. A think tank report, titled "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains for Beautiful China and World: China's Ecological Civilization Concept and Practice, and How They Inspire the World", highlights how environmental protection has fostered new drivers and advantages for development.

Eco-agriculture, forestry and ecotourism have emerged as new pathways to build green brands, boost product value and create opportunities to "turn green into gold".

By 2024, China had certified 78,000 green, organic, famous, special, high-quality, new and geographically indicated agricultural products, and identified 1,399 key rural tourism villages. By 2025, 19 villages, including Yucun in Zhejiang province, Xidi in Anhui province and Jingzhu village in Chongqing municipality, have been recognized as "Best Tourism Villages" by the UN Tourism. Such efforts have also contributed to broader rural revitalization.

Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization also promotes international cooperation and supports sustainability in other Global South countries. Through the Belt and Road Initiative and South-South cooperation, China's ecological conservation theories and practices have helped produce tangible benefits in multiple countries.

The Mombasa-Nairobi Railway in Kenya has corridors for wildlife to pass through, offering a visible example of how infrastructure development and conservation can go hand-in-hand. Solar photovoltaic projects in Mongolia can expand energy access while improving air quality. The Great Green Wall initiative along the southern edge of the Sahara has benefited from China's experience in combating desertification. The China-Africa Green Technology Park has emerged as a demonstration model, bolstering confidence in green development across the continent. At Lake Victoria in East Africa, Chinese expertise has been used to strengthen water management. Taken together, these projects illustrate how China's environmental policies and experiences are contributing to global green development.

With remarkable achievements in ecological conservation and green transition, China has become a source of practical solutions for advancing global sustainability.

Looking ahead, global environmental governance remains a formidable challenge. Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and upholding multilateralism, China will continue to support and strengthen global environmental governance, emphasizing open international cooperation, practical approaches and compelling narratives. The aim is to turn shared aspirations into sustained, pragmatic collaboration to build a prosperous, clean and beautiful world.

The author is the director of the Research Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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NATURAL FRONTIERS

Editor's note: *China Daily is publishing a series of stories highlighting China's efforts to understand, protect, and sustainably utilize natural resources across different fields and regions in support of national development. In this first installment, we present five exemplary individuals who have been honored as "Most Beautiful Natural Guardians" by the Ministry of Natural Resources for their outstanding contributions.*

Surveyor scales gargantuan heights to secure crucial resource statistics

By YANG ZEKUN
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At 7,500 meters on the slopes of Mount Qomolangma, Ren Xiubo made a choice that would define his 27-year career: he removed his thermal gloves. Ignoring a direct order to descend during a sweeping blizzard, the then-25-year-old surveyor worked bare-handed for 10 minutes in sub-zero winds to secure a critical gravity measurement. It is a moment of "instinctive" duty that underscores the extreme physical lengths China's surveying teams go to in order to provide the foundation for the nation's economic and ecological maps.

For Ren, a member of the First Geodetic Surveying Brigade of the Ministry of Natural Resources, surveying Mount Qomolangma, also known as Mount Everest and the world's highest peak, was the rarest of opportunities.

"I did not know whether I would ever have the chance to reach that height again," Ren said. "At that moment, I had only one thought: I had to get the data."

By the time the measurement was completed, his hands had lost all feeling. During the descent, he repeatedly struck them against an ice axe to stimulate the nerves. Only after several hours did sensation slowly return.

That day, Ren and his teammates pushed China's gravity measurement and satellite positioning work on Qomolangma to 7,790 meters, a record at the time.

Now a senior engineer, Ren does not describe the decision as heroic. To him, it was simply what the mission required.

"It was instinct, a natural reaction," he said. "It is also the kind of commitment rooted in the bones of our surveying team."

Born in 1979 in Yulin, Shaanxi province, Ren has spent much of his 27-year career in mountains, deserts, plateaus and remote areas. He has taken part in China's two Qomolangma elevation measurement missions, in 2005 and 2020, and more than 30 major national projects, including the national highway network, post-Wenchuan earthquake reconstruction and the West-East Gas Pipeline project.

His brigade has long been at the forefront of China's surveying work.



Ren Xiubo (right) displays a flag signed by his teammates during the geodetic measurement of Mount Qomolangma in 2005 at an altitude of 7,790 meters. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



The members of the 2020 Mount Qomolangma measurement team take a group photo after the descent to base camp at 5,200 meters at the end of the successful mission on May 28, 2020. JIGME DORJI / XINHUA

In 2015, President Xi Jinping sent a letter to its veteran Party members and former members, encouraging them to remain true to their mission and continue measuring the country's mountains and rivers with precision.

"What supports us in harsh field conditions is the original mission of surveying for the country," Ren said. "It is also the surveying spirit of loving the motherland and the profession, working hard and making selfless contributions."

To many people, surveying may seem far removed from daily life. Ren sees it differently.

"If national economic development is like constructing a building, surveying is the foundation and framework," he said.

Maps, navigation, location services, intelligent driving, food delivery, ride-hailing and express logistics all rely on basic surveying data. Such data also supports natural resource management, territorial spatial planning, major engineering projects, disaster relief and ecological protection.

"Surveying is a foundational undertaking for economic development, national defense and social progress," Ren said.

In 2005, Ren was still a young team member. He said he was "following the older generation", obeying commands, overcoming altitude sickness and completing his assigned tasks.

During that mission, he worked for more than 40 consecutive days in areas above 6,500 meters. At the 6,500-meter camp, strong ultraviolet rays darkened and cracked his face, while fierce winds cut into his skin day after day. At the 7,028-meter camp, on the eve of a summit measurement attempt, he solemnly wrote his application to join the Communist Party of China.

"I had prepared for everything, including the worst," he said. "Even if I had to leave my life on Qomolangma, I had to complete the surveying mission."

On May 22, 2005, the mountaineering survey team successfully reached the summit and completed the measurement mission. China later announced the rock-surface elevation of Qomolangma as 8,844.43 meters.

Ren did not reach the summit that year. Some later asked whether he felt regret.

"Perhaps there was regret," he said. "But surveying is our job, and completing the mission always comes first."

Fifteen years later, in 2020, Ren returned to Qomolangma. This time, he took on coordination, publicity and support work for the summit measurement mission, while passing on practical experience to younger colleagues.

Before the mission, Ren repeatedly reviewed possible emergencies, from equipment operation and resistance to extreme cold to contingency plans for bad weather after the summit team reached the peak.

"We had to anticipate every difficulty we could think of," he said. "Only then could we do our best to ensure the mission was foolproof."

The 2020 mission proved far more difficult than expected. The first summit attempt was halted near the North Col ice wall above 7,000 meters because of deep snow, strong winds and avalanche risks. A second attempt was forced back by a storm, leaving less than a week of suitable climbing time.

Ren said the team encouraged one another and kept refining the plan. On May 27, the summit team successfully reached the peak and completed the measurement. Coincidentally, the date was also the day China's older generation of surveyors had reached the summit in 1975.

But reaching the summit was only the first step. The summit marker had to be set up three times before the Beidou navigation satellite system receiver began working properly. The snow-depth radar also had signal problems, which the team members solved on site.

Only after two and a half hours of summit operations, and another 36 hours of waiting to confirm the data was valid, did Ren and his teammates feel relieved.

Beyond Qomolangma, Ren has also witnessed the growing role of surveying in emergency response and ecological protection.

In 2015, after a major landslide struck Shanyang county in Shaanxi, members of his brigade stayed in the core danger zone despite the risk of secondary landslides. Their monitoring data helped protect rescuers and provided support for scientific disaster relief.

The same year, the brigade set up an emergency surveying center focusing on drones, aerial remote sensing, image processing and 3D modeling. Ren helped build the team, train operators, produce orthophoto maps and formulate emergency response plans.

Ren said modern surveying must keep pace with new technologies such as Beidou navigation, satellite remote sensing and real-scene 3D modeling.

Ren is committed to working on new basic surveying, the construction of a real-scene 3D China and the building of spatiotemporal information databases, providing accurate support for natural resource monitoring, ecological change detection and territorial spatial planning.

"I will continue to visit schools, enterprises, institutions and communities," he said. "I want to share the stories of surveying for the country and plant the seed of responsibility for protecting nature."

'Land guardian' brings prosperity to village

Effective planning helps vitalize once-impoverished countryside

By LI MENGHAN
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Top: Wang Weimin transplants rice seedlings at a paddy field in Anji. **Above:** Wang discusses the landscape with colleagues in Anji. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In the 15 years since Gaoyu village launched a pilot program to consolidate its fragmented "postage-stamp" plots into contiguous farmland, its collective economy has surged more than 80-fold, reaching 8.32 million yuan ($1.15 million) last year. This transformation, led by veteran land manager Wang Weimin, has turned a once-impoverished mountain community into a national model for China's rural vitalization and land-use efficiency.

Wang, deputy director of the natural resources and planning bureau in Anji county, prefers to call himself a "land guardian", a title rooted in his childhood and symbolic of his commitment over the past three decades.

"I grew up in the mountainous region of Anji, where we relied on ration coupons for essentials like rice and flour," the 54-year-old said. "Having experienced famine, my ancestors instilled in my mother a deep appreciation for food, which she passed on to me from a young age. One of her sayings that has left a lasting impression on me is: 'Even if rice falls to the ground, you should still eat it.'"

In Wang's memory, reaching the provincial capital Hangzhou meant traversing mountains, and most children studied hard for one reason: to leave. However, after graduating in land management in 1994, Wang decided to stay, driven by a deep bond with his homeland and a sense of duty to its fields.

To gain a deeper understanding of the local farmland, Wang set foot in every village and discovered that the primary problem was the fragmentation of plots, which resulted in low mechanization, poor returns and diminished motivation among farmers to cultivate the land. Rapid urbanization and economic development further exacerbated the situation, with large areas of high-quality farmland being built upon.

Holding the belief to "preserve the land inherited from our ancestors for future generations", Wang promoted the county's land consolidation efforts. After rounds of field research and in-depth discussions, Gaoyu village — where 313 hectares of farmland were sliced into tiny plots by scattered houses — was selected as the pilot site in 2012.

With a population of 6,000, the village's collective annual income at that time was less than 100,000 yuan.

To revitalize the inefficient areas, the local government planned four resettlement communities, with follow-up measures including re-demarcating the farmland, restoring soil fertility and leasing it to a cooperative for unified management.

However, the villagers were hesitant to be the first to try such an approach. To alleviate their concerns about moving old houses, land transfer and falling income, Wang and his colleagues visited each household, explaining how relocating would enhance their living conditions, how the land transfer would ensure a stable rental income, and how the cooperative would create additional job opportunities. After several months, all 726 households agreed.

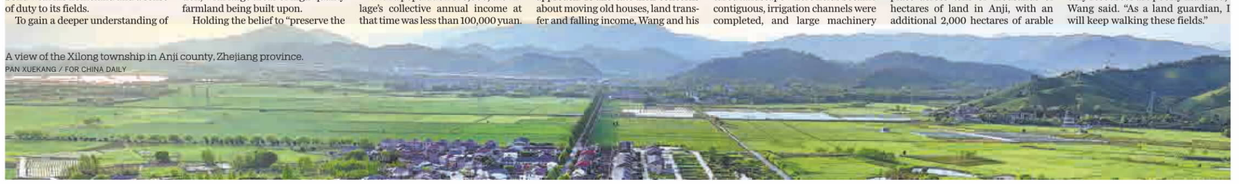
The efforts resulted in a restructured landscape where fields became contiguous, irrigation channels were completed, and large machinery could move freely, leading to increased crop output and economic returns. By last year, the village's collective economy had grown more than 80-fold.

"Seeing the villagers' satisfied smiles, I feel my work is truly worthwhile," Wang said.

Such transformations have taken place across tens of thousands of hectares of land in Anji, with an additional 2,000 hectares of arable land created, and land use tailored to local strengths.

These include Wukangqiao village, which has attracted agricultural tourism to its newly consolidated fields, and Hongmiao village, which turned an abandoned mine into a landmark cafe.

"No villages are poor by nature; only resources are poorly matched," Wang said. "As a land guardian, I will keep walking these fields."



A view of the Xilong township in Anji county, Zhejiang province. PAN XUEKANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Honoree insights



Wang Weimin (second from left), deputy director of the natural resources and planning bureau in Anji, Zhejiang province, shares his stories on using his skills to develop the county's infrastructure and agriculture during a news conference held by the State Council Information Office in Beijing on April 22. Together with him are Wang Shi (left), an official from the office, and Wang Weimin's fellow recipients of the "Most Beautiful Natural Guardian" honor — Ren Xiubo (third from left), Wang Guiling (third from right), Jiang Wenkai (second from right) and Niu Dongliang (right). PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Geologist's inner passion unlocks Earth's eternal heat

By LI HONGYANG
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For nearly four decades, Wang Guiling's "office" has been the most volatile terrain on the planet, from the boiling geysers of Yunnan province to the high-altitude hot springs of the Xizang autonomous region and western Sichuan province.

Wang, a researcher at the Institute of Hydrogeology and Environmental Geology in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, affiliated with the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences, is fascinated with the origins of thermal heat.

"It's not just a landscape," said the 62-year-old, referring to his geological surveys. "It's a conversation the planet is having with itself."

At the core of Wang's work is one of humanity's most pressing questions: Where will our energy come from when fossil fuels run out?

"Solar energy is an inexhaustible cosmic energy source, while geothermal heat is Earth's eternal gift from within," he said. "As long as the sun shines and the planet keeps moving beneath our feet, these two will never run out."

Wang's passion for his work goes far beyond earning a salary, in fact, in the 1990s his institute struggled to do exactly that. "I never wavered. I genuinely love this work. It comes from inside," he said.

What that work looked like in the early days is almost unimaginable in the age of digital mapping technology. Tasked with producing comprehensive maps of geothermal resources, Wang spent five years developing his method so painstaking it bordered on obsession. Armed with nothing more than a set square and paper maps, he plotted by hand more than 2,000 hot spring and geothermal well locations across China.

"I'd go through records — province, county, village — then get down on the map with a ruler until I found the exact spot," he said. "I'd mark it, and then I'd imagine the terrain. What did it look like there? Why was the water hot?"

Wang said geothermal exploration is similar to medical diagnosis. First comes the equivalent of a CT scan — geophysical surveys that detect anomalies in electrical signals beneath the surface, hinting at different rock types and structures. Then comes the biopsy — a test well used to measure underground temperatures.

Since 2011, the China Geological Survey has launched a national project to survey and evaluate geothermal resources. Led by Wang, the project has brought together hundreds of technicians from across the country to conduct systematic investigations of geothermal resources in each province.

Among the several types of geothermal resources, the potential of hot dry rock geothermal energy is especially pertinent. Wang and his team estimate that China's hot dry rock resources at depths of between 3 and 10 kilometers contain the heat equivalent of burning 856 trillion metric tons of coal.

"That figure is astronomically large. But it only tells us the heat is there. What we can actually extract is a different question," he said.

"To unlock it, we must artificially fracture the rock, pump cold water down, let it heat up in the cracks, and bring it back up again."

To Wang, his achievements do not come from individual brilliance alone. "Geothermal research is deeply interdisciplinary — geophysics, geochemistry, rock mechanics, hydrogeology, even mathematics and chemistry," he said.

"No person can be an expert in all of it. We need a team. And we need to give young people the conditions to settle down and really dig in.

"Working in geothermal exploration also requires the spirit of 'grinding a sword for 10 years'," he said.



Wang Guiling (right) identifies a rock and determines its heat-storage features during a mission in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region in May last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Tech utilized to transform Shanghai nature reserve

By LI MENGHAN
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After a decades-long ecological battle against invasive species and poachers, bird populations at the Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve in Shanghai have surged from 40,000 at its lowest to nearly 500,000 last year. Led by Niu Dongliang, the reserve has transformed from a "ravaged" wetland into a high-tech sanctuary where AI surveillance and innovative flooding techniques have restored a vital link in the East Asian-Australasian Flyway.

When Niu, who now serves as the director of the reserve's management affairs center, arrived at the eastern tip of Chongming Island in 2004, it was a lawless frontier.

"When I first arrived at the reserve, some people hunted wild ducks — a single small packet of pesticide could poison hundreds of them. However, with no monitoring equipment back then, we had to walk through reeds and wade across tidal creeks for patrol, stopping them once found," Niu said.

He emphasized the difficulty of enforcement, noting that even if poachers were caught, they could claim to have merely "picked up" the dead birds rather than poisoned them, which prevented the police from taking action.

The tide turned in 2011. When Niu spotted a suspicious vessel through surveillance footage, he immediately organized an interception operation. Under stricter wildlife protection laws, eight individuals were prosecuted, and their convictions sent a strong deterrent message to other potential poachers.

"Now, more than 200 surveillance cameras are spread across the reserve, and infrared cameras set in key areas can capture people's movements even in the dark. Every access point is guarded, giving the wetland back to the wild plants and animals," he said, adding that the staff all wear camouflage or light-colored clothes to minimize human disturbance.

Beyond human activities, the rapid spread of invasive smooth cordgrass posed an even greater threat. Originating from the Atlantic coast of North America, this plant quickly encroached upon native vegetation, endangering wildlife food sources, habitats and the overall ecological function of the wetland. From the first discovery of a few scattered plants in 1995, by 2011 the reserve had more than 20 square kilometers of smooth cordgrass, accounting for one-tenth of the reserve's total area.

To address this, the reserve launched a large-scale ecological restoration project in 2013. Niu and his colleagues consulted experts, conducted experiments and finally developed a plan, involving building cofferdams to enclose the influenced area, cutting the smooth cordgrass above the water surface, and then flooding the area to submerge and rot the roots. Meanwhile, they also restored the damaged habitats and built ecological islands tailored to the living habits of different species, making these once-disappeared birds "frequent visitors".

"Birds are a very important indicator species for the health of an ecosystem," Niu said. "If they stop coming to an area, or if the variety of species declines, it means the environment has deteriorated. Everything we have done is to protect the biodiversity here."

With waterbird numbers gradually increasing, and State second-class protected tundra swans rising from just a few dozen to a record 5,216 this March, the birds themselves have delivered a clear verdict.





Top: Niu Dongliang introduces plants and animals that inhabit the Chongming Dongtan Nature Reserve to visitors in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Above:** Birds feed at a patch of wetland in the reserve. ZHOU GUKAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Outpost veteran 'human anchor' of nation's marine safety

By LI SHANGYI
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On the uninhabited island of Qianliyan, guarding the country means guarding the data. For over four decades, Jiang Wenkai has served as the "human anchor" of the Yellow Sea, once spending 217 days a year on a barren outpost. Today, the veteran observer is the final link in a chain that has transformed a primitive observation post into a smart hub for offshore wind power and marine ranching, proving that even as technology becomes automated, the human spirit remains the foundation of China's marine safety.

Nearly 50 kilometers away from the shore, the tiny island, covering just 0.135 square kilometers and rising to a maximum elevation of 93 meters, is home to the Haiyang marine station of the Beihai Forecasting and Disaster Reduction Center of the Ministry of Natural Resources, one of China's national benchmark marine observation stations.



Jiang Wenkai carries supplies to the outpost on Qianliyan Island. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The station operates around the clock. Since taking on the job in 1983, Jiang has helped collect extensive marine hydrological and meteorological data that have been widely used in marine disaster prevention, mitigation and economic development.

In the early years, when technology was still underdeveloped, the island had no electricity, and the observation equipment was extremely primitive. Under such harsh conditions, Jiang and his colleagues carried out uninterrupted marine and meteorological observations day after day, year after year.

"Every drop of water and every grain of rice we used had to be transported by boat," Jiang recalled, describing both the working and living conditions as extremely difficult.

As equipment and infrastructure gradually improved, the number of staff stationed on the island was reduced from six or seven people in the early days to just two rotating staff members today. However, Jiang said the demands on workers have become even greater.

"Now, once you arrive on the island, you have to know how to do everything," Jiang said. "You cannot rely on others to take care of you. People trained here become versatile — cooking, washing clothes and repairing instruments all by themselves."

With advances in technology and upgrades in observation equipment, working conditions on the island have improved significantly over the years. Tasks that once required manual readings in harsh weather have now become increasingly intelligent and automated.

New technologies, including intelligent video inversion for wave monitoring, drone-based sea ice identification and smart red tide monitoring, are gradually being introduced into daily operations. The data collected provide strong support for marine disaster prevention and mitigation, offshore wind power, marine ranching and other emerging industries.

Over four decades on the island, Jiang has not only recorded waves, monsoons and other marine data, but also witnessed major changes in the marine ecological environment and environmental governance.

"We are no longer merely recorders of marine data, but also guardians of marine ecology and practitioners of harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature," he said.

Jiang, now 59, is scheduled to retire soon. Looking back on a lifetime spent enduring storms and lonely nights on the isolated island, he said he has no regrets about dedicating 40 years to guarding the outpost.

"Guarding the island means guarding the country; guarding the sea means guarding our home," Jiang said.



Qianliyan, a desolate island on the Yellow Sea about 50 kilometers off Haiyang, Shandong province, is where Jiang Wenkai has served for over 40 years.

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CHINA

Calls to build clean, healthy cyberspace

Conference on internet civilization champions anti-bullying practices

By **CAO DESHENG** in Beijing and **ZHANG LI** in Nanning

Chen Lijun, a Yue opera performer, rose to fame across China after her captivating portrayal of a male character in the Yue opera production of *New Dragon Gate Inn* went viral online.

Speaking at the 2026 China Internet Civilization Conference in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on Tuesday, Chen shared her story to champion the benefits of a healthy internet environment and its vibrant online community.

Chen, who has nearly 4.6 million followers on her social media platform Douyin, the Chinese counterpart of TikTok, said she hopes to promote the development of Yue opera through the internet.

"I record the content I love and my practice sessions, edit them into short videos, and share them online. These works have been well received, and I've managed to attract some attention to Yue opera through the internet," she said.

As a young opera performer who has benefited from social media platforms, Chen said it is her duty to help build a civilized online community.

"Through every positive share and every kind response, we lift up a civilized and vibrant internet environment. This also gives each of us the opportunity to grow and realize our dreams through the internet. Let's work together to make our online home cleaner and warmer," she said to participants at the conference.

With the rapid development of the internet, China has attached great importance to cyberspace governance.

When the inaugural China Internet Civilization Conference was held in 2021, President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory message, emphasizing that as a major component of social etiquette and civility under new circumstances, internet civilization remains a key area in enhancing China's strength in cyberspace.

China's internet user base reached 1.125 billion by December, with the internet penetration rate exceeding 80 percent, according to the 57th Statistical Report on Internet Development in China, released by the China Internet Network Information Center in February.

In a keynote speech delivered at Tuesday's conference, Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, underlined the need to foster a clean and upright cyberspace.

While calling for continued efforts to enrich the supply of high-quality online content and strengthen mainstream values, mainstream public opinion, and mainstream culture on the internet, Li said it is important to improve a long-term mechanism for cyberspace governance.

Issues such as online rumors and cyberbullying infringe upon societal and public interests and must be addressed with strong measures, he said.

Participants at the conference called for an integrated approach to promoting internet civilization, fostering a sound cyberspace, and enabling the internet to better enhance people's well-being.

Meng Man, a Chinese scholar and professor at the Minzu University of China's School of History and Culture, highlighted the progress brought to humanity through the internet, but emphasized that the question of how to build a healthy online environment has become increasingly important.

"This is because the internet profoundly shapes both the living environment and our mental landscape. Naturally, we hope that the internet not only creates attention for content creators, but also provides fertile ground for all users, serving not just as an information provider, but also as a platform of civilization," Meng said.

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Helping hand



Immigration management officers and Red Cross workers assist Mongolian cataract patients at the Ereenhot railway port in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region on Tuesday as part of a program under the Belt and Road Initiative. GUO PENGJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Welcome dance



A dragon dance is performed to welcome approximately 2,800 South Korean travelers arriving aboard the *Costa Serena* cruise ship at the Shanghai Wusongkou International Cruise Terminal on Tuesday, which also marked the 16th China Tourism Day. The Shanghai International Cruise Tourism Resort hosted the welcome ceremony that also promoted tourism products. LIU XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

China-Europe SMILE mission launch to enhance space weather forecasting

By **LI MENGHAN**
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A Vega-C rocket carrying the SMILE satellite blasts into the sky in Kourou, French Guiana, on Tuesday. XINHUA

The successful launch of the Solar wind Magnetosphere Ionosphere Link Explorer satellite on Tuesday, aimed at studying how streams of charged particles from the sun interact with Earth's magnetic field, marks a milestone in China-Europe space cooperation.

The satellite was launched by a Vega-C rocket from Europe's spaceport in Kourou, French Guiana. Following liftoff, the satellite entered its planned orbit, with solar arrays deployed and all systems operating normally. The mission is a collaboration between the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the European Space Agency.

"Earth is surrounded by an invisible magnetic field, the magnetosphere, which functions like a protective umbrella and deflects most of the solar wind — high-speed streams of charged particles from the sun. Without this protective shield, life on Earth would not be able to survive," said Wang Chi, a CAS academician and the Chinese principal investigator of the SMILE satellite.

Wang, who is also the director of the CAS National Space Science Center, said when some charged particles break through the magnetic shield and enter near-Earth space, they can disturb the space environment, threaten satellites in orbit, interfere with communication and navigation systems, and even trigger large-scale power outages.

Previous studies of Earth's magnetic environment have mainly relied on isolated observations from individual satellites, making it difficult for scientists to obtain a complete picture of how the system works.

With SMILE now in orbit, scientists will for the first time conduct panoramic imaging of Earth's magnetosphere, allowing them to observe its overall structure. Shaped by the pressure of the solar wind, the boundary of the magnetosphere resembles a smile, also the mission's name. The mission will also help scientists better understand how the solar wind interacts with Earth's magnetic field and improve space weather forecasting capabilities.

To achieve these goals, SMILE carries four advanced scientific instruments. The core payload is the Soft X-ray Imager, which detects X-rays generated when particles from the solar wind interact with particles in Earth's upper atmosphere. This allows scientists to observe the previously invisible boundary of the magnetosphere for the first time.

The three other instruments include: an Ultraviolet Aurora Imager for photographing auroras near Earth's polar regions, a Light Ion Analyzer for measuring charged particles, and a Magnetometer for monitoring changes in Earth's magnetic field. Together, these instruments will provide both large-scale images and direct measurements, providing scientists with new tools to study geomagnetic storms and other space weather events.

Beyond its scientific value, Dai Lei, chief designer of SMILE's science application system and a professor at the National Space Science Center, said the mission demonstrates an equal and mutually beneficial model of cooperation between China and Europe.

"Building upon the legacy of the Double Star Program — a China-led space cooperation project with ESA proposed in 2003 — SMILE has established a new model for international space collaboration. This is the first bottom-up, mission-level, full life-cycle partnership between CAS and ESA," Dai said.

CAS took primary responsibility for the satellite platform, mission operation and control, and the science application system, while ESA provided the payload module, launch vehicle, launch site, and ground tracking and emergency support.

The University of Leicester in the United Kingdom led the development of the Soft X-ray Imager, while CAS led the development of the other three instruments with support from European partners in key components and calibration work.

Over the past decade, the mission established an integrated engineering system involving six major subsystems. Scientists and engineers from both sides jointly addressed technical challenges such as cross-regional design coordination, system compatibility and joint testing, helping ensure the mission's timely and smooth implementation.

SMILE will spend about 42 days maneuvering into its final science orbit. It will then undergo a two-month in-orbit testing phase before beginning its planned three-year observation mission.

During its operational lifespan, scientists from China and Europe will jointly process and analyze the data collected by the satellite. All scientific data will be openly shared with the global research community to encourage wider international participation and research.

The long-term data gathered by SMILE is expected to deepen understanding of interactions between the solar wind and Earth's magnetic field, while also helping improve the accuracy of space weather forecasts and the safety of near-Earth space activities.

Looking beyond SMILE, Wang outlined broader plans for China-Europe cooperation in space science. He said the China-Europe space exploration program, which includes the SMILE mission, will launch a series of satellites during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30).

These include the Hongmeng Project to study the universe's earliest period after the Big Bang, the Earth 2.0 mission to search for planets similar to Earth, and the enhanced X-ray Timing and Polarimetry space observatory (eXTP), which will explore extreme cosmic conditions such as black holes and neutron stars, Wang said.

Joint op to boost fish stocks in Beibu Gulf

By **ZHAO YIMENG** in Nanning
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China and Vietnam conducted a joint marine stock enhancement operation in the Beibu Gulf on Tuesday, aiming to strengthen fisheries conservation and increase fishermen's incomes on both sides.

The latest release, held in Dongxing, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, involved about 272 million juvenile fish and shrimp, including yellowfin sea bream and red sea bream.

Fishery resources in the Beibu Gulf, one of the most biodiverse marine areas shared by the two countries, remain under pressure despite years of conservation efforts, said Zhang Dianchang, head of the South China Sea Fisheries Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences.

Long-term monitoring data shows fishery resource density in the eastern Beibu Gulf, including shared fishing zones, fell from 1,161 kilograms per square kilometer in 2006 to 317 kg in 2019.

Joint stock enhancement programs aim to replenish natural populations through artificial breeding and the release of species suited to the local ecosystem, Zhang said.

Since 2017, China and Vietnam have conducted nine joint stock enhancement operations in the Beibu Gulf, releasing about 770 million aquatic seedlings. Zhang said the recapture rate of released species has remained above 5 percent, while catches of key released species have increased by more than 10 percent year-on-year. Incomes of coastal fishermen have risen by more than 20 percent, he added.

Local fishermen say they have noticed visible improvements in fish stocks. "I've been fishing in this area for many years, and over the past few years I really feel there are more fish," said Ye Fengzheng, a fisherman in the region. He said catches that once required long trips offshore are now more common closer to shore, with 10 to 15 kg a day now relatively easy to achieve under favorable weather and tides.

Ye said he once caught a tagged fish released under the program. "I pulled up a fish with a small tag attached, and there was Vietnamese writing on it," he said, adding that he later reported the catch using the phone number on the tag.

China has expanded the use of tracking technologies, including external tags and molecular markers, to study migration patterns. Tagged sea bream released in the Beibu Gulf have been recaptured along both the Guangxi and the Vietnamese coastal waters.

Officials and scientists say the program emphasizes scientific management rather than large-scale indiscriminate release. Researchers have assessed the ecological carrying capacity of target waters, including food availability and water quality, to avoid ecological imbalance caused by excessive stocking.

"Released species are not simply any available seedlings. They need to have reliable genetics, suitable size and strong vitality," said Su Zhongxing, general manager of Guangxi Fuqun Marine Seedling Reproduction.

He said hatcheries gradually adjust water temperature and salinity to help juveniles adapt to marine conditions, while transport protocols carefully control oxygen levels, stocking density and temperature to improve survival rates after release.

Marriage: Mass weddings promote simple ceremonies

From page 1

In preparation, the couple had completed free premarital medical checks at a Beijing hospital, taken registration photos at a commercial studio and hired a photographer to document their special day near the civil affairs bureau.

The pair met via social media, bonding over photography and skiing, and dated for two-and-a-half years before deciding to marry. They chose May 20 partly because its homophone "520" is a declaration of love in Chinese and is often seen as a Valentine's Day equivalent. "We want to celebrate our anniversary and 520 together," Yan said.

Both originally from Shaanxi but living in Beijing for work and study, the couple benefited from a revised marriage regulation introduced in May 2025. The rule ended a decades-old restriction that required people to register their marriage in a place where either spouse's household registration was recorded. Now, couples can marry anywhere in the country without presenting their household registration booklet. "It saved us time and travel costs, and made us feel more connected to Beijing," Guo said.

Thursday or May 21 is the choice of many this year as it coincides with *xiao man*, or Grain Buds, a traditional Chinese solar term. Song Jian, an engineer from Sichuan province, chose this date over May 20. "The solar term carries a beautiful saying — a modest half-full state is better than perfection," he said. "That fits our relationship well. You don't have to pursue perfection in life; being content with what you have is enough."

Authorities across multiple provincial-level regions have also organized mass wedding ceremonies on and around the two dates to promote simple ceremonies.

In Hainan province, collective weddings will be held on Wednesday at coastal venues, including Coconut Dream Corridor in Sanya and the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site. Zhejiang province hosted a ceremony on Saturday featuring 520 couples, with a main venue in Hangzhou linked to dozens of sub-venues across the province. Guangdong organized military-civilian collective weddings in Guangzhou on Monday, Zhaoqing on Sunday, Foshan on Friday and Zhongshan on Saturday, involving more than 1,000 couples.

"This collective wedding is a celebration that's both sweet and green, without the complicated preparations," one groom, Zhong Zhiyuan, who was part of the Guangzhou weddings, was quoted by the local media as saying.

But not everyone is keen on getting married on popular dates. Yang Xinran, a marketing professional from the Chinese mainland who now works in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, registered her marriage in Beijing last September and deliberately avoided peak days. "As working people, we have to prioritize our schedules," she said.

Yang and her husband picked several possible dates based on their work calendars, then let their parents take the final call. "Even booking a restaurant for an anniversary is hard enough on popular dates — no need to add to the trouble," she said.

In the past year, authorities processed more than 682,000 interprovincial marriages, official data showed. China saw a significant surge in marriage registrations in 2025, with 6.763 million couples registering, a 10.76 percent year-on-year increase.

Guo Yuhe contributed to this story.

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BUSINESS

Stronger RMB seen stabilizing currency system

Yuan's expanded global role mitigates risks of unilateral financial disruptions

By **WANG KEJU** in Chengdu
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A more multipolar currency landscape — in which the Chinese renminbi could play a much larger role — is gaining traction, as intensifying geopolitical tensions and the rapid rise of emerging economies strain the traditional international monetary system, economists said.

"The world needs a new and balanced monetary system," Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, told China Daily during the two-day Tsinghua PBCSF Global Finance Forum, which concluded on Tuesday in Chengdu, Sichuan province.

"A strong renminbi represents the needs of Global South countries, the needs of the global financial system, and also the needs of China's economy to further grow and strengthen," Zhu said.

> "A strong renminbi represents the needs of Global South countries, the needs of the global financial system, and also the needs of China's economy to further grow and strengthen."
>
> **Zhu Min,** former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund

He pointed to a fundamental imbalance in the current international monetary system. While the United States' share of global GDP has dropped to about 24.5 percent and its share of world merchandise exports is just about 9 percent, the US dollar still accounts for 58 percent of global reserve currencies — far exceeding its underlying economic weight.

In contrast, Zhu said, China now accounts for about 16.6 percent of global GDP and 14.4 percent of world merchandise exports, yet the renminbi's share in global reserves is merely 2.4 percent.

"The gap between China's real economy weight and its currency's international status is the core driving force for renminbi internationalization," Zhu said.

Djoomart Otorbaev, former prime minister of the Kyrgyz Republic, said that countries accept the greenback not because they prefer it, but because in times of crisis, the dollar can provide stable liquidity and expectations.

However, more and more financial tools have been weaponized, even used as weapons in geopolitical conflicts. This trust has been severely eroded, Otorbaev said.

The gradual erosion of the greenback's dominance is already visible. A Deutsche Bank research report released earlier this month said the dollar's share of global foreign exchange reserves has fallen from over 60 percent to just 40 percent.

Marc Uzan, executive director of the Reinventing Bretton Woods Committee, said that central banks around the world have diversified their reserves, more energy deals are being priced in non-dollar currencies and countries are increasingly settling bilateral trade in their own currencies.

That said, Uzan acknowledged that the dollar's structural advantages remain significant, and he cautioned against expecting a swift end to dollar hegemony.

Nevertheless, he expects the future international monetary system will be multipolar, with the US dollar, the euro and the renminbi all playing significantly larger roles. Regional currencies will also assume more functions in their respective neighborhoods.

In March, the renminbi ranked fifth in global payments with a share of 3.1 percent, up from sixth place in February, said global financial messaging services provider SWIFT.

Shi Kang, chair professor at the PBC School of Finance at Tsinghua University, said that the renminbi's participation in the reshaping of the global monetary order is "deliberate and measured".

"We do not want to replace the US dollar system, nor are we trying to develop a separate system," Shi said. "China's goal is to address the weak links in the current monetary system, allowing more currencies to participate and thus enhance global financial stability."

Cross-border renminbi settlement volume reached 6.4 trillion yuan ($941 billion) in 2024 and climbed further to 7 trillion yuan in 2025, Shi said.

To mitigate the risk of unilateral disruptions to the SWIFT messaging system, China has built its own Cross-border Interbank Payment System (CIPS), which has significantly improved the efficiency and security of cross-border settlements, he added.

China has also signed various bilateral currency swap agreements, providing liquidity support to emerging markets such as Argentina. These swaps act as a safety net for countries facing dollar shortages, reducing their dependence on a single currency, Shi said.

Looking forward, Shi said China will eventually open its current account in an orderly and prudent manner, offering more renminbi-denominated assets to global investors.



Sinopec employees inspect PV panels at a solar power station in Qingdao, Shandong province, on July 4. ZHANG JINGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Nation's oil giants ramp up efforts in clean energy

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China's State-owned oil majors are rapidly accelerating their pivot toward renewable energy, transforming from traditional fossil-fuel drillers into integrated green energy powerhouses to meet the nation's ambitious "dual carbon" goals.

Recent environmental, social and governance (ESG) reports from the country's three energy giants — China National Petroleum Corp, China Petroleum and Chemical Corp (Sinopec) and China National Offshore Oil Corp — reveal a decisive shift in capital allocation toward hydrogen, solar and offshore wind power.

Sinopec is currently spearheading the sector's clean transition with an aggressive push into the hydrogen economy. Aiming to become China's top hydrogen enterprise, the refiner now operates a world-leading network of 150 hydrogen refueling stations.

It has also leveraged its vast retail network to deploy 141,000 electric vehicle charging terminals, according to the company's latest filings.

CNPC is matching this momentum, investing a robust 41.46 billion yuan ($6.09 billion) into new energy and advanced materials in 2025. The company's wind and solar power generation surged 68 percent last year as it builds a comprehensive "oil, gas, heat, power and hydrogen" portfolio.

In the offshore sector, CNOOC is capitalizing on its maritime expertise to advance the Hainan CZ7 offshore wind project and the development of the world's first 16-megawatt floating wind platform. The company is also pioneering carbon capture, utilization and storage (CCUS) technologies, exemplified by its Enping 15-1 offshore facility, the first of its kind in China.

"The severe supply disruptions and soaring oil prices triggered by global crises are undeniably accelerating the pace of the global energy transition," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Lin said this strategic pivot relies heavily on China's world-leading clean technology and manufacturing prowess, which further cements the nation's core position in the future global energy architecture.

These corporate milestones mirror a broader national trajectory. Official figures from the National Energy Administration show that by the end of March, China's combined installed capacity of wind and solar power had reached roughly 1.9 billion kilowatts, a 28.1 percent jump year-on-year.

A recent China Electricity Council report expects China's installed solar power capacity to surpass that of coal power for the first time in 2026, marking a historic tipping point in the country's energy mix.

While prioritizing green growth, the majors have maintained a dual-track strategy to ensure domestic stability.

China secured stable domestic oil and gas supplies in the first quarter, effectively cushioning the economy against external shocks from geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Output of crude oil and natural gas rose 1.3 percent and 3 percent year-on-year, respectively, during the first quarter, said Xing Yiteng, deputy director-general of the department of development and planning at the NEA.

Dong Xiucheng, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics, said the rapid implementation of major new energy bases has effectively stimulated industrial activity while securing long-term energy safety.

"Efforts to stabilize prices and secure supply have built a solid foundation," Dong said.

"It has helped hedge against international fluctuations and stabilize costs for both corporate production and people's livelihoods."

Track stewards



Technicians inspect electric locomotive equipment at a service workshop at Houma North Locomotive Depot, China Railway Taiyuan Group, in Houma, Shanxi province, on Tuesday. Regular and precise maintenance of the equipment is the cornerstone of railway safety, underpinning the reliable operation of China's over 165,000-kilometer national rail network — the world's largest — which carries about 4.6 billion passengers and 5.2 billion metric tons of freight annually, serving as the backbone of the country's transportation system.
WANG FANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Built by China, Central Asia's first fully automated driverless LRT opens in Astana

By **REN QI**
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22.4 kilometers
length of the first phase of the Astana light rail transit (LRT) system, Central Asia's first fully automated driverless light rail line built primarily by Chinese enterprises

The first phase of the Astana light rail transit (LRT) system, Central Asia's first fully automated driverless light rail line primarily built by Chinese enterprises using Chinese equipment, technology and standards, was officially launched in Kazakhstan on Saturday.

The LRT system saw its first train depart at 11 am local time. Enterprises from Tianjin played a significant role in this milestone, with the Tianjin-based centrally administered State-owned enterprise CSCEC 6th Bureau undertaking the construction of several stations.

Furthermore, Tianjin Rail Transit Group trained over 500 operational staff members who all assumed their posts on the launch day, following theoretical studies in Kazakhstan and practical training in Tianjin since last year.

Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev attended the inauguration ceremony in the Kazakh capital and became the line's first passenger, taking a test ride from the airport station to the National Museum station.

During the ceremony, Tokayev expressed gratitude to the Chinese side for the successful implementation of the project. He described the launch as an event of special significance for the country, saying the capital should eventually develop into a transportation hub of Eurasia.

Kazakhstan is also considering a second phase of the project to further develop public transport, according to the official website of the Kazakh presidential administration.

The newly launched first phase spans 22.4 kilometers and includes 18 stations, connecting major commercial centers and residential areas from Nursultan Nazarbayev International Airport in the south to the new railway station in the north.

Passing by landmarks and transport hubs such as Nazarbayev University, Abu Dhabi Plaza and the National Museum, the LRT system operates with a departure interval of five to six minutes. It is equipped with 19 trains manufactured by CRRC Tangshan, each capable of carrying over 600 passengers at full capacity with a maximum speed of 80 kilometers per hour.

Numerous passengers took the light rail for a trial ride on the first day of its operation, praising the Chinese equipment for its reliability and high level of comfort. An Astana resident named Yembergenov remarked upon seeing it in person that the Chinese automated driverless technology felt highly advanced, adding that the cabin interior was very modern and everything felt well-ordered.

Abat Shynybekov, deputy chairman of Astana's City Transportation Systems, said the project is of great significance in alleviating urban congestion and promoting public transport development.

He highlighted that the line adopted Chinese automated driverless technology and control systems, and that the Chinese side carried out targeted upgrades to the system's equipment, interior design and noise reduction, making it the most advanced LRT system in Central Asia today.

Yerkin Tukumov, director of the Kazakhstan Institute for Strategic Studies under the President of the Republic of Kazakhstan, said China and Kazakhstan are working together to advance key transport corridors, energy infrastructure and green technologies, enhancing the region's resilience and prosperity.

Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, Chinese enterprises have been actively participating in the Central Asian country's infrastructure construction, Tukumov said. Last November, a highway reconstruction project undertaken by CITIC Construction Co Ltd was officially completed and delivered, adding another practical achievement to the joint construction of the BRI between China and Kazakhstan.

The project covers two national-level highways totaling 1,130 km with a designed speed of 120 km/h. During its construction, the project created local jobs and trained a group of professionals, including construction engineers and machinery operators, boosting the development of Kazakhstan's highway construction industry.

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BUSINESS

Bright future ahead for Piraeus Port

Annual throughput exceeds 5.6 million TEUs, up from 680,000 TEUs in 2016



A ship under China's major shipping enterprise COSCO makes maiden call at Piraeus Port in Greece on June 25. XINHUA

By REN QI
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Located about 10 kilometers southwest of Athens, Greece, Piraeus Port is a vital gateway connecting Europe, the Middle East and Africa.

Designed by architect Hippodamus of Miletus in the 5th century BC, Piraeus has long been one of the most prosperous ports in Greece and Europe. Historically, Chinese silk was transported by the Scythians via sea to Piraeus during its peak, before being sold throughout Greece.

However, the global financial crisis over a decade ago plunged the port into its "darkest hour". Shadowed by pay cuts and unemployment, the port suffered from strikes, blockades and sabotage. Equipment was left unmaintained, container yards fell into chaos and trucks jammed the port entrance for up to five kilometers. Shipowners abandoned the port, and clients were almost entirely lost.

The turning point came in 2016 when China COSCO Shipping Corp officially took over the port's operations. At the time, the annual container throughput of the port was approximately 680,000 twenty-foot equivalent units, ranking 93rd globally with outdated facilities and limited capacity.

Today, it has become one of the busiest ports in the Mediterranean, with annual throughput exceeding 5.6 million TEUs, ranking as high as 25th globally.

Upon taking over, COSCO Shipping issued a letter to employees, promising that the Chinese management team would not take a single blade of grass or stone from the port. They pledged that the port's past, present and future belong to the Greek people, with no more than seven Chinese nationals on the management team, leaving all other positions to Greek employees.

The management delivered on their promises. They worked alongside local employees to expand the international market, increase transit cargo and take the lead in repairing aging facilities.

To improve working conditions, the company provided free lunches and allowed employees to manage the canteen. Embracing a shared "family" culture similar to both Chinese and Greek traditions, they invited workers to new year parties and awarded scholarships to employees' children, transforming initial doubts into trust and a powerful synergy for development.

"They are not here to steal our jobs; instead, they have created more employment opportunities," said Tassos, the company's commercial manager who has worked at the port since he was 16. "In less than half a year, Piraeus Port began to achieve consecutive monthly profits. They did what we had wanted to do for years but couldn't."

Nikolaos, manager of the claims department, quoted a Greek proverb, "From the soil of wisdom grow three green shoots: good thoughts, good words, good actions." He said that COSCO Shipping perfectly combined Eastern wisdom with Greek culture, respecting and safeguarding the locals' millennia-old attachment to the port with advanced concepts, effective communication and solid actions.

Piraeus Port has now become the fourth-largest container port, the second-largest cruise homeport and the largest ferry port in Europe, as well as an important roll-on/roll-off automobile hub and ship repair center in the Eastern Mediterranean.

"These 10 years mark the decade in which the port of Piraeus moved from being a corner of the Mediterranean to a global hub," said Han Chao, chairman of the port operator Piraeus Port Authority SA.

The development path of the port is also quietly transforming. Stepping into the office building of the container terminal, one can see large screens displaying vessel dynamics, operational progress and equipment status in real time.

According to Han, the port has built a digital monitoring platform covering the entire port area and introduced 5G and artificial intelligence technologies, driving its organization to evolve from "manual planning" to "intelligent coordination".

In terms of energy, photovoltaic systems have begun supplying power to parts of the port. Shore power facilities are also being planned to allow docked ships to cut emissions, further increasing the port's share of green energy.

In recent years, the port's revenue and profit have continued to grow, reversing a long-term trend of losses. COSCO Shipping has invested over 10 billion yuan ($1.47 billion) locally, creating thousands of direct jobs and generating tens of thousands of indirect employment opportunities.


Trucks move containers at Piraeus Port on May 6, boosting regional logistics links via international connectivity cooperation. LYU YOU / XINHUA

> "These 10 years mark the decade in which the port of Piraeus moved from being a corner of the Mediterranean to a global hub."
>
> **Han Chao,** chairman of the port operator Piraeus Port Authority SA

"It has changed not only the port itself, but also the relationship between the city and its people," said Yannis Moralis, mayor of Piraeus.

As port revenues inject funds into the local economy, surrounding businesses have prospered. Once quiet streets are now bustling with cafes, shops and logistics companies. For locals, the port is no longer just a "distant dock", but a part of their daily lives.

According to the recently released financial report of the Piraeus Port Authority, the company's total revenue in 2025 reached approximately 251 million euros ($292 million), a year-on-year increase of 8.6 percent; operating profit stood at 132 million euros, up 2.2 percent year-on-year.

Savvas Sanozidis, secretary of the board of directors of the Piraeus Port Authority, said the transmission and integration of COSCO Shipping's corporate values have effectively strengthened supervision over management, promoting transparency, prudence and a high sense of responsibility in all aspects of work, providing a strong guarantee for the company's long-term sustainable development.

Stefanos Gkikas, deputy minister of maritime affairs and insular policy of Greece, stated that the fruitful cooperation between COSCO Shipping and the Piraeus Port Authority over the past decade has significantly enhanced the port's competitiveness and further consolidated Greece's position in the international shipping sector.

Looking ahead to the next decade, the development blueprint for Piraeus Port is clearly defined.

"The future port will be smarter and greener," Han added. The port plans to extend its industry chain to logistics, warehousing and comprehensive services, building a global logistics node with greater reach.

Meanwhile, social responsibility remains a priority. Public welfare projects and cultural exchanges continue to advance, making the port not just an economic hub, but a connection point for emotion and culture.

According to Han, the construction of the COSCO Shipping Piraeus Port park project was officially launched in April. Once completed, it will become a modern center integrating sports, leisure and social activities. It will not only benefit local residents, but also improve the infrastructure of the cruise terminal area and strengthen transport links with the city of Piraeus, providing a better experience for international tourists.

Over the past decade, Piraeus Port has achieved leapfrog development, serving as a vivid footnote to China-Greece cooperation. Today, amid the surging tides, this gateway to the Mediterranean is embarking on its next decade of intelligent, green and open growth.

Belt and Road Initiative's infrastructure projects improving lives abroad

By REN QI

Under the framework of the Belt and Road Initiative, China and various involved countries have continuously advanced global interconnectivity. A series of major infrastructure projects have taken root worldwide, supporting the dreams of people for prosperity and development while injecting fresh vitality into the global economy.

On April 1, 2023, the New Belgrade-Surcin section of the E-763 highway in Serbia, constructed by a Chinese enterprise, officially opened to traffic. Spanning 7.9 kilometers, this segment serves as the starting point of the highway, seamlessly connecting the urban area of Belgrade with the previously completed Surcin-Obrenovac section.

With the opening of this new segment, the total operational length of the E-763 highway has reached 140 km. This vital transport artery brings large and medium-sized cities in southwestern Serbia into the capital's one-hour economic circle. Benefiting a population of over 4 million, the highway not only facilitates convenient travel for locals, but also plays a crucial role in promoting interconnectivity and economic and trade exchanges across the entire Balkan region.

Over the past decade, Chinese enterprises have consistently offered Chinese solutions to overcome complex technical challenges in highway construction across BRI-participating countries. Through collaborative efforts, they have successfully built landmark projects such as Cambodia's first expressway and Bangladesh's first elevated expressway.

The momentum extends to rail networks. On Oct 2, 2022, the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway — the first of its kind in both Indonesia and Southeast Asia — officially commenced operations. Stretching 142 km with a maximum design speed of 350 kilometers per hour, the railway has drastically slashed travel time between Jakarta and Bandung from over three hours to just over 40 minutes now.

This transformative railway was jointly built and operated by a joint venture established by China Railway International Co Ltd and four Indonesian State-owned enterprises. As a flagship project of the BRI and a symbol of practical cooperation between China and Indonesia, builders from both nations worked in tandem over eight years, conducting comprehensive, all-element and full-system cooperation.


Passengers chat inside the dining car of an Ethiopia-Djibouti Railway train on Sept 9, 2023. WANG GUANSEN / XINHUA

From the Addis Ababa-Djibouti Railway, East Africa's first electrified railway, to the Mombasa-Nairobi Standard Gauge Railway, a major artery for regional interconnectivity; and from the China-Laos Railway, which transformed Laos from a landlocked country into a land-linked hub, to the Jakarta-Bandung HSR, which achieved the "fastest speed" in Southeast Asia — the past decade has seen China and partner countries pave roads of development and revitalization.

Together, they have spurred economic growth, transferred advanced technology, increased employment opportunities and improved local livelihoods, steadily marching toward common development and shared prosperity.

Aviation infrastructure has also seen remarkable progress. In 2019, the new terminal of Bole International Airport in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, built by Chinese enterprises, officially opened. As part of the airport's expansion and upgrading project, construction of the new terminal began in 2015 and was completed after four years of dedicated efforts.

Following the terminal's successful operation, the Ethiopian government continued to invite Chinese enterprises to participate in further expansion projects, aiming to transform the airport into a premier aviation transport hub in Africa.

From New Gwadar International Airport in Pakistan to Siem Reap-Angkor International Airport in Cambodia, multiple modern airports have sprung up in BRI participating countries over the past decade, with Chinese enterprises frequently playing key roles in their investment and construction.

These achievements are microcosms of the deepening cooperation between China and BRI participating countries in the field of new infrastructure. In recent years, the overseas service networks of China's three major telecom operators have expanded to over 40 countries, paving "highways" for new digital infrastructure.

Meanwhile, enterprises such as the State Grid and China Southern Power Grid have also actively strengthened the alignment, mutual recognition and application of rules and standards with BRI participating countries. This has promoted the "going global" of Chinese technology, standards and equipment, helping to build the BRI into a road of innovation.

Andrey Ostrovsky, chief researcher at the Institute of China and Modern Asia at Russian Academy of Sciences, said the BRI proposed by China brings new development opportunities to participating countries and significantly aids global common development.

To ensure the successful implementation of the BRI, China has introduced a series of supportive policies and promoted the establishment of institutions such as the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and the Silk Road Fund.

Through this extensive cooperation, many countries have acquired vital facilities that would have been exceedingly difficult to build relying solely on their own capabilities, Ostrovsky said, adding that these projects have created excellent conditions for subsequent development and have become enduring sources of wealth for these nations.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Education meets AI

AI is transforming education worldwide, but experts say human judgment, creativity and adaptability remain at the center.



Left: Students at Hangzhou Chovan Century City Experimental School introduce an AI project to delegates attending the 2026 World Digital Education Conference. **Right:** Students from Hangzhou Xuejun Primary School present an environmental protection project to delegates during the conference. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **ZHONG YUTONG** and **XU YIDAN** in Hangzhou and **MENG WENJIE**

Gaspard Banyankimbona has seen the anxiety many young people feel as artificial intelligence advances.

As commissioner for education, science, technology and innovation at the African Union Commission, he arrived at the 2026 World Digital Education Conference in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, with a clear message for students and teachers facing the rise of intelligent technologies: AI is not something to fear or avoid, but a tool people must learn to use wisely.

"AI is already with us. We cannot run away from it. We need to learn how to work with it," he said.

Held from May 11 to 13 under the theme "AI + Education: Transformation, Development, Governance", the conference brought together government officials, scientists and education experts from around the world to discuss how AI is reshaping learning, teaching and research.

Drawing on years of experience in education, Banyankimbona said that as AI tools make knowledge easier to access than ever, educators must rethink their role in the classroom.

"Teachers should become collaborators with students and guide them in areas AI can never replace, such as critical thinking, emotional intelligence and social intelligence," he said.

That idea — that AI is pushing education beyond the simple delivery of knowledge — ran through the conference. It was also on display at Hangzhou Chovan Century City Experimental School, where delegates saw how AI tools are being woven into everyday school life.

There, students use AI-assisted learning platforms that generate exercises based on the areas where they need more practice. The system helps them review difficult topics more efficiently and allows teachers to see where students need extra help.

In physical education classes, data such as step counts, heart rates and movement patterns are collected and analyzed in real time, helping teachers build personalized fitness profiles for students. The goal is not simply to measure performance, but to better understand each child's physical development.

AI has also changed how students approach creative projects.

Before graduation, sixth-grade students at the school complete a project called "The First Book of My Life", in which they document memorable moments from their primary school years. In the past, students were responsible only for writing, while the layout and design were outsourced. Now, with the help of AI-supported tools, they can create their own e-books, bringing together text, images and design.

Tan Pengfei, the school's principal, said the changes reflect a broader shift in education.

"The abilities developed outside textbooks have become even more valuable today — communication, creativity, curiosity and problem-solving," Tan said. "The role of schools is to awaken and nurture these human qualities that are already present in children."

Tan's comments echoed Banyankimbona's view that the future of education will depend less on whether students can access information and more on whether they can use knowledge with judgment and creativity.

The same shift is also taking place in higher education and scientific research.

At the conference, Luo Jianlan, an associate professor at Shanghai Innovation Institute, discussed AI's role in research and innovation in a keynote speech on embodied intelligence.

Founded in 2024, the institute focuses on cultivating AI talent capable of addressing real-world challenges.

"It trains students to identify real problems, turn them into scientific questions and complete a full cycle of innovation," Luo said.

A graduate of the University of California, Berkeley, and a former researcher at Google and the Berkeley Artificial Intelligence Research Lab, Luo said AI has narrowed the gap between basic research and industrial application.

"In the past, translating research into real-world use could take 10 to 20 years," he said. "Today, for example, it took only about seven years for AlphaFold, an AI system that predicts protein structures, to progress from breakthrough research to a Nobel Prize-winning achievement."

Zhang Linfeng, founder and CSO of DP Technology, shared a similar view.

Having long worked in "AI for Science", an interdisciplinary field that uses AI to advance scientific research, Zhang recalled the first time he saw AI's transformative potential in science.

By using neural networks to model atomic interactions, he completed a molecular simulation on a laptop in less than a day — a task that would previously have required 200 million CPU-core hours and millions of dollars.

"That was when I truly understood what AI could bring to scientific advancement," he said. "In the future, when a scientific question arises, AI may be able to interpret it, review the literature, design experiments, carry them out and analyze the results."

> "As AI expands humanity's ability to explore the unknown, even more complex and interesting questions will emerge. That is why soft skills such as defining problems and finding solutions may become more important than expertise in any specific technical domain."
>
> **Zhang Linfeng,** founder and CSO of DP Technology

But Zhang stressed that this does not mean scientists will be removed from the process. On the contrary, he said, AI will make their ability to ask meaningful questions, evaluate results and decide which problems are worth solving even more important.

He also believes China has distinct advantages in this field, and that was one reason he chose to return to the country after graduating from Princeton University in 2020 to start his company.

"China has a strong industrial and manufacturing foundation, which makes it easier to connect scientific breakthroughs with industrial innovation," he said.

Turning from frontier science back to education, Zhang also reflected on how younger researchers are adapting to the fast-changing age of AI.

He noted that in the past, a PhD student might spend years steadily exploring a single research topic. Today, that path is far less predictable.

"With AI evolving so rapidly, entire fields can change within three to five years," he said.

That makes adaptability increasingly important, Zhang added.

"As AI expands humanity's ability to explore the unknown, even more complex and interesting questions will emerge. That is why soft skills such as defining problems and finding solutions may become more important than expertise in any specific technical domain," he said.

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Shining Wisdom

Bangladeshi scholar inspired by Chinese modernization

When I first arrived at Taiyuan University of Technology more than six years ago, I was a young man from Bangladesh carrying a suitcase, a dream and the values my father had instilled in me.

My father has long been active in the Communist Party of Bangladesh, and in our home, discussions about justice, equality and working people were part of everyday life. Those conversations shaped my earliest understanding of society.

My decision to come to China was practical at first. I wanted to learn from the country's achievements in infrastructure, power generation and technology. What I found, however, went far beyond technical knowledge, reshaping both my academic path and worldview.

During my first year, a professor recommended *Xi Jinping: The Governance of China*.

I opened the book expecting formal political theory, but found a work that spoke to questions I had carried since childhood: What does it mean for development to serve the people? How can a country protect its independence while opening to the world? How can political ideals improve people's daily lives?

What struck me first was the emphasis on putting people first. In Bangladesh, I had often thought about obstacles facing developing countries: foreign interference, inequality, local elites and weak long-term planning.

President Xi's writings helped me see that national development cannot be reduced to economic growth alone. It requires clear vision, strong institutions, social stability and commitment to improving lives.

The idea of building a community with a shared future for humanity also moved me deeply.

Bangladesh is highly vulnerable to climate change, although it has contributed very little to global carbon emissions. For people from countries like mine, international cooperation is not an abstract slogan; it is a question of survival, dignity and justice.

President Xi's call for mutual respect and shared benefit gave me hope, a spirit I also saw in educational exchanges, friendships and development cooperation.

The more I read, the more I understood that Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era represents a living application of Marxism.

My father taught me that Marxism is not a fixed dogma, but a method for understanding society and guiding action. In *The Governance of China*, I saw that method applied to the 21st century: innovation and stability, opening up and cultural confidence, environmental protection, national rejuvenation and global responsibility.

Living in China allowed me to connect these ideas with real experience. I have visited communities where public services have improved people's lives. I have spoken with people in Shanxi who remember harder times and describe changes in daily life. These experiences helped me understand development not as a statistic, but as something visible in ordinary lives.



Riyadzh Mahmudh

President Xi's discussion of poverty alleviation also affected me deeply. In Bangladesh, despite progress, many people still face hardship. Learning how China lifted hundreds of millions out of poverty changed my understanding of what is possible.

What impressed me was not only the scale, but also the method: targeted policies, mobilization, measurable goals and a determination that no group should be forgotten. It showed me that poverty is not inevitable when political will, organization and people-centered policy work together.

My experience at Taiyuan University of Technology has reinforced these lessons. In renewable energy systems and power grid integration, I have come to see engineering not only as a technical discipline but also as a contribution to development and human well-being. The book helped me connect my research with a larger question: how knowledge can serve the people.

It has also helped me understand my identity more clearly. As a Bangladeshi communist studying in China, I once felt I stood between different worlds. Now I see that position as a responsibility. The vision of a community with a shared future for humanity teaches me that my education is not for personal advancement, but for preparation to contribute to my country and strengthen friendship among peoples.

The Governance of China has been an important guide in my transformation.

When I return to Bangladesh, I will carry more than a doctorate. I will carry the lessons I learned from China: that development must be people-centered, that independence and cooperation can strengthen each other, and that theory becomes meaningful when it improves real lives.

My father gave me my first introduction to communism. China has shown me how those ideals can be practiced in the modern world.

Written by Riyadzh Mahmudh, a PhD candidate from Bangladesh in the College of Electrical and Power Engineering at Taiyuan University of Technology. His research focuses on the evolving landscape of high-voltage engineering and power electronics.

Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

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Running toward the light

Student volunteers in Jiangxi guide runners with visual impairments, helping them build confidence, independence and lasting friendships through the shared power of running.



Top: Hu Liang (first from left) leads a visually impaired runner in warm-up exercises on June 2, 2024. **Middle:** Zhang Hongying (right) accompanies her running partner, Zhang Qian, on the track at Jinggangshan University on Dec 14, 2025. **Bottom:** Man Xinyuan (left) guides a friend with visual impairment during a run on Sept 8, 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



At a running event for people with visual impairments in Nanchang, Jiangxi province, Chen Xinping (third from left) crosses the finish line on April 12 with guide runner Hu Liang (second from right). PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **MENG WENJIE**
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When Zhang Hongying first put on a blindfold to experience what it is like to be blind, she froze, her heart racing.

"I couldn't take a single step. There's an instinctive fear when you face the unknown," she recalled.

At the time, Zhang was training as a new volunteer with the Red Stars Charity Program, an initiative based in Ji'an, Jiangxi province, which supports runners who are blind or have low vision. Now 20, Zhang has been volunteering with the program for a year. Every Sunday morning, she joins a group of runners in a riverside park in Ji'an.

Before working with participants, volunteers complete a three-week guide-running course, including one session conducted entirely in darkness.

As a dental student, Zhang had had little contact with people with vision loss. At first, she assumed her role would be straightforward: point out obstacles and give clear directions so the runners could focus on their pace.

"But when I was plunged into darkness, I realized that these runners are placing not just their bodies, but their full trust in you," she said.

Hu Liang, the founder of Red Stars and an associate professor at Jinggangshan University (JGSU) in Jiangxi province, has visual impairment himself. Born to parents who were both completely blind, he developed severe myopia that gradually worsened until he could see little more than blurred shapes.

Hu said those years were extremely difficult until running helped him rebuild both his physical and mental strength. Later, when he learned that blind athletes at the Paralympic Games competed with the help of guide runners, he had a revelation: running could open new possibilities for people like him, who had lost their sight.

In 2022, Hu founded Red Stars. The name draws inspiration from the revolutionary history of the Jinggangshan area and symbolizes perseverance and hope. Most of the program's volunteers are JGSU students who come from all over China.

"They are like little stars, coming together to shine for a shared cause: supporting people with visual impairments," Hu said.

The program connects volunteers and runners through a guide rope — a sports neck gaiter twisted into a figure-eight.

"It's a clever design," said Chen Xinping, a runner who lost his sight in 2010. "If I drift off course, the rope tightens slightly and gently guides me back. It allows volunteers to lead us without taking over, so we can truly enjoy the run ourselves."

Before joining Red Stars, Chen rarely left home without the support of family members. But the program gave him the confidence to venture beyond his familiar surroundings.

Originally from Shangrao in Jiangxi province, Chen celebrated his 60th birthday in April by setting a personal record at a Red Stars event in Nanchang, the provincial capital, where he completed six kilometers.

"The lives of people with visual impairments are like a long march," Chen said. "Red Stars helped us find our starting point and take the first steps on a new journey."

> "They are like little stars, coming together to shine for a shared cause: supporting people with visual impairments."
>
> **Hu Liang,** the founder of the Red Stars Charity Program

Strengthening bonds

For many participants, the benefits of Red Stars go far beyond the running track, including physical strength, confidence, and independence.

One of them is Zhang Qian, who experienced depression after losing his eyesight in his 30s. Initially, he doubted whether running was even possible, given that he often bumps into things while walking. Despite his reservations, he decided to give it a try.

With the steady support of his guide runners, Zhang has made progress step by step. "I went from just a few kilometers at the beginning to 10 kilometers now," he said.

Zhang Qian's regular guide runner is Zhang Hongying, who has grown alongside him. Before joining Red Stars, she could barely run two kilometers. This past winter, she completed a half marathon.

"It's the determination of the runners that keeps me going. They treasure every opportunity to run and always give their best," she said. "We are not merely helpers and those being helped — we're friends who achieve things together."

Man Xinyuan, 23, a senior at JGSU and a volunteer with Red Stars, believes the runners need to be treated as equals and offered genuine companionship.

He recalled accompanying a runner with vision loss to a marathon in Zunyi, Guizhou province, in 2023. Man wanted to take photos for him, but his partner declined, explaining that his phone's screen reader can only read text, so images mean nothing to him.

"Don't worry — I'll help you 'see' them," Man replied. He later sent detailed text descriptions of each photo so his partner could imagine the event.

According to Man, Red Stars feels like a family, with people supporting each other both on and off the track. As an environmental design major, he drew inspiration from the program for his graduation project: an inclusive kindergarten designed with accessibility in mind. He also hopes to create a comprehensive visual identity for Red Stars.

"Students from different academic backgrounds contribute in many ways and grow through the experience," Hu said.

Design students create patterns for guide ropes and team uniforms, psychology students offer emotional support, and sports science students lead rehabilitation exercises.

"As a teacher, it is incredibly rewarding to watch students grow from freshmen into capable, confident, and determined young adults," Hu added.

Expanding reach

What began as a small campus initiative has since developed into a much broader support network.

Red Stars now has nearly 4,000 volunteers, has organized close to 300 events, and has served over 30,000 people who are blind or have low vision.

In 2024, Hu established a rehabilitation center to support people who lost their eyesight later in life, expanding the initiative far beyond running.

"This has been made possible by national policies," Hu said. He noted that in late 2023, the China Disabled Persons' Federation directed every province and region to establish at least one service center for each type of disability beginning in 2024.

Red Stars' center is located on the campus of JGSU, which provides space and equipment free of charge. The 1,000-square-meter facility includes tactile pathways, a sports zone, a Braille library, and life-skills spaces designed to help participants relearn daily tasks in a safe environment.

Zhang Qian benefited greatly from the center, gaining orientation and mobility skills that now allow him to travel independently. "I used to wait at home until my family had time to take me out," he said. "Now I can go wherever I need to on my own."

Zhang Qian now works as a trainer at the center, helping others learn how to navigate life without sight.

The Red Stars model is also expanding beyond JGSU. In Yudu county, also in Jiangxi province, a new running group for people with visual impairments has been launched with the program's support.

Several other universities have visited JGSU to learn from Red Stars and apply its approach to their own projects, such as audio-described films, accessible design projects, and hiking groups for people with visual impairments.

"The methods may differ, but we share the same goal: bringing society together to support people with disabilities," Hu said.

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Z WEEKLY

Russian actor lives Chinese stories

From extra roles to revolutionary dramas, a Russian actor discovers his place in China's storytelling world.





Above: Antonov Dmitry portrays a Soviet paratrooper in the Chinese film *Survival*. **Right:** Dmitry (third from left) plays the German communist revolutionary Otto Braun in the Chinese micro-drama *Bright Horizon*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By DU AORAN
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In the countryside of Le'an county, Jiangxi province, Russian actor Antonov Dmitry stood face-to-face with Chinese actor Chi Shuai on the set of the revolutionary historical micro-drama *Bright Horizon*.

Dmitry, 37, plays Otto Braun, also known in China as Li De, a German military adviser sent to China by the Communist International in the 1930s. In the scene, Braun insists on his own military judgment and demands full command of the troops, while Mao Zedong, played by Chi, argues for tactical adjustments based on the realities on the battlefield.

"This is one of the most emotionally charged scenes I've ever filmed," Dmitry said, recalling how he slammed the table so hard during shooting that he bruised his hand.

"But I didn't feel the pain," he said. "I was completely immersed in the role."

Even during camera adjustments and brief water breaks, the actors stayed in character, maintaining the emotional pressure throughout.

"If you relax for even a second, the tension disappears," he said.

Dmitry admitted that in recent years he has begun carrying heart medication with him on set as a precaution.

"It shows how physically and emotionally demanding historical roles can be," he said.

For Dmitry, the scene was more than just a performance. It reflected what has drawn him ever deeper into acting in China: the challenge of entering another history, another emotional world, and another way of storytelling.

Finding his rhythm

Dmitry did not originally plan to become an actor. He studied engineering at university, specializing in mining and natural gas. "It was a very technical and logical world," he said.

But art had always been part of his upbringing in Russia. Music, painting, and theater surrounded him from an early age, and at 18 he started teaching himself classical vocal performance, an experience that later helped him develop his voice, stage presence, and acting skills.

"That early exposure to art became an outlet that helped me balance the rigidity of engineering," he said.

His interest in Chinese culture deepened after he watched a Chinese stage performance in Moscow.

"It was completely different from what I knew," he said. "It was subtle, restrained, almost like an ink painting. It didn't explain everything, but it made you feel everything."

That impression stayed with him. Years later, Dmitry came to China for postgraduate studies. Then, in 2019, a friend working in media production offered him an unexpected opportunity: a small role as an extra in a television drama being filmed in Nanjing, Jiangsu province.

"That was my first time on a film set," he said. "I stood quietly at the edge with no lines, thinking, 'Where am I, and what am I supposed to do?'"





Above: Dmitry takes part in a traditional Chinese-style photo shoot wearing *hanfu* at Hengdian World Studios in Zhejiang province. **Bottom:** Dmitry appears as a Russian police officer in the Chinese film *Moscow Mission*.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

But as soon as filming began, the atmosphere changed.

"The director called 'Action!' and the set suddenly came alive," Dmitry recalled. By the third take, he began to understand the rhythm of filmmaking. "Even without any lines, I felt like I was part of something meaningful."

Over the next six years, Dmitry gradually built a career in China's entertainment industry, moving from extra roles to supporting parts and more complex characters in television dramas and films.

The work, he said, has often been physically demanding. He remembered one film shoot that lasted 21 hours, with long periods of waiting in the makeup room and only brief moments to rest.

As his experience grew, Dmitry began collaborating regularly with agents, casting directors, and production companies.

> "I understand how Chinese sets operate, how directors communicate, and how emotions are expressed in Chinese storytelling. Maybe I've become more of a *laonei* — an insider."
>
> **Antonov Dmitry,** a Russian actor

Most of his roles, he said, come through in-person auditions, online castings, or self-taped submissions. Sometimes, production teams contact him directly after seeing his portfolio.

Language skills and cultural understanding, he added, have been central to his progress.

"I don't really feel like a *laowai* anymore," he said, using the Chinese term for "foreigner". "I understand how Chinese sets operate, how directors communicate, and how emotions are expressed in Chinese storytelling. Maybe I've become more of a *laonei* — an insider."

For Dmitry, acting is not only about speaking lines. Costumes, lighting, and the surrounding environment all help him connect with a character.

He recalled filming at Hengdian World Studios in Dongyang, Zhejiang province, where he played a French envoy in a historical drama.

"The moment I put on the costume, the entire environment brought the character to life," he said. "A chair, a lantern, a beam of light — every detail helps you step into the role."

Working with experienced actors has also deeply influenced him. Earlier this year, he acted alongside Mei Ting — one of China's best-known actresses and a national first-class performer — in the film *Heart of Gold*.

Four years earlier, Dmitry had watched Mei's performance in *Blind Massage* (2014) and was struck by her precision and professionalism. On set, he said, he saw that same mastery up close.

"She is extremely focused and has a remarkable sense of the camera. In one scene, she conveyed complex emotions through very small movements, with perfect timing," he said. "That is not acting — it is living in the moment."

From screen to stage

Outside of filming, Dmitry balances several pursuits. He is a partner in a fitness club chain in Russia while also continuing to read extensively on acting theory and biographies of great performers.

But his main artistic goal now is to join a theater company.

That ambition grew stronger last May after he watched Canadian international students perform an opera adaptation of *Thunderstorm*, the classic drama written by Cao Yu in 1934.

"They crossed cultural boundaries and expressed pain, passion, and conflict with such sincerity that the audience burst into applause," he said. "I was completely captivated."

The performance made him think more seriously about theater. Unlike film, theater allows no retakes or editing. Everything depends on the actor's voice, timing, and direct connection with the audience.

Dmitry said he hopes to further develop his improvisation skills, voice control, and stage presence, and to better understand China through its classic works.

"Acting is no longer just my job. It is part of who I am," he said. "I cannot imagine my life without it."



An international student plays Go with a Chinese student at Fudan University on May 10.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ancient game connects global youth

By ZHENG YIRAN in Shanghai
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Without Go, Filip Filipovic, Noah Lauder and Kseniia Shatarova might never have become friends in China.

The three international students come from different countries and have different reasons for taking up the ancient Chinese board game Go, known in Chinese as *weiqi*. But through the Shanghai International Student Go Training Program, they found a shared language on the board.

The program, hosted by Fudan University, was launched on May 10 as a side event of the upcoming 10th World Collegiate Weiqi Championship. It aims to teach international students in Shanghai the fundamentals of Go while offering them a deeper understanding of Chinese culture.

More than 200 students applied, and 86 were ultimately selected. Participants came from 35 countries across Asia, Africa, Europe, North America, South America and Oceania.

According to the organizers, the course provides systematic instruction, covering everything from the basic rules of Go to practical gameplay training. Bilingual teaching assistants are also on hand to help ensure smooth communication in the classroom.

Beyond the game itself, the program includes friendly matches, cultural workshops and *hanfu* (traditional Chinese attire) experiences, giving students the opportunity to learn about Chinese traditions firsthand.

Filipovic, a 29-year-old doctoral student from Serbia at Fudan University, first encountered Go while attending primary school in China.

"At first, I played chess with my schoolmates. Later, our school introduced Go classes, and that completely drew my attention," he said. "The rules are simple, but the possible variations are extremely complex. The real difficulty is much higher than that of many other board games."

Having completed both primary and middle school in China, Filipovic said Go has become an important part of how he understands Chinese culture.

"Every board game carries its own cultural heritage," he said. "Go is deeply connected to Chinese ideas of yin and yang, as well as ancient military strategy, including concepts found in Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*. That is what makes it so fascinating."

His Go idol is Nie Weiping, a Chinese Go master and honorary chairman of the Chinese Weiqi Association.

"I used to watch him play when I was a kid," Filipovic said. "I love his fuseki and his understanding of the game. For me, it is a kind of philosophy."

For Lauder, a freshman from Australia at Fudan University, Go became appealing through another part of Chinese culture: tea.

"When I came to China, I found it really interesting how tea and board games are often enjoyed together as part of everyday life," he said. "That was when I started playing Go."

Lauder said he sees Go as a hobby that can last a lifetime.

"It is easy to get started, but there is no ceiling," he said. "You can keep growing with the game."

Shatarova, a 20-year-old Russian student at Tongji University, said she was drawn to Go because of its complexity.

"Go is one of the toughest games in the world," she said. "I play it to challenge myself."

She often plays with Chinese friends and said each game gives her another way to understand Chinese culture. Given the chance, she hopes to introduce Go to people in her hometown.

Zhang Zhuo, a researcher at the Institute of Journalism at the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, said Go can help young people connect across cultures.

"Go is a quiet form of communication because many of the ideas embodied in the game resonate with people from different cultural backgrounds," Zhang said. "The game reflects the Confucian concept of balance and moderation in Eastern philosophy, while also sharing similarities with ideas found in Western cultural traditions."

She said training programs and competitions can make traditional Chinese culture more accessible to young people worldwide.

"Go is a cultural symbol that transcends ideology and serves as an important bridge for exchanges between civilizations," she said.

The 10th Annual World Collegiate Weiqi Championship will be held at Fudan University from July 7 to 13. Players from across the globe will gather in Shanghai to compete and build friendships through the centuries-old board game.

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SPORTS

BASKETBALL

Wemby dazzles as Spurs top Thunder

French star produces epic 41-point, 24-rebound display to give San Antonio a 1-0 lead in the Western Conference finals

OKLAHOMA CITY — The longest night of Victor Wembanyama's NBA career was over.

His postgame media responsibilities were done, and he had just seen his father and a few other people in a quiet hallway near the San Antonio Spurs locker room.

He didn't walk back to the room. He got a ride — in a wheeled office chair, pushed by a Spurs staffer.

"Save some steps," Wembanyama said.

To be fair, after the night he had, energy was probably in short supply anyway.

A 41-point, 24-rebound playoff game. Only a few people in the history of basketball have done that — Wilt Chamberlain eight times, Hakeem Olajuwon twice, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar once, Charles Barkley once.

Add Wembanyama to that list now, after his latest masterpiece — in a career-high 49 minutes — carried the Spurs to a 122-115 double-overtime win over the Oklahoma City Thunder in Game 1 of the Western Conference finals on Monday night.

"The best player in the (expletive) world," Spurs guard Stephon Castle announced for all the world to hear in a postgame interview on NBC.

Officially, no, that's not the case. The best player in the NBA world right now is Shai Gilgeous-Alexander, the player who got his second consecutive Most Valuable Player award in a pregame ceremony with Wembanyama looking on.

It was an award Wembanyama wanted — and still wants. Seeing Gilgeous-Alexander raise that trophy, though, had an effect on the 7-foot-4 French star.

"He's competitive. If you're a competitor and you see another competitor get rewarded with what you want. If that's motivation, we all get motivated by different things," Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said. "As a competitive person, that would be my approach and perspective."



San Antonio Spurs forward Victor Wembanyama celebrates after scoring a dunk during Game 1 of the Western Conference finals against the Oklahoma City Thunder on Monday in Oklahoma City. Wembanyama scored 41 points and pulled down 24 rebounds to lead the Spurs to an epic 122-115 double-overtime triumph. AP

Did it matter?

"I've still got a lot to learn," Wembanyama said. "And I want to get that trophy many times in my career."

Are you the best player?

"The world is eight billion people," Wembanyama said. "That's eight billion opinions."

Wembanyama's final line: 14 for 25 from the field, 12 for 13 from the foul line, and his lone 3-pointer came late in the first overtime, tying the game from well beyond the arc. Without that shot, there's probably no second overtime. There's probably a 1-0 series lead for Oklahoma City going into Game 2 on Wednesday night.

He blocked three shots and changed countless others. He dunked on the Thunder and flexed, more than once.

The Spurs outrebounded the Thunder 61-40. Wembanyama even smiled and posed for the cameras at times. This was his first conference finals game, on the road no less, and he was as comfortable as could be.

"I think he's a great player with high impact, obviously, and when you play against those players it's kind of an acquired thing," Thunder coach Mark Daigneault said. "You're learning as you go. We've gone through that with other great players."

This was a game that the Spurs were supposed to lose: underdogs, on the road, without injured point guard De'Aaron Fox, against the defending champion, a team unbeaten in the first two rounds of the playoffs. A 10-point lead in the fourth quarter was given away, and the Thunder isn't in the habit of losing leads in the final moments.

And none of that mattered, largely because of Wembanyama. The road to the NBA title now goes through San Antonio; if the Spurs win all their home games the rest of the way, they'll be NBA champions.

That's a long way off. But the Spurs aren't a rising team anymore, they're already here.

"The message would be that we, as a team, are ready to go into any environment, in any place, against anybody," Wembanyama said. "And even though we've still got a lot to learn, our effort should be over anybody else's. And tonight, we were relentless."

With the triumph at Oklahoma City's Paycom Center, the Spurs stole home-court advantage in the best-of-seven series that will send the winner to the NBA Finals.

Wembanyama admitted the sight of Thunder star Gilgeous-Alexander receiving his second straight MVP trophy before the game "for sure" made the clash more personal.

He was named Defensive Player of the Year, but finished third in the MVP voting announced on Sunday.

Rookie Dylan Harper, starting in place of the injured Fox, scored 24 points and snagged seven steals for San Antonio. Castle added 17 points and 11 assists as the Spurs extended their season dominance over the Thunder.

Oklahoma City, trying to become the first team to repeat as champion since Golden State in 2017 and 2018, piled up a league-best 64 regular-season wins, but dropped four of five contests against the Spurs — who won 62 regular-season games to return to the playoffs for the first time since 2019.

Gilgeous-Alexander was limited to 24 points after shaking off a sluggish start to spark the Thunder's rally from a 10-point fourth-quarter deficit.

Alex Caruso scored 31 points to lead the Thunder and Jalen Williams returned from a six-game injury absence to score 26.

Oklahoma City trailed by 10 in the fourth quarter, but the Thunder clawed back and it was knotted at 99-99 with 33.2 seconds left when Wembanyama spun in for a basket that put San Antonio up 101-99.

Gilgeous-Alexander then tied it up with a layup and Chet Holmgren blocked Wembanyama's potential game-winner at the buzzer.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

SOCCER

Neymar gets the World Cup nod from Ancelotti



Santos' Neymar reacts during a Brazilian Championship match against Coritiba. AP

RIO DE JANEIRO — Neymar has been named in Brazil's squad for next month's World Cup, manager Carlo Ancelotti said on Monday, handing the forward a chance to return to international soccer's biggest stage after an injury-disrupted cycle.

The 34-year-old, Brazil's all-time leading scorer, comes back following a prolonged absence due to a series of injuries that have kept him out for much of the qualifying campaign, as the five-time champion pursues a record-extending sixth title.

As dozens of journalists gathered at Rio de Janeiro's Museum of Tomorrow for a ceremony featuring musical acts and celebrity guests, all eyes were on Ancelotti's decision whether or not to include Neymar in the squad.

The 66-year-old Italian, who took charge of Brazil's men's national team last year, had not previously called up the former Barcelona and Paris Saint-Germain player. He told reporters earlier this month that Neymar's inclusion would be based on fitness and form, not sentiment.

"We evaluated Neymar throughout the year and noticed that, recently, he has been playing consistently and has improved his physical condition," Ancelotti said at a news conference on Monday.

"He has the same role and responsibilities as everyone else, but he is an experienced player.

"It's true that in some positions we prioritized experience."

Neymar, who has 79 international goals, but has not featured for Brazil since 2023, has faced questions about his fitness and form following an injury-marred spell at Al Hilal and an underwhelming return to his boyhood club Santos last year.

The forward said on Sunday he was satisfied that he had done all he could to prove he was fully fit and deserved a place in the squad.

"Physically, I feel great. I've been improving with every game," he told reporters after Santos' 3-0 defeat to Coritiba.

The rest of Brazil's squad was largely retained from the qualifying campaign and recent friendlies, with the likes of Vinicius Junior, Raphinha, Matheus Cunha and Endrick shouldering the attacking duties alongside Neymar.

Real Madrid striker Rodrygo, defender Eder Militao and Chelsea winger Estevao were left out due to injuries. Chelsea forward Joao Pedro and midfielder Andrey Santos, who had been called up on previous occasions, also surprisingly missed the final squad.

"Some of the players who were with us this year won't be happy with this list. I'm sorry, and I want to thank everyone who was with us," Ancelotti said.

Brazil will open its World Cup campaign against Morocco on June 13 in New Jersey. It also faces Haiti and Scotland in Group C.

REUTERS



A Neymar lookalike poses for a photo before the announcement of Brazil's squad on Monday. AP

Flying Kiwis flock to support their team in a uniquely New Zealand way

WELLINGTON, New Zealand — They call themselves the Flying Kiwis, an eclectic group of New Zealanders from around the world who, whenever their national soccer team plays a major match, assemble to provide raucous and usually outnumbered support.

The deliberate irony: Kiwis — the eponymous bird from which New Zealanders take their nickname — are flightless.

Since 2009 the Flying Kiwis have followed the New Zealand men's team at home and overseas, and they'll be at the World Cup, offering a small island of loud, proud and distinctly Kiwi support.

Small beginnings

In 2009, New Zealand played Bahrain in a two-game qualifying series, with the winner advancing to the 2010 World Cup in South Africa. After the first leg in Bahrain ended in a 0-0 draw, New Zealand needed a win in the return match at home to qualify for the World Cup.

Matt Fejos, who was then a university student and, he admits, not a hardcore soccer fan, wanted to lend as much spirit as possible to the New Zealand team.

"So I got a credit card with a $1,000 limit and I bought 32 tickets for my mates and we wanted to do all we could, so we got banners, we got the coveralls saying 'Flying Kiwis' and we got New Zealand flags," Fejos said. "That was a pretty memorable moment for anyone who was there and for football to arrive in New Zealand a little bit."

Now those friends are spread around the world and have recruited other friends to the ranks of the Flying Kiwis.

"I had 10 years living in the UK, so, with the Confederations Cup in Russia in 2017, there were 30 of us who went to that, and it was kind of a special experience," Fejos said.

Russian supporters "organized a friendly game between our fans and their fans, and it brought in another kind of meaning for me: that you're doing it for your team, but actually in far away places you might be the first New Zealanders they've ever met, so you're kind of representing your country.



New Zealand's players celebrate scoring during a Confederations Cup game against Mexico in Sochi, Russia, in June 2017. AP

"To connect with the world through the global language of football is a beautiful thing and a beautiful way to travel."

Local culture

The Flying Kiwis had to find their way to their own brand of fandom. Soccer is not the major sport in New Zealand, where rugby holds sway. The soccer traditions that are firmly fixed in the culture of other countries don't exist at home, so Fejos and his friends have made their own.

The Flying Kiwis support section is usually small in number compared with the fan bases of New Zealand's opponents, but, Fejos said, "There's advantage to being so small — we can be really unified."

The New Zealand team will probably need all the support it can get at the World Cup. Ranked No 85 in the world, it is drawn in Group G against No 9 Belgium, No 21 Iran and No 29 Egypt.

"There's so much more belief (among the New Zealand team) because of where the players are playing," Fejos said of the foreign-based national team members.

"There's so many more playing at a top, top standard and in these difficult environments, these really charged atmospheres with crazy passionate fans. So they're used to playing under that pressure as well."

The mascot

The kiwi isn't the most intimidating of national symbols compared with other mascots, such as eagles or lions.

"Sometimes it can seem a bit funny or deprecating, but it's a thing that means a lot," Fejos said.

"The kiwi is a flightless bird, but when you consider the challenges that we face: we're so isolated, so far away from the world, the professional game is very young here, there are not many professional academies or opportunities.

"Despite that, I think it's incredible for some of those (New Zealand) players to play in some of the best leagues of the world, and to take (their talent) to the world at a World Cup."

Fejos said the "metaphor means a lot, defying expectations overseas".

"People think of us as a rugby country, and probably as hobbits, but that allows us to go in with that underdog mentality, fearless," he said.

"We want to stamp our mark and show them something different."

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CHINA DAILY

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VISIONARY PATHWAY | JINJIANG EXPERIENCE

Jinjiang model still shaping China's growth

Balanced, comprehensive development path has turned city into an apparel powerhouse

By **XU WEI** and **HU MEIDONG** in Jinjiang, Fujian

More than 47 years ago, Hong Zhaoshe started a clothing business with little more than a wooden door panel for a workbench, a single sewing machine and less than 300 yuan ($44) to his name. Like many small workshop owners in China at the time, he cut, sewed and sold garments himself, often sleeping just two hours a day.

"I always believe that by offering genuine goods at fair prices and doing business with integrity, the market would eventually recognize us," Hong said.

Today, his hometown of Jinjiang — a coastal city in Fujian province — manufactures one-fifth of the world's athletic shoes, one-fifth of its jackets and one-eighth of its slippers.

The transformation from clusters of family-run workshops into a global manufacturing center was not simply the by-product of globalization or low-cost labor. It was also shaped by an economic philosophy that emerged at a defining moment for China's private sector.

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, as private businesses grappled with the uncertainties surrounding China's entry into the World Trade Organization in 2001, Xi Jinping — then serving in Fujian province — made seven extensive fact-finding visits to Jinjiang.

In 2002, Xi summarized and put forward the city's development model into what became known as the "Jinjiang Experience" — a framework emphasizing commitment to the real economy, market-oriented growth, industrial upgrading, entrepreneurial resilience and government support tailored to local conditions.

The framework held that sustainable growth depended not on speculative expansion, but on balancing traditional manufacturing with technological innovation, coordinating industrialization with urbanization, fostering both small businesses and major enterprises, and allowing government to guide — rather than replace — market forces.

More than two decades later, it remains influential as China seeks to steer its economy toward higher-quality growth. The country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) calls for further developing the "Jinjiang Experience" and improving the comprehensive support system for private-sector development.

Hong, the businessman, now chairman of Fujian Seven Brand Fashion Technology, recalls a moment that tested those ideas.

By 1998, his company had accumulated modest capital, but the global apparel industry was rapidly shifting toward automation and standardization. Convinced that low-cost, semi-manual production would eventually become obsolete, Hong made what was then an enormous gamble: He invested $7 million to import advanced suit-production lines from Western Europe and establish rigorous quality-control systems.

During that transition, Xi, then deputy Party secretary of Fujian province, visited the company's production lines. Hong still remembers the visit vividly, describing Xi's manner as pragmatic and understated as he inspected the new equipment.

"His modest, down-to-earth and approachable manner deeply moved and inspired us," Hong said.

Xi encouraged the company to continue innovating, strengthen its brand and pursue international recognition. For Hong, the remarks amounted to a vote of confidence at a moment of financial uncertainty.

The once-humble workshop built around a wooden door panel has since evolved into one of China's best-known menswear brands.

"Since taking up leadership positions in the early years of China's reform and opening-up, I have worked in Hebei, Fujian, Zhejiang and Shanghai before coming to the central leadership," Xi, now China's top leader, said during a meeting with private entrepreneurs in February last year. "Throughout those years, I have consistently placed great importance on supporting the healthy development of the private economy and the growth of private entrepreneurs."

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See more by scanning the code.

Ebola recovery



A health worker in the Democratic Republic of Congo, who recovered from an Ebola virus infection, receives her discharge certificate at the Evangelical Medical Center in Bunia, Ituri province, on Sunday, in the presence of Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus (left), director-general of the World Health Organization. Four health workers and a patient have been discharged from the center, while agencies have intensified efforts to contain a new outbreak caused by the Bundibugyo Ebola strain. GRADEL MUYISA MUMBERE / REUTERS

Outbound investment regulation hailed

By **ZHONG NAN**
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China's latest move to regulate outbound investment will bolster high-level opening-up, expand international investment cooperation and better safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies operating overseas, said market watchers and business leaders.

On Monday, a new regulation on outbound investment was unveiled by the State Council, China's Cabinet, which will take effect on July 1.

The regulation, consisting of 34 articles, comes at a time when the nation's outbound investment is continuing to grow, with Chinese companies expanding their presence in sectors ranging from manufacturing to green energy and digital technologies.

Data from the Ministry of Commerce showed that China's nonfinancial outbound direct investment increased 1.3 percent year-on-year to $145.66 billion in 2025, while in the first four months of this year, such investment across all industries totaled 429.42 billion yuan ($63.5 billion), up 3.9 percent year-on-year.

Experts said the regulation is expected to provide a clearer institutional framework for overseas investment against a backdrop of rising protectionism and geopolitical uncertainties. The new rule will also help improve investment quality, deepen international cooperation and promote mutual benefits, they added.

Wei Jianguo, former vice-minister of commerce, said the regulation signals China's determination to be an active participant in global economic integration despite mounting geopolitical challenges.

Liu Ying, a researcher at Renmin University of China's Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies in Beijing, said, "By promoting high-quality outbound investment and strengthening regulatory safeguards, China aims to offer greater certainty for long-term business planning, deepen economic ties with overseas markets and help anchor global growth amid a volatile external environment."

According to the regulation, China will continue to advance high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, strengthen bilateral and multilateral investment cooperation mechanisms and play a more active role in shaping international investment rules.

The regulation also establishes clear safeguards for national security and development interests. Investors cannot export or use goods, technologies, services and related data that are prohibited from being exported under Chinese law. In addition, the export or use of restricted goods, technologies, services and related data requires prior authorization from relevant authorities.

Lyu Yue, a professor of economics at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the regulation represents further refinement of China's outbound investment governance framework, and is aimed at helping companies pursue overseas opportunities while managing potential risks more effectively.

Xi Guohua, chairman of Chinese financial conglomerate CITIC Group Corp, said that clearer compliance requirements will help Chinese companies better identify sensitive sectors, avoid regulatory missteps and protect their long-term interests in overseas markets.

In a report released in late March, the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation said the need for stronger safeguards for outbound investment has increased because, in recent years, some countries have stepped up investment reviews and regulatory scrutiny of foreign companies on "national security" grounds.

In response to these challenges, the regulation also authorizes countermeasures against discriminatory restrictions, arbitrary business disruptions and other practices that undermine the interests of Chinese investors abroad.

Sherri He, managing director for China of Kearney, a United States-based management consultancy, said that as global markets become more complex and consumer demands evolve faster, Chinese companies need stronger risk management and governance capabilities to support sustainable, high-quality global expansion.

WORLD WATCH
By Fred S. Teng

Africa needs partners in its pursuit of stability

Africa should not be treated as a problem to be managed, but should be respected as a continent of sovereign nations, ancient civilizations, young populations, vast resources, expanding markets and historic potential.

For too long, much of the outside world has spoken about Africa through the language of crisis. Conflict, poverty, debt, migration, disease, corruption and instability often dominate the headlines. These realities cannot be ignored. But they are not the whole story. Africa is also a continent of creativity, resilience, entrepreneurship, culture, energy, agriculture, minerals, digital innovation and human ambition.

The central question is not whether Africa matters, as Africa clearly does matter. The real question is whether the international community will support Africa's stability and development in a way that respects African agency, strengthens African capacity and advances long-term peace and prosperity.

The stability and development of African countries do not constitute only an African issue. They are a global issue. A stable and prosperous Africa contributes to food security, energy security, climate resilience, public health, maritime safety, migration management, peacekeeping, industrial development and a more balanced international order. An unstable Africa, by contrast, creates human suffering, regional insecurity and lost economic potential.

No country can develop without a basic level of stability. Roads cannot be built if communities are constantly displaced. Schools cannot function if children are fleeing violence. Agriculture cannot expand if farmers cannot safely cultivate land. Investment cannot grow if the legal and security environment is uncertain.

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BUILDING BONDS ACROSS BORDERS, ONE STITCH AT A TIME

Shanghai market for custom-fit clothes draws visitors with keen craftsmanship, speedy service

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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A short video showing Tamara Vucic, wife of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, browsing for custom-fit clothes at Shanghai's South Bund Soft Spinning Material Market during their recent visit to China went viral on social media. But long before the high-profile guest turned the global spotlight on this market, it had cemented its position as a go-to sartorial destination among travelers from around the world.

Every day for nearly three decades, as rolling shutters creak open at 8:30 am, visitors from home and abroad line up at the market's entrance, many carrying large suitcases with ample room to take home custom-made clothes.



A tailor busy at work inside a shop at South Bund Soft Spinning Material Market in Shanghai last week. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

"Many people make our market their first stop. Some come here even before they check into hotels," said Chen Xia, a second-generation tailor, who runs a shop owned by her in-laws, revealing a counterintuitive Shanghai tourism secret.

While many travelers flock to the Bund or Lujiazui's skyscrapers, a dedicated group heads straight to the three-story market located on Lujiabang Road in Huangpu district.

The market, which dates back to the 1990s, today boasts nearly 300 shops and sees over 1 million visitors annually. Foreigners account for 40 percent of these customers and contribute to 70 percent of the total sales, said Zhang Shengxiang, general manager of the market.

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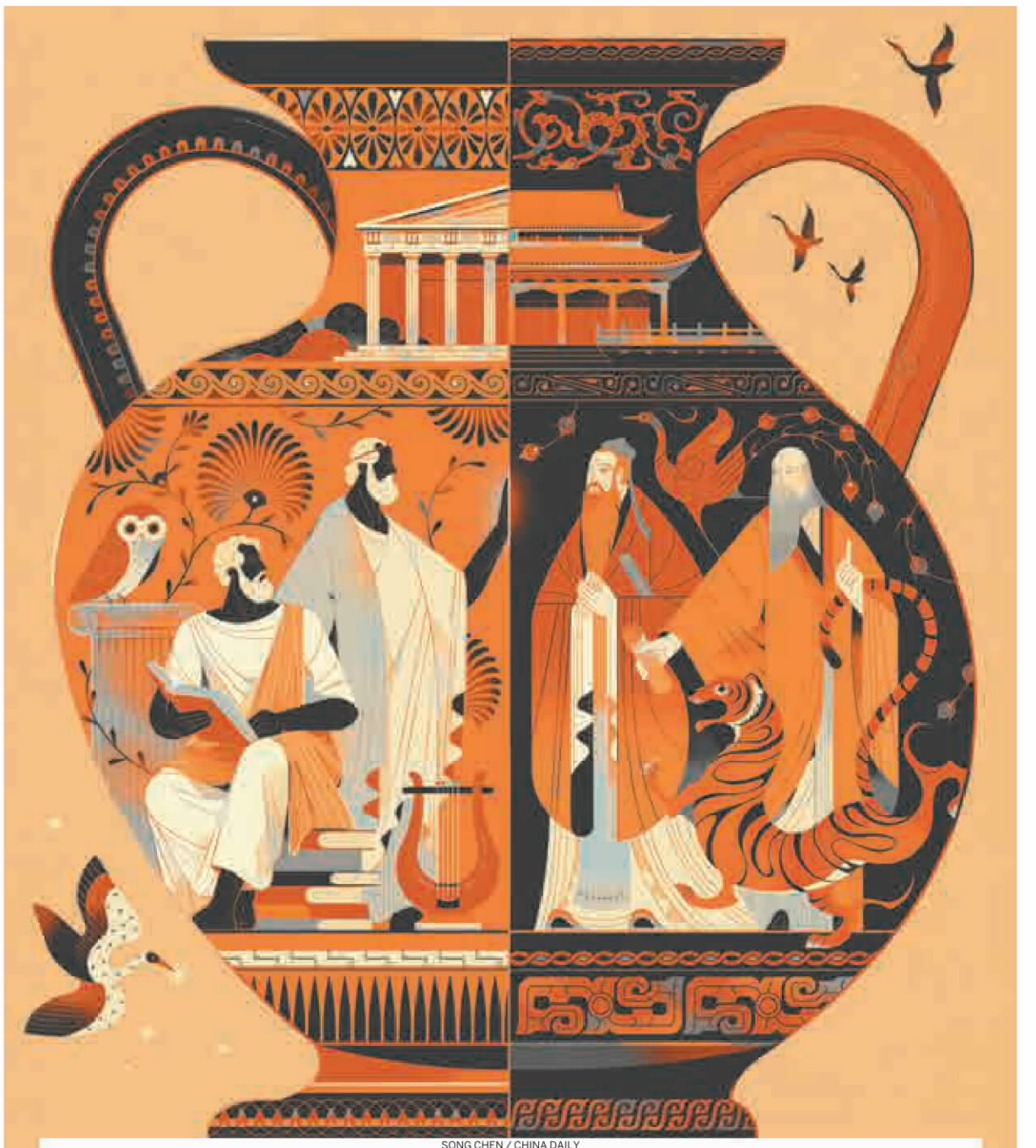

SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Confucius and Plato: the quest for modern relevance

Chinese scholars, overseas peers to attend world conference of classics in Athens

By **ZHAO XU**
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In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus leaves Ithaca and journeys through a world of profoundly different city-states and cultures, encountering unfamiliar customs, political orders, and ways of life. The voyage becomes more than a long return home. By stepping beyond his own world, the wandering king gains the distance necessary to reflect upon it; travel becomes a form of learning, about others and self.

As Chinese scholars gather in Athens this year for the second World Conference of Classics, they will, in a sense, be embarking on a similar intellectual journey, said He Fangying, a classics professor closely involved in organizing the event, which was jointly initiated by China and Greece in 2024.

"The king, who 'saw the cities of many men and learned their mind' — to quote directly from Homer, is ultimately led to a single question: what is the best way to live? It is a question asked by our sages as well — one that has echoed across millennia and feels no less urgent today," she said.

Plato answered this question through the pursuit of justice, reason, and truth. Aristotle, meanwhile, saw the good life as one of human flourishing achieved through the cultivation of excellence and virtue, guided by practical wisdom and the "golden mean" — the balance between extremes in both personal conduct and civic life. For Chinese scholars, such ideas often resonate with the Confucian concept of "*zhongyong*" (Doctrine of the Mean), revealing striking echoes between the Greek and Chinese classical traditions in their shared search for moral and ethical order.

"The enduring influence of Homer's epics lies not simply in their antiquity, but in the fact that they helped shape the West's fundamental imagination of human nature, society, and political life," He said.

In 2017, He launched the first courses of ancient Greek and Latin for postgraduate students at the Institute of Foreign Literature, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, one of the conference's co-hosts alongside China's Ministry of Education, Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Greece's Ministry of Culture, and the Academy of Athens.

Having translated Plato's dialogue *Lysis* from Greek, her own path into the field began in 2002, when she enrolled in an ancient Greek class taught by Liu Xiaofeng, the philosopher-turned-classicist widely regarded as a leading figure in the revival of classical studies in China.

"Chinese classical studies and the study of the Western classics should not be treated separately, for the historical challenges confronted by modern China emerged, in large part, from its encounter with the West," said Liu in a previous interview.

According to He, what her mentor sought was to engage the Western classics on equal terms — neither venerating them from afar nor reducing them to instruments for contemporary use — but as traditions to be read seriously and respectfully from within his own horizon of thought.

In 2002, Liu co-launched the academic series *Classics and Interpretation*, organized around three main branches — Western Tradition, Chinese Tradition, and the Classics and Interpretation Journal. Since then, the series has expanded to 800 volumes.

Drawing in part upon the Chinese exegetical tradition, which dates back to around the second century BC, when Confucianism was canonized as a guiding moral foundation of Chinese society, Liu championed a method of close reading grounded in fidelity to the original language and textual precision. Moving beyond purely technical or ideological debate, it sought instead to return to the enduring questions posed by ancient thinkers from Plato to Confucius.

In the spring of 2000, Wu Fei, then a Ph.D. student in anthropology at Harvard, met Liu during the latter's visiting sojourn there. "He had only recently turned toward classical studies," recalled Wu, now a philosophy professor at Peking University.

Among the thinkers who most profoundly influenced Liu was German-American political philosopher Leo Strauss, whose work helped revive the study of classical political thought in the twentieth century.

"Strauss believed that modernity had not abandoned the idea of 'natural right', but fundamentally altered its meaning. For classical philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, natural right referred to what is naturally just or proper — an objective standard for justice, political order, and the good life. Modern thought, by contrast, increasingly recast it as individual rights grounded in self-preservation," said Wu. "Strauss argued that this shift gradually gave rise to historicism, in which values became products of historical circumstance; and to relativism and nihilism, where objective truth and moral order themselves appeared uncertain."

"Having witnessed the rise of Nazi Germany before emigrating to the United States, Strauss responded not by calling for a return to antiquity, but by urging a renewed engagement with the concerns of the classical tradition," said Wu, referring to this year's conference theme, "Dialogue between Ancient and Modern: Contemporary Inspirations of Classical Wisdom".

"The question of how classical studies may still speak to modern life is, before all else, a question of whether modern people still trust in the wisdom of the ancients," said Liu, whose philosophical writings Wu first encountered in the 1990s as a sociology undergraduate at Peking University before later pursuing philosophy there as well.

> "It is this union of institutional order and inner virtue that I see as especially distinctive within the Chinese classical tradition."
>
> **Wu Fei,** philosophy professor at Peking University

"Those books were attempts to diagnose the spiritual and social tensions of the modern world, and it was precisely through that process that he was ultimately led to look further back," said Wu, who sees himself as having undergone a similar journey. His study of contemporary funerary practices in rural China gradually drew him into the world of traditional Confucian commentary centered on ritual, kinship, and moral cultivation, while also revealing the central role family played in both personal and political life across the ancient Chinese and Greco-Roman worlds.

Having translated into Chinese such works as Augustine's *City of God* — written in the aftermath of the Sack of Rome as the classical Roman world gave way to the Christian Middle Ages — and Plato's *The Apology of Socrates*, Wu is acutely aware of the layers of interpretation that have accumulated around classical Greco-Roman texts over centuries of Christian theology and modern Western thought.

"For Chinese scholars, the task is therefore not only to examine these established readings, but also to gradually peel back those layers in order to recover the original forms of thought beneath them," said Wu, who is the director of the Center for Nomos Studies at Peking University.

"The original Chinese concept is *li*, which can be understood on three levels. At its most basic, it refers to ritual or ceremony, something found in every civilization. More deeply, it extends to institutions and the normative ordering of political and social life. But *li* also carries an inward moral dimension: as Chinese philosopher Mencius suggested, human beings possess an innate ethical capacity that must be cultivated. It is this union of institutional order and inner virtue that I see as especially distinctive within the Chinese classical tradition," Wu said.

"I chose the ancient Greek word *nomos* because I believe it captures one of those striking moments of convergence in human thought. *Nomoi* — the title of Plato's final work, usually translated as *The Laws* — signifies more than law in the narrow legal sense; it also encompasses ritual, custom and normative order."

Reflecting on an intellectual life that has straddled the dual worlds of Western and Chinese classical studies, Wu said: "True immersion requires a degree of intellectual and moral identification, because classical studies are ultimately concerned not only with knowledge, but with the cultivation of character and the transformation of one's inner disposition."

In the 2024 volume of *In the Mind, in the Body, in the World*, scholars of early China and ancient Greece investigate how emotions were understood in philosophy, medicine, and literature from approximately the 5th century BC to the 2nd century AD. Topics covered range from equanimity in Taoism and Stoicism, to therapies of emotion in Greco-Roman and Chinese medicine, to the social function of contempt in Greek literature and Confucian thought.

Myrto Garani, a professor of Latin literature at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, spent three weeks teaching in Beijing last summer under a collaborative program between her university and the Center of Ancient Greek and Chinese Civilization in Athens, opened last year as China's first overseas high-level research center dedicated to classical studies.

Garani said that the Chinese scholars she was in touch with impressed her by "the seriousness of their scholarship, the strong philological training and the openness to comparative and interdisciplinary approaches", while her Chinese students stood out for "their critical perspectives, respect, and remarkable devotion".

"What I found particularly meaningful was the combination of academic professionalism with genuine human warmth," said Garani, who believes that "intercultural approaches in a global academic context demonstrate that the classics are not the exclusive inheritance of a single cultural world."

Last autumn, Wu traveled to Greece for the first time. Visiting Piraeus, the historic port of Athens, he found his mind returning to the opening line of Plato's *The Republic*: "I went down yesterday to the Piraeus with Glaucon the son of Ariston".

"The sight of Chinese cargo vessels," Wu said, "made me think about how civilizations continue to encounter one another across the same seas, and through memory, texts, and the lasting human search for meaning."

Both Wu and He will be among nearly 100 Chinese scholars attending this year's conference in Athens, scheduled for June 9 and 10.

"This is the first time Chinese classicists have appeared collectively in Athens, the cradle of the Western classical world," said He.

"For much of Chinese history, the study of canonical texts stood at the center of intellectual life. Deeply embedded within China's civilizational consciousness, this reverence for the wisdom of the past had persistently drawn generations of Chinese scholars toward classical studies — whether of their own tradition or others — as a way of engaging the foundational inheritances of the world's great civilizations: Greek, Chinese, Mesopotamian, Indian, and beyond."

One of them He had in mind was Luo Niansheng (1904–1990), who, having studied in Athens in the early 1930s, returned to China and devoted the rest of his life to translating the ancient Greek world into Chinese.

In 1986, a production of *Oedipus Rex* by Beijing's Central Academy of Drama was invited to the International Ancient Greek Drama Festival in Delphi and later performed in Athens. Luo, who first translated the play in 1935 while working with a Chinese archaeological team in northern China, attended as head of the Chinese delegation and later wrote an essay titled "Returning to Greece". A year later, the Academy of Athens awarded him its Highest Prize for Literature and Art.

When Luo died in 1990, his unfinished translation of Homer's *Iliad*, completed only halfway, was carried forward by another Chinese scholar, Wang Huansheng, who first learned ancient Greek through Russian in the former Soviet Union in the 1960s before completing Chinese translations of both *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey*.

These days, He has joined Wang in sustaining the interpretation and study of Homer's epics, continuing across three generations a distinctly Chinese intellectual journey into the heart of the ancient Greek world.

In *The Odyssey*, Odysseus descends into the underworld to seek guidance from the prophet Tiresias on his journey home. There he encounters Achilles, the greatest hero of *The Iliad*, who confesses that "I'd rather slave on earth for another man ... than rule down here over all the breathless dead".

"Achilles is defined by glory and remembrance, Odysseus by endurance and return. Both represent the highest ideals of life held by ancient Greeks, and yet Homer seems to have given his final word to Odysseus," said He.

Two centuries after the composition of *The Odyssey*, Confucius was born in the mid-sixth century BC. Like Odysseus, who spent two decades away from Ithaca, Confucius traveled for 14 years among the competing states of his age, not by force of circumstance but by conscious choice.

If the Greek tradition often framed travel as a heroic encounter with difference, the Confucian tradition understood it as ethical and political learning, the search for moral order and wise governance. Yet both suggest that a culture comes to know itself more deeply through encountering another.

In *The Analects*, compiled by later generations after the death of Confucius, the sage once asks his disciples about the way of living they aspire. While the others speak of governing states and achieving distinction, the disciple Zeng Dian offers a quieter vision, one attuned to both nature and the self: in the warmth of late spring, to bathe in the river, stroll in the breeze, and return home singing.

Confucius responds simply: "I am with Dian."

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TOP NEWS

Services seen as new growth driver in trade

Tech advantages well placed to turn into new competitive edge in global value chains

By **WANG KEJU**
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As part of a broader effort to optimize the nation's trade structure, China's foreign trade is gaining fresh momentum, with services emerging as a new driver of growth, supported by a steady rise in exports of knowledge-intensive services and a surge in inbound tourism, experts said.

Their comments came on the heels of recent data showing that China's services trade deficit shrank in April to its smallest monthly level in over a year.

The deficit in services trade fell to $14.8 billion in April, down nearly 40 percent from $24.3 billion in March, according to data from the State Administration of Foreign Exchange. It was the narrowest monthly gap since December 2024.

China is doubling down on services exports, with policymakers having embedded "encouraging and supporting services exports" into the Government Work Report as a key task for this year.

China's services trade has run a persistent deficit for years, due to the country's relative weakness in exporting high-value services, said Zhao Jinping, vice-president of the China Association of Trade in Services.

But the gap is now closing at an accelerating pace, a shift that Zhao said points to "a huge improvement" in the quality of China's services sector supply.

Exports of telecommunications, computer and information services, which covers cloud computing, software development and data processing, have expanded rapidly. The surplus in this category widened to $5.5 billion in April, from $3.1 billion in March, data from the administration showed.

"As the global economy accelerates its digital transformation, China's technological advantages and digital application capabilities are well positioned to translate into a new competitive advantage in global value chains," said Zhu Caihua, a professor at the University of International Business and Economics.

Zhu also noted that China is negotiating or updating free trade agreements with multiple economies to push services and digital trade higher up the agenda.

Beyond knowledge-intensive exports, the travel services balance improved as inbound tourism rebounded, boosted by China's expanded visa-free policy covering 50 countries, and a 240-hour visa-free transit policy for travelers from 55 countries at 65 ports.

Cross-border trips made by foreign nationals increased 26.4 percent year-on-year in 2025 to more than 82 million, according to the National Immigration Administration.

The momentum has continued into 2026. China's travel service exports surged 32.3 percent year-on-year to 105.35 billion yuan ($14.6 billion) in the first quarter of 2026, the fastest growth among all service export categories, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

As countries around the world compete to attract travelers, China has emerged as a rising hot spot for global tourists, and policymakers are seizing the moment with a fresh wave of measures designed to facilitate every step of the journey, said Jiang Zhao, an associate researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

The government has also streamlined departure tax refunds and improved payment systems, making it easier for overseas tourists to spend in China.

The number of international travelers processing departure tax refunds in China tripled to 270,000 last year, and the value of those refunds for the year alone roughly equaled the cumulative total of the previous decade, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Travel services are not just an end in themselves, Jiang said, highlighting the inbound tourism push as a testing ground for deeper opening-up in finance, education, healthcare and other relevant services.

Medical outreach



A Chinese doctor examines the teeth of a local child on Saturday in Zanzibar, Tanzania. In collaboration with Zanzibar's Ministry of Health, the Chinese medical team provided free medical services to local residents during a one-day outreach clinic at Sinai Polyclinic. EMMANUEL HERMAN / XINHUA



Exhibit of progress

People visit a photo exhibition on the achievements of Chinese modernization on Saturday in Irkutsk, Russia, during a reception honoring Russian graduates who studied in China. The exhibition featured more than 20 selected photographs from Xinhua News Agency, showcasing China's progress in social and economic development, science, technology and culture.
FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA

International conference on classics set for Athens

By **CHEN JIE**
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The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences announced on Monday that the second World Conference of Classics will be held on June 9 and 10 at the century-old Academy of Athens in Greece.

Under the theme "Dialogue between Ancient and Modern: Contemporary Inspirations from Classical Wisdom", the conference will explore the relevance of classical studies in today's world, the CASS announced at a news conference in Beijing on Monday.

Participants will examine how the enduring insights of classical wisdom can be reinterpreted to address contemporary challenges, inspire innovation and contribute to the progress of human society and civilization.

The event is jointly organized by the CASS, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism, the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Academy of Athens. Around 200 scholars and experts in classical studies, civilization, culture, archaeology and related fields from 20 countries will attend.

Yue Yunxia, deputy director of the CASS Bureau of International Cooperation, said, "Through dialogue and scholarly exchange, attendees will discuss key issues related to classical civilizations and their contemporary significance, fostering greater understanding and consensus in the study of classical world civilizations."

The program will include an opening ceremony and a plenary session on the morning of June 9 and four parallel subforums running through the afternoon of June 9 and throughout June 10, followed by the closing ceremony that evening.

The four subforums will focus on "Virtue and Paideia: A Modern Interpretation of Classical Education"; "Friendship and Community: The Ethical Community in the Transition from Ancient to Modern Times"; "Peace and Order: Civilizational Solutions to the Shifting Global Landscape"; and "Technology and Civilization: Humanism in the Age of Digital Intelligence."

"Classical studies are not only about ancient thoughts that merit specialized research, but should also involve placing ancient wisdom within the context of contemporary global concerns," said Liu Zuokui, director of the CASS Institute of World History, which will host the "Peace and Order: Civilizational Solutions to the Shifting Global Landscape" subforum.

"This includes discussing how classical traditions can address current issues such as war and peace, power and justice, order and freedom, and the clash and mutual learning of civilizations," Liu added.

Li Guoqiang, deputy director of the CASS' Chinese Academy of History, which will host the subforum "Technology and Civilization: Humanism in the Age of Digital Intelligence", said: "Today, artificial intelligence and big data algorithms are deeply integrated into all aspects of our life, profoundly changing the way society operates."

"Therefore, our forum starts from the perspective of classical studies, linking technological transformations throughout history with the evolution of humanity, and connecting classical wisdom with contemporary humanistic spirit. We aim to use the classical humanistic spirit to respond to modern technological challenges, exploring the convergence between instrumental rationality and humanistic values."

The conference will release a joint initiative highlighting the role of classical wisdom in addressing global challenges, along with a new international visiting scholar program launched by the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens.

During the conference, an exhibition titled *Bringing Classics into the Modern World* will showcase classical texts and research publications from China and elsewhere, representative works of traditional Chinese art, achievements in archaeological science and cultural heritage preservation, and interactive experiences featuring intelligent technologies. Visitors will also be able to engage with traditional Chinese medicine through a range of immersive displays and activities.

Jinjiang: Establishing brand identity emphasized

From page 1

Li Ling, vice-president of Anta Group, said the company's rise into a global sportswear giant closely followed the direction laid out by Xi.

Li sees Anta's trajectory as reflecting a broader push for Chinese manufacturers to build globally competitive brands rather than remain anonymous contract producers.

When Anta was founded in 1991, Jinjiang's footwear industry was trapped in intense price competition, producing largely generic products. During a visit to the Jinjiang Footwear & Sports Industry International Exposition in 2001, Xi stopped at Anta's booth and urged the company to prioritize product quality and establish its own brand identity.

In 2019, during the annual session of the National People's Congress, and again at a symposium in 2024, Xi reiterated the same message to the company: Remain fully focused on the core business.

Guided by that philosophy, Anta spent more than three decades transforming itself from a local manufacturer into a global sportswear company — proof that industrial resilience is built through long-term accumulation rather than speculative capital.

Liao Meng, an associate research fellow at the Fujian Academy of Social Sciences, said the focus on the real economy did not emerge in isolation. "It also required close coordination between private enterprises and government support," Liao said.

He contends that the "Jinjiang Experience" remains relevant because it links industrial growth with broader social development, ensuring that the wealth generated by manufacturing translates into stronger infrastructure, narrower urban-rural gaps and more tangible prosperity for local residents.

The next stage of Jinjiang's industrial transformation is already underway.

Zhang Zhenxian, general manager of Fujian Yuanlyu Energy-Saving Technology, confronted a mounting environmental challenge in Neikeng township, China's largest slipper-manufacturing hub.

The town's factories, which produce one-eighth of the world's slippers each year, consume roughly 2 million metric tons of EVA material — a versatile copolymer known for its lightweight, durable and soft qualities — each year, generating about 100,000 tons of industrial scrap historically destined for landfills or incinerators.

Recognizing an opening, Zhang launched an effort to build a closed-loop recycling system for EVA footwear materials.

The company invested 30 million yuan in its first development phase without any mature blueprint to follow or industry benchmark to emulate.

Zhang recalls suffering from severe insomnia, waking up multiple times each night worried that the company was pouring money into unusable recycled waste.

Yet the company persisted, driven in part by Jinjiang's long-standing culture of turning improbable ideas into viable industries. Today, it has signed closed-loop recycling agreements with 200 local enterprises.

What distinguishes Jinjiang today is not simply manufacturing scale, but industrial density — a tightly connected ecosystem in which raw materials, design, production and logistics operate within minutes of one another. For overseas buyers and industry groups, that concentration has turned the city into a global reference point.

"Jinjiang is probably No 1 in the world in sports shoe manufacturing," said Berke Icten, president of the Turkish Footwear Manufacturers Association, during a recent visit to the city.

What impressed him most, he said, was not only the scale of production, but the completeness of the supply chain.

"From materials to design to finished products, you can find everything here," he said, pointing to the city's sprawling materials markets and tightly clustered factories.

Ahmed Fawad Farooq, secretary-general of the Pakistan Footwear Manufacturers Association, described Jinjiang as one of the world's leading footwear exhibition platforms, particularly in athletic shoes.

Visiting the city for the second time with a delegation of about 15 industrialists, Farooq said that Jinjiang has become an important destination for sourcing raw materials, identifying fashion trends and studying emerging technologies.

"We come here to see new innovation and new technology," he said.

Contact the writers at xuwei@chinadaily.com.cn

Market: Reputation has extended to global events

From page 1

Zhang added that for some shops, foreigners make up more than 60 percent of the clientele.

Consistently ranking in the top two on TripAdvisor's list of must-see places in Shanghai, the market is frequently featured in foreign travel guides and has even become a "secret itinerary" for visiting dignitaries and celebrities.

Pran Patel, a pilot from the United States, said he is a regular at the market, "because Mr Rong is always right". Referring to the owner of Shop No 144, he said: "Mr Rong does a very good job with the quality of my suits, shirts, trousers and jackets. And I have all my friends come here all the time."

Zhang, the general manager, said that one of the unique selling points of the market is making custom-fit clothes within 24 hours.

"Order today, pick up tomorrow — this kind of service is almost unheard of anywhere else in the world. If one foreigner in a business group or tour knows this place, that person will bring everyone here," he said, noting that 95 percent of the shops focus on tailoring clothes in both Western and Chinese styles, rather than just selling materials.

In addition to tailored clothes, one can order custom-made curtains, bedding and leather goods, including shoes, at the market and expect speedy service.

Jan Schutte, a German professor at the Shanghai Theatre Academy, has been a customer at Jenny's Shop in the market for more than four years. "Jenny has made suits for my daughter, dresses for my wife, and shirts, jackets and suits for me. Every time friends come to Shanghai, this is the first place I recommend," Schutte said.

The reputation of the fabric market has reached global events. According to Zhang, F1 Chinese Grand Prix teams, Shanghai Masters snooker tour referees and NBA China Games players all order their custom wear here.

Tailoring a suit of the same quality costs at least 5,000 yuan ($739) abroad, but here, the price starts at 1,000 yuan, Zhang said, adding that "unbeatable value" is only a part of the story, because what drives customer loyalty is the remarkable craftsmanship.

Chen, the shop owner, said that businesses here are built on reputation and skills. "We offer customized services. From fabric selection and measurement guides to fitting trials and final delivery — everything is done by hand," she said.

Dai Meixiang, who has been running a *qipao* shop for more than 20 years, started designing and making traditional Chinese clothes at the age of 18. "We create custom patterns for every customer. While costs are higher, we keep the profits low for the benefit of our customers, maintaining an excellent reputation."

While the market offers both Chinese and imported materials, most foreigners choose the former.

Brazilian fashion designer Elisa Lima, who visits the market every year, said that more than the affordable price for quality materials, she values the experience.

"The tailors can tell what kind of fabric will be perfect for Brazilian summer, or what will be comfortable for travel in general," Lima said, adding that the materials and the clothes also make good souvenirs.

Zhang, the general manager, said that many foreigners request Chinese elements in their custom orders, as "a touch of Chinese style makes their clothes stand out".

Schutte, the German professor, is one of them. He recently ordered a 2,000-yuan suit jacket, and said he was "most satisfied" with the Chinese-style lining.

Dai, the *qipao* shop owner, noted a significant rise in her foreign clients from countries such as Singapore, Malaysia, France and the US. She said she continuously adapts to foreign customers' aesthetic requirements, adjusting designs to suit different body types and incorporating fashionable elements and even bold European-style details.

Zhang said that clothes gain added value through culture, because "without culture, they are just fabric". The market has been Shanghai's calling card for 20 years, he said, adding that he hopes to enhance amenities to further elevate customer experience.

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Expanded healthcare access in Xizang

Medical outreach efforts are enhancing disease prevention and public care across the region

By YUAN SHENGGAO





From above: In a village in Chonggyai county, doctors answer residents' questions regarding their checkup results. Monks in Xizang take part in a health checkup.
PHOTOS BY PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

On a crisp April morning, villagers, monks and nuns in Namling county in the Xizang autonomous region gathered at the village activity center for the annual health checkup, an event symbolizing community care and well-being.

At an altitude of 4,100 meters, members of a mobile medical team conducted a range of services, including blood pressure readings, ultrasounds and screenings for chronic diseases.

Since 2013, Xizang has prioritized free health checkups as part of its broader efforts to improve public healthcare. Initially supported by an annual subsidy of 100 yuan ($14) per person, the program has completed 22.41 million checkups to date, achieving near-universal coverage, according to the Xizang Health Commission.

By 2025, the subsidy for health checkups in the autonomous region had risen to 164 yuan per person, alongside additional investments in mobile diagnostic vehicles and clinic upgrades targeting remote areas. For seniors aged 65 and above, the subsidy had reached 200 yuan per person annually.

The initiative emphasizes early disease detection and prevention, with screenings focused on conditions like hypertension, diabetes and altitude-related illnesses. Tailored programs for the elderly, women and children are reducing maternal mortality and improving long-term disease management.

Monasteries have also benefited from these efforts. For monks like Phurbu from the local Dragkar Monastery, regular health checkups have significantly improved their well-being.

"Regular screenings allowed me to detect and treat hypertension early," Phurbu said. "With medication prescribed by doctors, the disease is now under control."

Mobile health checkups

Given Xizang's vast territory and sparse population, mobile health checkup services have played an irreplaceable role in disease prevention, control and public health management.

The initiative allows residents, especially farmers and herders in remote rural areas, to access convenient, high-quality and one-stop healthcare services.

One recent example was a health checkup initiative offered by the Lhundrub County People's Hospital in Gyangyo village in late April.

When the mobile checkup vehicles arrived in the early morning, residents lined up in the public square in front of the village's administrative office under the guidance of community officials.

The checkup covered 45 villagers aged between 40 and 83. "This is especially beneficial for seniors and people with physical difficulties, who no longer need to travel long distances to the county hospital," said a community official.

The mobile vehicles were equipped with devices including an X-ray imaging system and ultrasonic scanning equipment, enabling multiple basic examinations.

The health checkup, lasting several hours till noon, led to the diagnosis of such diseases as cataracts, fatty liver disease, hypertension, gallstones, renal atrophy and hepatic hemangioma.

After the examinations, doctors from the Lhundrub County People's Hospital analyzed the results and provided treatment suggestions to villagers with abnormal findings.

Villager Yangzom Drolkar said she was amazed by how efficient the mobile checkup service was. "They brought so much advanced equipment here to our village," she said. "I'm happy to have such a thorough checkup right at our doorsteps."

"*Tashi Delek, Tashi Delek!*" Yangzom Drolkar repeatedly told the doctors. *Tashi Delek* is a Tibetan greeting expressing good wishes.

One morning in February, residents in Midong village, Sangri county, were concerned after an unexpected heavy snow arrived on the day a mobile health checkup organized by the Sangri County Central Hospital had been scheduled.

Located at an altitude of about 4,500 meters, the village faced serious challenges from the snow, which complicated travel for doctors and the transportation of medical equipment, according to a village official.

"We would rather have the checkup canceled for the safety of our doctors," the official said.

But to their surprise, the convoy carrying medics and equipment arrived safely and on time.

With the help of village officials, a temporary checkup facility was immediately set up in the village administrative office.

The checkup focused on screening altitude-related diseases, including ultrasonic scans of liver, gallbladder, pancreas and spleen; chest X-ray; and blood tests related to anemia, liver and gallbladder functions, and blood glucose levels.

After the examinations, the medics held a meeting with villagers, answering questions about the results and offering advice on health management.

Villagers were informed that hypertension patients should take medication in the morning and that both physical exercise and a healthy diet are important for blood sugar control.

At the end of the meeting, the medics distributed manuals on disease prevention and control.

"The manual was written in plain language, avoiding complicated terms," a local resident said. "It's something we can easily understand."

Tseten Phuntso, a medic from Sangri County Central Hospital, said that beyond providing health checkups for residents, the initiative had a broader goal for public health research and management.

"An important part of the mobile health checkup mission is collecting data from the majority of our residents to establish a countywide database," Tseten Phuntso said.

He added that local healthcare authorities can then analyze the data and adjust public healthcare strategies accordingly.

"Health checkups are playing an increasingly important role in disease prevention and control," Tseten Phuntso said. "The practice allows us to detect and diagnose diseases earlier, which is crucial for the patients' treatment and recovery."

All-around progress

Mobile health checkups are among the key measures aimed at strengthening public health management and improving universal healthcare services for residents.

Over the six decades since the founding of the Xizang autonomous region in 1965, Xizang has achieved historic progress across the healthcare sector, said Tan Xiangdong, deputy chief of the Xizang Health Commission, at a news conference in September 2025.

The official said Xizang has established a public health service system featuring expanded coverage and steady development over the past 60 years.

Citing statistics, Tan said the number of medical institutions, including hospitals and clinics, rose to 7,231 in 2025 from 193 in 1965, marking a 37-fold increase.

The number of healthcare workers in Xizang grew from 2,422 in 1965 to about 32,000 in 2025, while the number of beds in local medical institutions increased from 1,631 to 21,488.

To date, the autonomous region has achieved the full coverage of comprehensive medical institutions in all its cities, counties and districts.

In addition, through remote diagnosis technologies, every township in Xizang can access high-quality medical service resources provided by such renowned institutions as the Xizang Autonomous Region Institute of Tibetan Medicine, and the Lhasa branches of the famed West China Hospital and the West China Second University Hospital.

Over the past six decades, the autonomous region has also seen substantial improvements in public health management.

According to Tan, Xizang was home to 82 disease prevention and control centers at different administrative levels by 2025, covering all the cities, counties and districts in the autonomous region.

The public health management system highlights such fields as contagious disease monitoring, vaccination planning and services.

Vaccination rates for various diseases among children, for instance, have remained above 90 percent in recent years.

"Thanks to the public health management system, Xizang eliminated diseases such as smallpox, poliomyelitis and diphtheria, while effectively controlling illnesses including plague, tuberculosis and echinococcosis," Tan said.

The official added that great achievements have also been made in preventing and treating altitude-related diseases such as Kashin-Beck disease and iodine deficiency disorders.

Tan said the progress in public health management has led to substantial improvement in residents' health.

"The average life expectancy of Xizang residents now stands at about 72.5 years, increasing more than 100 percent from the early 1950s when peaceful liberation took place," Tan said.

A wide-covering, government-sponsored healthcare insurance system has also played an important role in improving residents' health conditions.

Xizang was among the pioneers in China that established a unified basic medical insurance system covering both urban and rural residents. Today, the system covers more than 95 percent of the population in the autonomous region.

Yangzom, an 89-year-old resident of Lhasa, the capital city of Xizang, said she is very happy to see the substantial increase in life expectancy in her neighborhood.

"Several decades ago, it was impossible to imagine one could live to the age of 80," she said. "And now I have a four-generation family."

She attributed the longer life expectancy among residents to the improved medical care conditions and an effective healthcare insurance system.

"I was hospitalized last year because of a kind of lung disease, which in the past could have been fatal for old people like me," Yangzom said. "The treatment was successful. It's fortunate that we have good hospitals and doctors today."

She added that most of the treatment costs were covered by the government-sponsored healthcare insurance. "I only paid a small portion of the expenses, about 1,000 yuan," she said.

Training of professionals

Tan also said that the improving quality of Xizang's medical professionals has contributed to the steady and sustainable growth of the local healthcare sector.

He said Xizang has developed a strong healthcare workforce through local higher education programs, assistance from other regions of the country and professional training initiatives.

Xizang University, for instance, has recently launched a training program for rural areas and now trains hundreds of professionals each year.

Medical institutions from other parts of the country have carried out eight missions for paired assistance in recent years, covering 13 counties in the autonomous region.

The official said the worldwide recognition of local Tibetan medicine sciences remains a source of pride for him and his colleagues.

With a history spanning over 2,000 years, Tibetan medicine is a unique and comprehensive medical system deeply rooted in the culture of the Tibetan Plateau.

At the heart of this ancient practice lie the *Four Treatises of Tibetan Medicine*, a set of classic texts that serves as the cornerstone for Tibetan medical theory and practice. This piece of work was inscribed on the UNESCO Memory of the World International Register in 2023.

In 2018, the Tibetan Lum medicinal bathing of *Sowa Rigpa*, a traditional body of knowledge related to health maintenance and disease prevention among Tibetan communities, was inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

After the autonomous region has held a number of international conferences and forums, the traditional medicine sciences of Xizang are now better known in the world, especially in countries including Nepal and Mongolia, according to Tan.

Looking ahead, Tan said Xizang will continue deepening reform in the healthcare sector and drive the development of the Health Xizang initiative, offering more equitable, accessible and higher-quality universal medical services for residents.







From left: Rural residents undergo a health checkup in Chonggyai county. Doctors analyze blood samples taken from health checkups. Students from a primary school in Xizang take part in a health checkup.

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WORLD

China warns against Japan's remilitarization

By **JI HAISHENG**
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China accused Japan's defense minister on Monday of spreading baseless claims and sowing confusion, urging the international community to stay on high alert to prevent and suppress the rise of Japanese neomilitarism.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the statement at a daily news briefing in Beijing, after Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi recently pledged to keep strengthening the military and rejected Japan being labeled a neomilitarist country at a Singapore forum.

Lin said Koizumi's remarks were totally groundless given historical facts, legal grounds and figures on the matter, adding that such a stance makes it impossible for Japan to earn the trust of its Asian neighbors and the international community.

Japanese militarists committed horrendous crimes in World War II and inflicted untold suffering to its Asian neighbors and Allied nations, Lin said.

To prevent the revival of Japanese militarism, a series of instruments with legal effect under international law — including the Cairo Declaration and the Potsdam Proclamation — clearly require Japan to be "completely disarmed" and not to maintain such industries as "would enable her to re-arm for war", he said.

Despite such restrictions, Japan's latest defense budget has exceeded 9 trillion yen ($56 billion), hitting a record high for 14 consecutive years, he added.

Citing more figures signaling Japan's expanding military buildup, Lin said Tokyo's total defense expenditure has surged to 2 percent of its GDP with plans to further increase it to 3.5 percent, while military orders from the Defense Ministry have tripled over the past five years.

Since the current administration came to power in October, it has been accelerating the deployment of intermediate and long-range missiles, easing the export restrictions of lethal weapons, and promoting the revision of its Constitution and three key security documents, he said.

These actions are seen as attempts to further breach the international and domestic laws and challenge the postwar international order, he added.

Regarding Japan's deepened military engagement with NATO, Lin said Japan has been pursuing remilitarization at full throttle, engaging in frequent interactions with a military organization from outside the region, expanding the scope of activities of its Self-Defense Forces, and building a combat-ready operational system.

"This is Japan trying to break free from the constraints of its Constitution, domestic and international laws, and its 'exclusively defense-oriented' principle," he said.

Japan portrays itself as a "peace-loving country", but its actions move in the very opposite direction, he added.

German voters expect more far-right success

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
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An opinion poll conducted for German weekly newspaper Bild am Sonntag shows the vast majority of people questioned think it is a formality that the far-right Alternative for Germany party, or AfD, will secure power in at least one of the three state elections taking place in the fall.

Since reunification in 1990, Germany has been consisting of 16 federal states, and three of those have elections later this year.

The AfD was launched in early 2013, initially as a party that opposed economic bailouts in the eurozone area, but has grown rapidly and taken an increasingly hard line on other issues, most notably immigration, and also state handling of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In the February 2025 elections to the country's 630-seat federal Parliament, the AfD ended up with 20.8 percent of the vote and 150 seats, making it the second-largest party.

However, the center-right Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union opted to form a coalition with the center-left Social Democrats, rather than break the unspoken policy of noncooperation with the AfD.

In September, voters in the states of Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and Berlin go to the polls, and it is widely expected that the AfD will make significant gains, and take power in at least one state.

Of those questioned, 69 percent said they expected it to win in at least one of the three states, and 28 percent expected it in more than one, with only 16 percent saying they did not expect the AfD to win any of the three states.

For many years, the AfD presented itself as being politically in step with United States President Donald Trump's Make America Great Again movement, but it has distanced itself from this during the ongoing war in Iran.

Targeting sentiment

The Financial Times reported that the party has targeted anti-US sentiment in eastern Germany to bolster its local election chances.

"In eastern Germany, there are many voter groups who tend to favor a more skeptical stance toward America," Uwe Jun, a professor of political science at Trier University in Trier, Germany, told the FT.

"That criticism of US politics goes down very well with these voter groups," he said.

Rising fuel prices linked to the war, and their contribution to the cost-of-living crisis, have further encouraged a growth in AfD support among what might not be its natural demographic.

"Certain barriers are breaking down", said Ursula Munch, a political scientist and director of the Academy for Political Education in Tutzing, Bavaria, including in "middle-class circles, where support for the AfD used to be frowned upon".

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Riding high



A family shares a joyful moment on a vintage scooter as an estimated 5,000 Vespa enthusiasts from across the globe flood the major thoroughfares of Jakarta, Indonesia, on Sunday. The massive convoy, part of the annual Jakarta Mods Mayday celebration, drew participants from as far as Japan, Malaysia and Singapore. Rooted in a subculture dating back to the 1960s, the event highlights Indonesia's massive, tight-knit scooter community while providing a welcome boost to the capital's tourism and creative economy. AGOES RUDIANTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

Iran, US trade strikes as negotiations falter

Kuwait comes under fire while nuclear talks remain deadlocked amid mistrust

DUBAI/TEHRAN — Iran and the United States traded strikes on Monday and each accused the other of acting aggressively, as diplomatic efforts to end three months of war drag on.

Weeks of indirect talks marked by stark threats and several waves of airstrikes have so far failed to agree on an end to the war or the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz, the key shipping channel for Gulf oil and gas.

The US military said it had over the weekend struck Iranian air defenses, a ground control station and two drones that were threatening ships after "aggressive Iranian actions", including the downing of a US drone over international waters.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said on Monday that it had targeted an air base used by the US in response to an attack on southern Iran.

It did not identify the base, but Kuwait activated air defenses on Monday and denounced Iranian missile and drone attacks, which it said were undermining efforts to reduce tensions in the region.

Kuwait's Foreign Ministry said the alleged attacks constituted a "direct assault" on the country's security and represented a "blatant violation" of international law.

The ministry affirmed Kuwait's "full right to take all necessary measures" to preserve its security and defend its territory, holding Iran fully responsible for the alleged attacks.

Oil prices, which have risen sharply since the start of the war, gained more than 3 percent on Monday after the strikes.

The US and Iran have sporadically exchanged strikes since a ceasefire took effect in early April, while Pakistan has been mediating efforts to secure a more durable agreement. An exchange of strikes on Thursday was described in similar terms by each side.

The war launched by the US and Israel on Feb 28 has killed thousands of people, mainly in Iran and Lebanon. It has also caused global economic pain by pushing up energy prices, as the Strait of Hormuz, a vital global oil and liquefied natural gas supply route, has been effectively closed.

In a late-night social media post, US President Donald Trump did not mention the exchange of hostilities, repeating his assertion that Iran "really wants to make a deal".

He berated critics, including what he described as "seemingly unpatriotic Republicans", for negative "chirping" about negotiations to end the conflict.

"Just sit back and relax, it will all work out well in the end — It always does!" he said.

Shifting stance

Despite Trump's remarks, Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei accused Washington on Monday of constantly shifting its negotiating stance and condemned what he called US aggressive action.

Sending contradictory messages would not work as a negotiating tactic, he said, urging Washington to take a clear, definitive position as soon as possible.

"Negotiations have started amid severe suspicion and mistrust, and the exchange of messages is taking place in this atmosphere," he said.

"The other party is constantly changing its views and putting forward new or contradictory demands ... it is natural that this situation will prolong negotiations," he said, adding that Tehran viewed Israeli actions in the region, including in Lebanon, as inseparable from those of the US.

Trump is under pressure to reopen the Strait of Hormuz and lower US gasoline prices before November's congressional elections, as voters grow increasingly frustrated by rising prices. At the same time, he faces a potential backlash from Iran hawks in his own party over any concessions to Tehran.

Trump has said his main aim in the war is to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon with its highly enriched uranium. Tehran denies having any nuclear ambitions.

Iran was already in talks with the United States about the fate of its nuclear program in February, when the US and Israel launched air and missile strikes that wiped out much of the Islamic republic's senior leadership and plunged the Middle East into war.

While Tehran has long insisted that its nuclear program is for purely civilian ends, the US and its Western allies suspect it aims to develop an atomic weapon.

Late on Sunday, Trump posted on social media that the deal under discussion "states, very clearly, that Iran will not have a nuclear weapon".

The two sides remain at odds on several other issues, including Tehran's demands for the lifting of sanctions and the release of tens of billions of dollars in Iranian oil revenues frozen in foreign banks.

Iran has said it needs the release of $12 billion in frozen assets before engaging in substantive talks on its nuclear program, and dismissed earlier Trump comments suggesting that its stockpile of enriched uranium would be destroyed.

AGENCIES—XINHUA



Woven into history

Young girls try their hand at traditional loom weaving during Turkmen Carpet Day celebrations in Ashkhabad, Turkmenistan, on Sunday. Observed annually on the last Sunday of May, the national holiday honors the country's master artisans and celebrates the historical significance of handmade Turkmen rugs, which are globally recognized on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list.

CUI JIAXIN VIA XINHUA

Treasury securities slide amid Gulf turmoil

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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Several foreign governments reduced their holdings of US Treasurys according to the latest data, with analysts suggesting the move may reflect efforts by central banks to buffer against energy-price shocks triggered by the US-Israeli war against Iran.

Japan, the largest foreign holder of United States government debt, shed its Treasury holdings by about $47 billion to $1.19 trillion, according to official data.

"Given increased financial volatility since the start of the war in the Gulf, and resultant pressure on exchange rates, especially in Asia, it is not a surprise that US Treasury holdings by central banks have fallen," Frederic Neumann, chief Asia economist at HSBC, told CNBC.

March data from the Treasury International Capital System — the US government's tracker of cross-border capital flows — showed that India sold $7.6 billion in Treasurys, while Canada reduced its holdings by $6.9 billion and the United Arab Emirates by $5.8 billion.

Overall, foreign holdings of US Treasurys fell by $138.4 billion in March, a 1.5 percent decline from the previous month.

Some investors worry that the decline could signal waning confidence in US assets.

"The fear is the US is losing its standing as the safe haven," George Cipolloni, a fund manager at Penn Mutual Asset Management, told The Associated Press. "Our bond market is the biggest and most stable in the world, but when you add instability, bad things can happen."

However, Goldman Sachs said in a May 27 note that the selling wave was neither unusual nor indicative of a shift away from dollar assets. Instead, it said, the moves were consistent with historical reserve-management practices by central banks.

Not all countries reduced their Treasury holdings in March. The United Kingdom, the second-largest foreign holder of US government debt, bucked the trend by increasing its holdings by $29.6 billion to $926.9 billion. Germany also raised its holdings by $3.7 billion, according to the Treasury International Capital System.

Foreign demand

The US government finances budget deficits through borrowing, issuing Treasury securities to supplement tax revenue when spending exceeds income.

US Treasurys are debt securities issued by the Treasury Department. Foreign demand for Treasurys helps keep US borrowing costs in check, alongside factors such as Federal Reserve policy, inflation expectations and the country's fiscal policy.

However, US personal finance expert Suze Orman warned that a decline in demand for US government debt could carry broader economic consequences. If fewer investors are willing to buy Treasurys, the US government may have to offer higher yields to attract buyers, pushing up borrowing costs for households and businesses alike.

The dollar's global dominance is also facing increased scrutiny, leading to US government moves to bolster the currency.

Last year, US President Donald Trump signed the Guiding and Establishing National Innovation for US Stablecoins Act into law, aiming to offer a global, dollar-backed digital currency.

The White House said on July 18 that the legislation would "generate increased demand for US debt and cement the dollar's status as the global reserve currency" by requiring stablecoin issuers to back their tokens with US dollars and Treasury securities.

Mohammad N. Elahee, a professor of international business at Quinnipiac University in Connecticut, said a prolonged period of global instability stemming from the US-Israeli war against Iran could encourage more countries to diversify away from dollar-denominated transactions.

Goldman Sachs, meanwhile, argued that financial markets had largely stabilized after the initial shock of the Middle East conflict.

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BUSINESS

MiniMax prepares for A-share launch

Dual-listing push by AI developers highlights sector's rapid growth

By **CHENG YU**
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Chinese artificial intelligence company MiniMax has begun preparations for an initial public offering on the Chinese mainland just months after its Hong Kong debut, setting the stage for a potential A-share rivalry with fellow large language model developer Zhipu AI.

The parallel IPO drives by MiniMax and Zhipu underscore how China's AI sector is entering a new phase, with leading model developers seeking not only technological leadership, but also long-term access to public market financing to help cover the costs of increasingly expensive competition in computing power, model training and global expansion.

China's securities regulator said on Saturday that MiniMax signed a listing guidance agreement on Friday, formally launching the process toward an A-share IPO.

Asked about when MiniMax could become profitable, its founder and CEO Yan Junjie told China Daily at a State Council Information Office briefing on Thursday that the industry's immediate priority remained accelerating development rather than focusing solely on profitability.

"The core issue for the large language model sector is still how to accelerate development. China's AI sector, including MiniMax, will see a major leap forward this year," Yan said.

The move makes MiniMax the latest major Chinese AI developer to pursue a dual-listing structure, following Zhipu AI, which earlier this year began preparations for a STAR Market listing after becoming the world's first publicly traded LLM company.

The race highlights growing investor appetite for China's AI sector, as Beijing increasingly views LLMs as a strategic tech area comparable to semiconductors and advanced manufacturing.

Founded in 2022, MiniMax was listed in Hong Kong in January and has since become one of the market's strongest performers. Shares have risen more than fourfold since their debut, giving the company a market value of roughly HK$263.5 billion ($33.6 billion).

MiniMax said it now serves more than 1 million enterprise and developer customers globally, five times the level reported six months ago. Its global user base has reached approximately 300 million.

Revenue growth has accelerated sharply as companies increasingly adopt AI models and related services.

MiniMax reported revenue of 24 million yuan ($3.3 million) in 2023, which rose to 208 million yuan in 2024 before climbing to 539 million yuan in 2025, representing year-on-year growth of roughly 160 percent.

Like many AI startups, however, MiniMax remains deeply unprofitable due to heavy investment in model development and computing infrastructure.

The company reported a net loss attributable to shareholders of 12.76 billion yuan in 2025. Excluding fair value changes on financial liabilities recorded through profit and loss, the adjusted loss stood at 1.92 billion yuan.

Zhipu AI, often regarded as one of China's leading LLM companies alongside MiniMax, was listed in Hong Kong in January and subsequently initiated preparations for a STAR Market listing.

Wei Kai, head of the AI research institute at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, said in a separate interview that the rapid development of Chinese AI LLM companies reflects "a systemic upgrade in China's overall AI capabilities".

Wei said: "It is the result of sustained investment, open ecosystems and the ability to integrate models with real-world scenarios at scale."

Milestone achieved



A drone image captures the completion of the last box girder for the Shanghai-Nanjing section of the Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu High-speed Railway in Taicang, Jiangsu province, on Saturday. Partially built by China Railway 24th Bureau Group, the over 2,000-kilometer Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu artery aims to become a core backbone of China's "eight vertical and eight horizontal" HSR network, shouldering connections between city clusters from the Yangtze River Delta region to the Chengdu-Chongqing economic circles.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Zeiss eyes China as engine for growth, dynamism

By **ZHENG YIRAN** in Shanghai
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With China being its largest single market worldwide and one of its most dynamic growth engines, German optics giant Zeiss Group will continue to deepen its presence in the country and build a win-win ecosystem with local partners, said its China head.

Martin Fischer, president and CEO of Zeiss Greater China, said during a recent forum in Shanghai: "As a technology leader, we know China is where the future is being built in real time — and where the dialogue between technology and industry truly shapes the world. That is why we are celebrating Zeiss' 180th anniversary here today: not only to honor our legacy, but even more to look ahead to the next 180 years."

He noted that for China, as for Zeiss, 2026 is a special year, as it marks the start of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). "Zeiss' capabilities resonate strongly with China's strategy of high-quality development. We are aligned in industrial ambition, in innovation intensity, and in long-term thinking."

Zeiss first entered China in 1957. At its innovation, and research and development centers in Shanghai, Suzhou in Jiangsu province, and Guangzhou in Guangdong province, it is advancing both products and processes, with solutions serving customers worldwide.

"Our manufacturing sites are widely recognized for both smart production and sustainability — our Guangzhou manufacturing site, for example, became the world's first optical lens factory to join the Global Lighthouse Network earlier this year," Fischer said.

According to market research firm Market Monitor, in 2025, the global optics market reached 107.5 billion yuan ($15.8 billion), with China accounting for 21.45 billion yuan.

"China offers one of the world's most comprehensive supply chains, a stable and attractive business environment, and — crucially — an openness to new technologies. I have personally witnessed the rapid rise and iteration of artificial intelligence in China, which has inspired us and accelerated our own transformation. In our new five-year strategy, AI-powered digital transformation and data intelligence are core themes: we are embedding them into our solutions and processes to help customers move faster, smarter and more sustainably," Fischer said.

Zhu Guangyao, China's former vice-minister of finance, said that the source of technological innovation is the core of future industrial competition, which requires the joint efforts of enterprises, universities and research institutes. He expects that multinational corporations will continue to be deep partners for China's high-quality development.

"Currently, the world is facing severe challenges. We need global cooperation to promote the steady growth of the world economy. China is building a high-level open economy, and we welcome Zeiss and all foreign enterprises to continue expanding their investments in China," he said.

Zeiss has established two hubs in the Yangtze River Delta and the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, focusing on high-end equipment and eye health. Its new headquarters in China is now under construction in Shanghai, marking the start of its next chapter of localization. It will serve as an open platform for innovation.

Costco expands digital footprint

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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A consumer carries a boxed item after shopping at a Costco store in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on March 22. CHENG XIN / GETTY IMAGES

Costco Wholesale Corp is accelerating its digital expansion in China, deepening competition with Walmart Inc's fast-growing Sam's Club as the US warehouse retailer seeks to broaden its reach beyond a limited store network.

The company recently launched its first official flagship store on JD, marking its first partnership with a major Chinese e-commerce platform. The online storefront offers direct-operated merchandise with products aligned with Costco's warehouse clubs.

The launch also introduces Costco's membership-based pricing model to a broader online audience. Active members receive the same prices available in physical stores, while non-members pay roughly 20 percent more.

Its Kirkland Signature 140 pacs (2.52 kilograms) UltraClean laundry detergent, for example, sells for 89.9 yuan ($13.29) to members versus 109.80 yuan for non-members.

Its store on JD joins the company's existing digital channels, which include its proprietary app and mini-program. The move underscores Costco's efforts to adapt its business model to the country's highly digital retail landscape, where online shopping and rapid delivery have become mainstream consumer expectations rather than supplementary channels.

Costco currently operates 928 warehouses and serves about 140 million members globally. Since entering the Chinese market in 2019, the retailer has opened seven stores, including two in Shanghai. An eighth location is expected to open in Quanzhou, Fujian province.

Costco currently offers two membership tiers in China: a Gold Star membership priced at 299 yuan annually and an Executive membership priced at 688 yuan. The premium tier, introduced in April, provides a 3 percent reward on eligible purchases and mirrors a strategy long employed by Sam's Club to deepen customer loyalty and increase spending.

JD Logistics will handle fulfillment for the new online operation. Next-day delivery is available in major cities including Beijing, Shanghai, and Guangzhou, Guangdong province. However, Costco's orders require a minimum spend of 199 yuan, with base shipping fees starting at 20 yuan for orders of up to 12 kilograms. No free delivery option is currently available. In comparison, Sam's Club ships for free at a minimum spend of 99 yuan.

The higher delivery thresholds reflect the structural challenge facing Costco in China. The company's low-margin, bulk-purchase model relies on large basket sizes, making last-mile logistics more expensive to subsidize.

That challenge is becoming increasingly apparent as Sam's Club strengthens its position in the membership retail sector in the country.

Walmart's China operations continue to gain momentum, driven largely by Sam's Club and e-commerce growth. Walmart reported first-quarter fiscal 2027 net sales in China of $8 billion, up 22.3 percent from a year earlier. E-commerce sales rose 31 percent and accounted for half of total revenue, an increase of 335 basis points from the previous year. Sam's Club added nine stores over the past 12 months while maintaining double-digit transaction growth.

Walmart Chief Financial Officer John David Rainey said during the company's earnings call, "The team delivered over half a billion units in the first quarter, with about 75 percent arriving in under one hour."

Another membership store, Maidelong, or Metro China, of the Wumart Group, has recently reshuffled its top management, installing retail veteran Andrew Miles as executive chairman. Miles previously held senior roles at Walmart China and led the expansion of Sam's Club China.

Suzano to scale up investments in nation

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Amid a turbulent and rapidly changing global environment, China has emerged as a crucial "source of stability" for multinational corporations, prompting Brazilian pulp and paper giant Suzano to continuously increase investments in the country, a senior company executive said.

Pablo Machado, Suzano's global vice-president for strategy and Asia business, noted that China's advanced manufacturing capabilities and digital advantages provide an excellent ecosystem for deepening integration with local partners across supply chains, technology and finance.

"Today, China is not only an important market for Suzano, but an integral part of our global operations and future growth," Machado said. "In this process, Suzano has successfully shifted its approach from simply 'selling into China' to 'building together with China'."

Driven by the unprecedented opportunities arising from China's pivot to high-quality economic development, Suzano intends to scale up its local investments. The company will harness China's "massive consumer upgrade wave" to actively back the nation's ambitious green transition, Machado added.

This anticipated surge in local investment — spanning research and development, logistics networks, and domestic value chains — aims to deliver premium, highly sophisticated products to Chinese customers across the packaging, hygiene, textile and cosmetics sectors, he said.

> "Today, China is not only an important market for Suzano, but an integral part of our global operations and future growth."
>
> **Pablo Machado,** Suzano global vice-president for strategy and Asia business

This robust foreign investment appetite is bolstered by the nation's steady economic fundamentals and comprehensive industrial ecosystem.

According to Wang Jun, vice-minister of the General Administration of Customs, multinational corporations remain pivotal in advancing new quality productive forces, maintaining a robust trade outlook within the Chinese market.

Supported by predictable policies and a highly open business landscape, these enterprises are increasingly empowered to broaden their network of commercial partners and unlock new market segments, said Wang.

Echoing the importance of a comprehensive industrial ecosystem, Machado emphasized that modern manufacturing is no longer limited to physical production; it has evolved into a fully integrated system enabled by continuous services such as data analytics, advanced monitoring and intelligent management.

By incorporating Chinese equipment and technologies into its global operations, Suzano is also well-positioned to support Chinese enterprises expanding into Latin America, said Machado.

Financially, Suzano continues to actively participate in the opening of the nation's market. It made history as the first non-financial company from the Americas to issue Panda Bonds, establishing a direct link between Chinese capital and sustainable forestry initiatives.

Tapping into China's capital market remains a central pillar of Suzano's long-term financial strategy. This approach not only secures competitive and diversified funding for the company, but also reinforces the crucial economic ties between Brazil and China, said Machado.

Bai Ming, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, noted that while more than four decades of reform and opening-up have highly liberalized China's manufacturing and related industries, the services sector continues to hold immense untapped potential.

As the country pushes to stimulate service-oriented consumption, global firms will find fresh opportunities to expand their footprint in fields like healthcare, logistics, travel, certification and digital services, Bai said.

Looking ahead, Suzano anticipates the Chinese market will unlock even greater technological synergies that can be scaled across global emerging markets.

"We believe China will play an even more important role," Machado said. "While further developing itself, it will become a global source of innovation, an industrial hub and a platform for capital convergence."

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BUSINESS



Technical workers test product performance at the UBTech AI industrial park in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province, on Oct 9, 2024.
ZHANG HAIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Jiangxi eyes scenario-based industrial collaborations

Project represents more than just another investment from Greater Bay Area; it exemplifies a paradigm shift in what province now offers technology firms

By REN QI and **ZHAO RUINAN**
in Nanchang

At an artificial intelligence industrial park in Jiujiang, Jiangxi province, humanoid robots are actively being trained for the workforce.

Inside the facility, Walker S2 robots practice tasks that may soon become standard in factories and logistics centers — learning to identify objects, handle materials, avoid obstacles and adapt to dynamic industrial environments.

Built by Shenzhen, Guangdong province-based UBTech Robotics Corp, the park hosts Jiangxi's first Walker S2 production line and the province's inaugural humanoid robot data collection and training center. With over 100 robots deployed, the facility has generated more than 15 million pieces of high-quality test data for algorithm training and scenario adaptation, local media reported.

This project represents more than just another investment from the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area. It exemplifies a paradigm shift in what Jiangxi now offers technology companies. Beyond traditional incentives like land, labor and policy support, the province now provides real-world testing grounds for emerging products.

This strategy was the focal point of the 2026 Jiangxi-Greater Bay Area Economic and Trade Week, held across Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao in May. Marking Jiangxi's first major cross-regional trade and investment push in the opening year of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), the initiative featured a main event, 19 themed activities and a series of targeted investment promotion visits.

The most notable shift during the event was a new emphasis on application scenarios. At a supply-demand matchmaking event for application scenarios in Jiangxi's emerging industries in Shenzhen on May 21, the cities of Jiujiang, Ganzhou and Shangrao, as well as the Ganjiang New Area, released 151 scenarios spanning artificial intelligence, intelligent manufacturing, brain-computer interfaces, the low-altitude economy, smart cities, government services and cultural tourism. Rather than conventional investment pitches, these offerings were designed to address a critical question for tech firms: where can a product be tested, data collected, early adopters found, and initial orders scaled into broader markets?

"Scenarios act as a bridge connecting technology with industry, linking research and development to the market," said Chen Zhimin, a second-level inspector at the Department of Commerce of Jiangxi Province. Chen emphasized the province's desire for companies to bring their innovations to Jiangxi to find suitable testing and application fields.

Huang Aiqun, director of the Jiangxi Industrial and Information Technology Integration Promotion Center, said the event aimed to align frontier technologies with Jiangxi's industrial needs in sectors like opto-electronic information, solid-state batteries and embodied intelligence through a model of open scenarios, demand release and enterprise roadshows.

While many new technologies have graduated from the laboratory, they require real-world conditions to achieve widespread adoption. A robot needs a factory floor; a brain-computer interface company requires hospital wards; a low-altitude economy startup depends on airspace and logistics routes; and an optical sensing firm needs industrial parks and energy facilities.



Above: Samples of rare earths are on display at the Ganzhou Museum in Ganzhou, Jiangxi province, on Jan 19, 2025.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: Robots are tested at the UBTech AI industrial park in Jiujiang, Jiangxi, on Oct 9, 2024.
ZHANG HAIYAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Consequently, Jiangxi has integrated these practical scenarios directly into its investment promotion strategy. The Shenzhen event brought together executives from 35 listed companies, high-tech enterprises and specialized "little giant" firms. Though representing diverse industries, their needs frequently overlapped: they all required testing grounds, technological refinement and access to initial customers.

Highlighting regional collaboration, Chen Shuilian, vice-mayor of Jiujiang, detailed the city's partnership with the GBA. Jiujiang has successfully explored models such as "GBA headquarters plus Jiujiang base" and "fund guidance plus industrial cultivation" in sectors including lithium battery materials, humanoid robots and 3D printing.

Ganzhou presented a different scenario, focusing on new rare earth materials and new energy. Leveraging platforms like the Ganjiang Innovation Academy of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the National Rare Earth Functional Materials Innovation Center, the city aims to link research, pilot incubation and industrial application.

The national center has incubated 17 technology companies and built 26 pilot demonstration lines, providing crucial support for Ganzhou's rare earth industry, which now exceeds 100 billion yuan ($14.78 billion) in scale. For Ganzhou, the greater challenge lies not just in extracting resources, but in transforming them into advanced materials and components that can integrate into broader industrial chains.

Shangrao highlighted its photovoltaic and optical electronics sectors, leveraging industry leaders like Jinko Solar Co, which boasts over 5,600 global patents and a 20-billion-yuan R&D investment over the past five years, to create more testing, demonstration and supply-chain opportunities. Meanwhile, the Ganjiang New Area showcased future-oriented public resources and research platforms, such as a traditional Chinese medicine innovation city in Nanchang, capital of Jiangxi, and digital economy industrial parks, pointing to another dimension of structural openness.

Scenarios alone, however, are insufficient without capital. On May 20, Jiangxi hosted a conference in Shenzhen, focusing on the deeper integration of industry and finance. Six Jiangxi enterprises involved in the province's key manufacturing initiatives pitched their technologies, growth prospects and financing needs to industrial funds from both Jiangxi and the GBA.

"Jiangxi has a solid industrial foundation, a sound financial ecosystem and a strong open environment," said Fang Yanru, chairwoman of the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade Jiangxi Provincial Committee, expressing hope that GBA financial institutions would strengthen their cooperation with the province. Jiangxi's outstanding loans exceeded 7 trillion yuan in the first quarter, up 7.8 percent year-on-year, with manufacturing loans rising 13.9 percent. The province currently boasts 54 companies listed in Shenzhen and 24 in Hong Kong.

Xu Zhonghua, executive deputy director of the office of the financial affairs committee of the Communist Party of China Jiangxi Provincial Committee, urged stronger industry-finance cooperation and smoother two-way information channels to identify more high-quality Jiangxi firms with listing potential.

Market access remains another vital pillar of this strategy. At a cross-border e-commerce event, officials highlighted the synergy between Jiangxi's comprehensive manufacturing capabilities and the GBA's advanced digital platforms, noting that such cooperation could achieve a result where the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. For enterprises, the demand is direct and practical. Xiao Shaping, foreign trade manager of Jiangxi OYF Vehicle Industry Co, said the Shenzhen event directly connected her company with potential clients from Russia and Pakistan, effectively linking Jiangxi's industrial belts with global e-commerce opportunities.

Wang Chunlei, deputy director of the Department of Commerce of Jiangxi Province, summarized the activity week as a reflection of three fundamental shifts in the province's approach: from traditional investment promotion to trade-investment integration, from one-way industrial transfer to two-way cooperation, and from basic industrial collaboration to comprehensive integrated development. Moving forward, Jiangxi plans to hold more than 100 specialized, industry-focused matchmaking events in the GBA annually.

Ultimately, the true measure of success will be follow-up work. While 151 scenarios have been released, the focus now shifts to transforming these opportunities into pilot projects, securing timely funding and building global brands. These questions will not be answered in a single activity week, but the direction is clear. By bringing concrete offers to the GBA — testing grounds, industrial platforms, capital links and manufacturing capacity — Jiangxi is moving beyond simple project promotion toward long-term, scenario-based industrial partnerships.

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Logistical adjustments keep landlocked region's exports flowing overseas

By REN QI and **ZHAO RUINAN**
in Nanchang

Before a product made in Jiangxi province can reach overseas customers, it typically requires two crucial elements the inland province has historically had to "borrow" from coastal regions: efficient port logistics access and mature market channels. Consequently, Ganzhou International Land Port in Jiangxi and the cross-border e-commerce ecosystem of Shenzhen, Guangdong province, have emerged as pivotal components of Jiangxi's deepening collaboration with the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area.

At Ganzhou International Land Port, containers of Jiangxi-made goods are loaded onto freight trains bound directly for Shenzhen's Yantian Port. The "Rongwan" intercity high-speed freight train between Ganzhou and Shenzhen has slashed average transit time from 12 hours to just six, saving nearly 2,000 yuan ($296) per container, said Liu Liping, deputy director of the port's operation and management bureau.

For a landlocked city, this represents far more than a logistical upgrade. By connecting with Yantian and Guangzhou ports, the land port has established an intermodal rail-sea channel designed to offer the "same port, same price and same efficiency". This cross-customs and cross-provincial coordination effectively extends the GBA's maritime reach inland to Ganzhou.

The impact is palpable across local industries. Deng Wangqiang, chairman of Jiangxi Aiyang Furniture Co, said that the land port enables companies to complete customs declarations and shipping locally. Deng estimates that logistics costs have dropped by 30 percent while efficiency has surged by 40 percent, significantly boosting the international competitiveness of the company's products.

The furniture industry of Nankang, a district of Ganzhou, serves as a prime example. Once reliant on traveling south to Guangdong to learn modern production and management techniques, local carpenters eventually returned to build a thriving modern furniture cluster in Ganzhou. In 2024, the output value of Nankang's furniture industrial cluster exceeded 280 billion yuan, with 46 percent of its products exported to over 100 countries and regions via the GBA, People's Daily's CPC News website reported.

Yet, logistics is only half of the equation for going global. Companies also require platforms, operators, buyers, brands and overseas distribution systems — which constituted the central focus of a Jiangxi cross-border e-commerce development panel held in Shenzhen on May 20. Chen Changsheng, deputy director of the Department of Commerce of Jiangxi Province, said Shenzhen efficiently links domestic and overseas markets, leading China's cross-border e-commerce development through its advanced digital technologies and active operating ecosystem. Chen described the partnership as a "two-way move" between Jiangxi's robust manufacturing and Shenzhen's expansive market channels.

Jiangxi is home to 39 of the country's 41 industrial categories, including two trillion-yuan-level industries in electronic information and nonferrous metals, alongside 12 hundred-billion-yuan-level industries. It also hosts 18 national foreign trade transformation and upgrading bases — covering products like Jingdezhen ceramics, Xinyu lithium batteries, Yingtan eyewear and Wuyuan tea — as well as nine comprehensive cross-border e-commerce pilot zones. Chen urged Jiangxi enterprises to embrace cross-border e-commerce, utilize comprehensive bonded zones and strengthen brand awareness to build independent labels with international influence.

For enterprises, the benefits of this synergy were highly practical. Xiao Shaping, foreign trade manager of Jiangxi OYF Vehicle Industry Co, said the Shenzhen event directly connected her company with potential clients in Russia and Pakistan, effectively linking Jiangxi's industrial belts with global e-commerce opportunities.

The underlying logic is straightforward: Jiangxi possesses manufacturing capacity and distinctive products, while Shenzhen offers the needed platforms, buyers and international networks. By synergizing these strengths, Jiangxi aims not only to boost export volumes but also to enhance brand building, channel management, supply-chain services and global market responsiveness.

For Jiangxi, this marks the next critical step in GBA cooperation. Moving products is essential, but building enduring channels is the greater challenge. As the province strives to turn its factories and industrial belts into recognized brands with long-term market presence, the GBA — with its ports, capital, platforms and global networks — is proving to be an indispensable partner.

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EXPLORING NATIONAL PARKS

RESERVES REBALANCING NATION'S BIODIVERSITY

Over a decade on since its introduction, China's national parks system continues to foster ecological initiatives and economic growth

Editor's note: *This series journeys through China's national parks to explore conservation, biodiversity protection and sustainable tourism in key ecological landscapes.*

By HOU LIQIANG in Ya'an, Sichuan
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He He and his sister Mei Mei, the world's first panda twins born to a captive mother and a wild father, arrived in July 2018, two years after the launch of the Giant Panda National Park pilot program. Their births were a signal of hope for the future of China's burgeoning national parks system.

Nearly nine years on, a growing harmony between humans and nature has evolved, and landscapes and biodiversity have improved.

Established in 2021, the national park covers some 22,000 square kilometers across Sichuan, Shaanxi and Gansu provinces, with most of it located in Sichuan.

Mei Mei has given birth to a male cub, and He He has successfully mated naturally, a testament to the progress made in field mating for captive giant pandas, said Huang Zhi, director of the Ya'an Bifengxia Base of the China Conservation and Research Center for the Giant Panda.

Carrying the genes of wild giant pandas, He He and Mei Mei are expected to open up new possibilities for the future recovery of China's wild panda populations, he said.

Reflecting on the center's over four decades of commitment to panda protection, breeding and rewilding research, Huang highlighted a shift in its conservation efforts: from pursuing quantity to prioritizing quality.

"Each panda has a clear pedigree management system. Every day, there is very detailed health monitoring. Every year, there is a breeding plan, which must be approved by experts before implementation. We now control breeding to 15 to 20 pandas per year," he said.

He said the center's captive population had reached 387 by the end of 2024, compared with just six in the early 1980s.

Meanwhile, the country has also seen remarkable progress in the recovery of the giant panda's wild population, with its number rebounding from about 1,100 in the 1980s to the current roughly 1,900, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration. Driving this steady growth are critical efforts in habitat protection, captive breeding and rewilding, and field mating introduction research.

The Daxiangling mountain range in the Giant Panda National Park stands as a microcosm for the consistent efforts.

Fu Mingxia, a park employee dedicated to scientific research and monitoring, said only 38 wild giant pandas were counted across the 6,000-sq-km range when the fourth national giant panda survey was conducted a decade ago.

"Because of factors such as habitat fragmentation, they existed as isolated small populations," she said.

Now, the picture is changing. In the process of building the national park, many mines and hydropower stations were closed, significantly reducing human disturbance within the park, she added.

An area of about 200 hectares has been set aside for giant panda rewilding, Fu said. After 30 to 45 days of adaptation in an enclosure, a panda moves to a small zone, then a larger one, before ultimately being released into the wild.

"This phased approach helps the panda learn to navigate its natural surroundings, enhancing its ability to avoid danger and find food and water, ultimately increasing its chances of survival," she said.

With the development of the national park, more efforts have been devoted to giant panda habitat protection and restoration, rewilding training and reintroduction, Fu said. Thanks to the efforts, infrared cameras in the Daxiangling range are capturing wild giant pandas with increasing frequency.

According to the Sichuan Provincial Department of Natural Resources, in the section of the Giant Panda National Park in Ya'an city alone, 1,080 hectares of historically abandoned mines were restored through a national demonstration project during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period.

Since the establishment of the Giant Panda National Park, Sichuan authorities have restored 22,090 hectares of habitat, revoked 200 mining rights and removed 258 small hydropower stations in efforts to enhance panda conservation, Wan Hongyun, a senior official with the Sichuan Provincial Forestry and Grassland Administration, said at a recent news conference.

The annual number of wild giant panda sightings in the park's Sichuan section has increased from 135 to 185, suggesting a stable recovery of the wild population, he added.

For local residents, the national park has brought tangible benefits. Zhou Hong, a 32-year-old resident of Fazhan village in Sichuan province's Yingjing county near one of the park's entrances, is a prime example.

Previously, he worked in the stone material business in Deyang, also in Sichuan. After the Giant Panda National Park pilot began, he decided to return, transforming his home into a guesthouse.

"Since the establishment of the Giant Panda National Park, many tourists have been flocking in," he said, adding that rooms are usually fully booked during the peak season in July, August and September, and occupancy remains above 50 percent in other months.

The rich bird life near his village adds to the draw. Among his customers are many bird-watching enthusiasts and wildlife conservationists who come for research and photography, he said.

The transformation of Fazhan village has been remarkable. According to local authorities, since the national park pilot began, the number of residents in the village has doubled, as have the number of agricultural leisure facilities and homestays, while per capita net income has quadrupled. Meanwhile, illegal activities such as poaching and bamboo shoot harvesting have become rare.

According to the Sichuan authorities, the Sichuan section of the Giant Panda National Park has welcomed some 16 million visitors over the past five years.

The Giant Panda National Park is one of five national parks that were formally established in 2021, following the launch of the national park system pilot program in 2015.

According to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, the five national parks span 230,000 sq km, and cover nearly 30 percent of the key terrestrial wildlife species found in China.

Growing harmony between humans and nature has also been seen in the other four parks, the Three-River-Source National Park, Wuyishan National Park, Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park, and the National Park of Hainan Tropical Rainforest.

At the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park, for instance, an intelligent space-air-ground integrated monitoring system has been put into operation, according to Sun Hongyan, deputy director of the administration's nature reserve department.

The system enables round-the-clock tracking and precise positioning of the big cats, and it can also provide early warnings of potential human-tiger conflicts, she said.

Leopards rarely come into conflict with humans because of their naturally shy nature.

At the start of the national park system pilot program, the populations of Amur tigers and Amur leopards in the park stood at 27 and 42, respectively, Sun said. These numbers have climbed to over 70 and 80.

In late 2024, tracks of Amur tigers were discovered on Changbai Mountain in Jilin province for the first time in three decades, signaling a habitat expansion of more than 200 km from the national park's core area, she added.

The establishment of the Three-River-Source National Park has ensured the comprehensive protection of the headwater ecosystems of the Yangtze, Yellow and Lancang rivers.

Compared with 2015, the populations of wildlife such as Tibetan antelopes, Tibetan gazelles and Tibetan wild donkeys in the park have increased significantly, Sun said.

According to the administration, the number of Tibetan antelopes in the national park has soared to about 70,000 from no more than 20,000 in the 1980s.

Since the park's establishment, grassland vegetation cover has increased by 8.6 percent, and local residents have seen an average annual income increase of 15,000 yuan ($2,180) to 21,000 yuan, she added.

Li Hongfu, an official with the Three-River-Source National Park Administration, said a people-centered approach has been key in the administration's efforts to promote high-standard conservation and high-quality development of the national park.

He highlighted the "one household, one ranger" mechanism, which provides each local herding family with a patrol route for ecological conservation, as a representative initiative by the park to balance ecological protection with the needs of local communities.

So far, over 17,000 former herders have taken up a patrol route, he noted. They are not only able to adapt quickly to the natural conditions, but also can promptly capture images when encountering unknown species and send them back to the big data center, providing invaluable analytical material for professional technicians.

"Today, the lush mountains and lucid waters in the Three-River-Source National Park are already invaluable assets," he said. "While enabling more local people to pursue a livelihood rooted in ecological conservation and benefit from it, these ecological resources are gradually becoming a lasting source of well-being for the community.

"The development of the national park has won the hearts of the people and will surely lead to an even brighter future," Li added.

CHINA'S NATIONAL PARKS





THREE-RIVER-SOURCE NATIONAL PARK

Location: Qinghai province

Area: 190,700 square kilometers

Resources: 32.41% forest, water, wetland, wasteland; 67.59% grassland

Feature:
WATER TOWER
The park encompasses the headstreams of three major rivers: the Yangtze, the Yellow and the Lancang, providing more than 60 to 90 billion cubic meters of high-quality freshwater annually to downstream provinces and five neighboring countries.
HIGH-ALTITUDE ECOSYSTEM
It's the largest and highest national park in China, with an average altitude exceeding 4,700 meters.

species of nationally key protected wild animals: 84
species of second-class nationally protected plants: 11

Flagship species:
The **Tibetan antelope**, a rare species native to the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, can reach speeds over 20 meters per second to escape predators like wolves and snow leopards. Thanks to effective conservation efforts, the population of Tibetan antelopes has grown from fewer than 20,000 in the 1980s to around 300,000 today, leading the International Union for Conservation of Nature to downgrade the Tibetan antelope from "endangered" to "near threatened".
As a top predator and flagship species of high mountain ecosystems, the **snow leopard** serves as a key indicator of ecosystem health. China is home to about 60 percent of the global snow leopard habitat, and the Three-River-Source National Park contains a large contiguous area of the habitat, with around 1,000 individuals.
The **red poppywort** is a species of poppy with highly decorative, drooping blood-red flowers. It also has medicinal value, offering benefits such as pain relief, cough suppression and antibacterial properties.



GIANT PANDA NATIONAL PARK

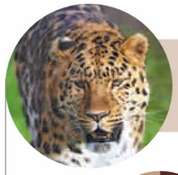
Location: Shaanxi, Gansu and Sichuan provinces

Area: 22,000 square kilometers
0.4% 97.72 sq km in Shaanxi
11.6% 2,552.96 sq km in Gansu
87.7% 19,300 sq km in Sichuan

Resources: forest, water, grassland, wetland, wasteland, minerals

Feature:
GIANT PANDA
73 protected areas have been integrated to safeguard the habitat of more than 70 percent of wild giant pandas. The wild population has grown from 1,100 in the 1980s to 1,900, leading the International Union for Conservation of Nature to downgrade the giant panda from "endangered" to "vulnerable". The giant panda acts as an "umbrella species" – protecting its habitat also safeguards numerous other species that share the same ecosystem. The park is home to over 10,000 species of wild flora and fauna, such as golden snub-nosed monkeys, snow leopards and Chinese yew.

Flagship species:
(In addition to the **giant panda**)
The **golden snub-nosed monkey**, a species endemic to China and classified under State first-class protection, lives in the forests of Sichuan, Gansu, Shaanxi and Hubei provinces. In the Giant Panda National Park, the distribution of the golden snub-nosed monkey overlaps significantly with that of the giant panda, making it an important sympatric species.
The **takin**, classified under State first-class protection, inhabits alpine forests and meadows at altitudes above 2,500 meters. The Tangjiahe area of the Giant Panda National Park is recognized as a hot spot with the highest encounter rate for takins in China.
The **Chinese mountain cat**, a species endemic to China and classified under State first-class protection, inhabits transitional areas between alpine forests, grasslands and deserts.
Resembling a cat but with a stouter build, the **red panda** has reddish-brown fur covering its entire body. It lives in deciduous and coniferous forests at altitudes between 2,300 and 4,800 meters.



NORTHEAST CHINA TIGER AND LEOPARD NATIONAL PARK

Location: Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces

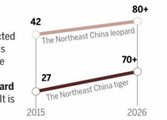
Area: 14,100 square kilometers
32.05% 4,508 sq km in Heilongjiang
67.95% 9,557 sq km in Jilin

Resources: 2.42% water, wetland, grassland; 97.58% forest



Feature:
BIODIVERSITY
species of vascular plants: 884
species of wild vertebrates: 397

Flagship species:
The **Amur tiger**, classified as a first-class nationally protected wild animal in China, is the largest extant feline species. It is solitary and primarily preys on wild boar and roe deer in the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park.
Slightly smaller in size than the Amur tiger, the **Amur leopard** primarily inhabits mixed coniferous and broadleaf forests. It is also a first-class nationally protected wild animal.





WUYISHAN NATIONAL PARK

Location: Fujian and Jiangxi provinces

Area: 1,280 square kilometers
21.8% 279 sq km in Jiangxi
78.2% 1,001 sq km in Fujian

Resources: water, wetland, forest, grassland, wasteland

Feature:
It has the most complete, most typical and the largest subtropical forest at the same latitude in the world.

BIODIVERSITY

species of vascular plants	2,866 (2 under first-class State protection, 61 under second-class State protection)
species of algae	239
species of fungi	503
species of lichens	100
species of orchid	78
species of wild vertebrates	690 (16 under first-class State protection, 93 under second-class State protection)
insects	6,913 (1 under first-class State protection, 6 under second-class State protection)

Flagship species:
The **Cabot's Tragopan**, a first-class State-protected wild animal in China, inhabits subtropical montane evergreen broad-leaved forests and mixed coniferous-broad-leaved forests at altitudes between 600 and 1,800 meters. The bird has a stable population of around 1,000 individuals in the Wuyishan National Park, accounting for more than 60 percent of the global population.
First found in the Wuyishan National Park, the **Yu Shen horned toad** is a terrestrial wild animal of important ecological and scientific value.



NATIONAL PARK OF HAINAN TROPICAL RAINFOREST

Location: central part of Hainan Island



Area: 4,269 square kilometers
45.4% general control area: 1,938 sq km
54.6% core protected area: 2,331 sq km

Resources: 2.89% water, wetland, grassland, wasteland and minerals; 97.21% forest

Feature:
It has the most concentrated, the best preserved and the most extensive tropical rainforest in China, a complete vertical vegetation zone from lowland rainforest, montane rainforest, alpine cloud forest, to a small area of coniferous forest

BIODIVERSITY

species of vascular plants	4,367 (6 under first-class State protection, 143 under second-class State protection)
species of wild vertebrates	651 (14 under first-class State protection, 120 under second-class State protection)

Flagship species:
The National Park of Hainan Tropical Rainforest is the only habitat for **Hainan black-crested gibbons** in the world. Thanks to sustained conservation efforts, their population has grown from fewer than 10 individuals in two groups, to 42 individuals in seven groups. It is estimated that by 2035, their population will reach 60 to 70 individuals.
The **Hainan Eld's deer** is a first-class State-protected wild animal in China and is listed as endangered on the IUCN Red List. It inhabits hilly lowlands or flat terrain at altitudes below 200 meters.
As a key species in the tropical ecosystem, the **Hainan oak** provides habitat and nourishment for a variety of flora and fauna, from nesting birds to insects and even small mammals. It can grow to 20 to 30 meters and is highly valued for its durability and aesthetic appeal.

Sources: National Forestry and Grassland Administration, websites of the five national parks

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COMMENT

Editorials

Strategic dialogue conducive to keeping Sino-UK ties on right track of progress

The visit of UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper to China from Monday to Wednesday for the 11th round of the China-UK Strategic Dialogue presents an opportunity for both countries to implement the road map for improving China-UK relations that the two sides agreed during the UK prime minister's visit to China in January, the first visit by a UK leader in eight years.

This year's strategic dialogue, following the 10th China-UK Strategic Dialogue in London in February last year, shows the continued willingness of both countries to develop a long-term, stable comprehensive strategic partnership.

The Keir Starmer government has taken substantive steps to promote economic and trade cooperation with China in fields such as artificial intelligence, bioscience, new energy and low-carbon technologies. It has also shown a clear intent to step up cooperation in areas such as environmental protection.

By working together on environmental issues, China and the United Kingdom can advance their national development goals while contributing to global sustainability efforts. This cooperation can serve as a reference for other nations, demonstrating how countries with different political systems can work together to address shared challenges.

The UK is China's third-largest trading partner, third-largest investment destination and third-largest source of foreign investment in Europe, while China is the UK's largest trading partner in Asia. The Chinese economy is structurally complemented with that of the UK. Collaborating with China is essential for the UK to boost domestic growth.

Post-Brexit UK increasingly finds cooperation with China an economic necessity rather than a diplomatic option. The trade volume between China and the UK reached $103.73 billion last year, representing a year-on-year increase of 5.3 percent, highlighting the resilience of bilateral trade amid global turbulence. Facing supply-chain disruptions and rising protectionism, London has sought to revive the China-UK Economic and Financial Dialogue after a long hiatus. Deeper engagement with the world's second-largest economy offers the UK opportunities for sustainable growth, investment and economic stability that are crucial for the UK to cope with post-Brexit shock waves.

And by continuing to cooperation with China in a consistent, long-term and strategic manner, the UK can not only benefit itself but also provide a reference for the European Union to improve relations with China, even though the UK is no longer part of the bloc.

However, despite the steadier momentum in China-UK relations than in the recent past, bilateral ties are far from smooth sailing. Beyond frequent irritants — such as London's repeated interference in Hong Kong-related affairs and its unilateral sanctions on Chinese entities under the pretext of the Russia-Ukraine conflict — the UK government has also blocked Chinese investments in certain sectors citing so-called "national security" concerns.

Moreover, the UK has sent warships to navigate at China's doorstep in the Western Pacific under the guise of exercising "freedom of navigation".

Such actions contradict London's stated willingness to improve bilateral relations, increase the risk of misjudgment, and heighten regional tensions — from which the UK stands to gain nothing.

The key to managing these differences lies in the UK fostering objective perceptions of China, and engaging in dialogue and communication grounded in mutual respect. The Starmer government needs to better align its deeds with its words.

If they can respect each other's differences and handle each other's core concerns properly, Beijing and London have the potential to build a partnership that is resilient and forward-looking. By enhancing coordination on global issues of mutual concern, the two countries — both permanent members of the United Nations Security Council — can work together to create the conditions that are conducive to helping them navigate differences and build a partnership that contributes to world peace and development.

Pragmatic cooperation, candid dialogue, mutual respect and strategic coordination should form the main theme of China-UK relations at a time when the world is facing growing uncertainty and fragmentation.

China and the UK, as two major countries on the world stage, share a common responsibility to demonstrate that cooperation and dialogue remain the rational response to a turbulent world, offering a reliable path toward stable relations and shared prosperity.

Tokyo and Manila building castles in the sand

Tokyo and Manila issued a joint statement last week announcing the start of talks on the "delimitation" of an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf between Japan and the Philippines. But the area the two countries announced they will "delimit" is east of China's Taiwan island. According to China's domestic law and international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China has an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in this area.

The so-called "maritime delimitation talks" constitute a severe violation of China's maritime rights and interests, UNCLOS and other international laws, and the basic norms governing international relations. The collusion between Japan and the Philippines is both legally groundless and politically provocative.

Against this backdrop, the China Coast Guard's law enforcement patrols in the waters starting on Monday are legitimate and necessary measures to safeguard China's sovereignty and core interests.

The "delimiting" scheme, announced during Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr's visit to Japan — along with the two countries' agreement to expand military cooperation to counter what they described as a "common threat" — only adds further uncertainty to the regional security landscape.

The Philippines suffered some of the worst atrocities of Japanese occupation during World War II. From the Bataan Death March to the destruction of Manila, the historical record is well-documented and beyond dispute. Yet today, some Philippine politicians appear willing to overlook that painful history to embrace a Japan that has made clear it will ignore the country's wartime legacy.

Under the banner of defending "regional peace" and a "rules-based order", Japanese right-wing forces continue to push for the removal of postwar constraints and remilitarization, challenging the postwar international order.

At the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore last week, Japan's defense minister shamelessly denied the rise of neo-militarism in his country. Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr went even further, suggesting that Japan has been "unfairly vilified" through what he called the "improper use of history".

What is particularly troubling is Manila's readiness to turn a blind eye to the risk of being used as a strategic pawn in Japan's geopolitical calculus.

Since Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi strained China-Japan ties with her dangerous and erroneous remarks regarding the Taiwan Strait situation on Nov 7, her government has repeatedly added insult to injury by hosting secessionist-minded politicians from China's Taiwan region, conducting provocative military activities near the island under various pretexts, and expanding security partnerships targeting China with other countries.

The proposed "delimitation" talks between Tokyo and Manila are merely the latest manifestation of this trend. They appear designed to draw the Philippines more deeply into Japan's geopolitical agenda and bind Manila to Tokyo's neo-militarist chariot.

The extraordinary lengths to which the Philippine defense chief went at the Shangri-La Dialogue — doing the dirty work for Japan by labeling China as a regional "bully" — reveal the true face of a government that sacrifices the Philippines' interests for the narrow gains of a few politicians.

Such brazen China-bashing raises obvious questions. If China were truly what he claimed it was, would the Philippine Navy's deliberately grounded vessel at China's Ren'ai Reef have remained there for more than a quarter century? Would Manila feel sufficiently secure to host an expanding network of foreign military facilities in close proximity to China? Would the Philippines have stable access to strategic supplies, including chemical fertilizers, the Chinese market and funding, despite its relentless provocations in the South China Sea regarding Chinese territorial waters?

The reality is that Manila understands Beijing is the party that truly seeks stability and peaceful development through cooperation and dialogue. Yet some Philippine politicians appear increasingly willing to exploit that restraint, portraying the creator of frictions as the victim.

This approach is neither prudent nor strategic. By embracing Japan's "maritime boundary delimitation" initiative, the Philippines risks placing itself in a position that primarily serves Tokyo's political objectives rather than its own long-term national interests.

The Tokyo-Manila initiative represents a serious attempt to alter the status quo of the waters unilaterally. Should such actions continue, they will inevitably invite a resolute response from China.

History repeatedly demonstrates that efforts to manufacture geopolitical confrontations rarely unfold as their architects intend. Those who seek to create instability in pursuit of short-term gains may ultimately find themselves bearing the consequences of their own miscalculation.

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Continent: China's cooperation pragmatic

From page 1

And public health systems cannot be strengthened if governments are trapped in cycles of emergency response.

Stability does not mean political silence. It does not mean the absence of debate, diversity or reform. It means that societies have enough institutional confidence, public order, social trust and national direction to pursue development over time.

Development is therefore not charity. It is preventive security. Food security prevents social unrest. Education prevents generational poverty. Infrastructure connects markets and lowers the cost of growth. Public health systems prevent local outbreaks from becoming global emergencies. Industrialization creates jobs and dignity. Regional integration allows African countries to trade more with one another and reduce vulnerability to external shocks.

Africa should not become a stage for great-power rivalry. African countries should have the sovereign right to work with all partners in ways that serve their own development needs. Africa needs partners, not patrons; and it needs cooperation, not competition disguised as concern.

Africa's development should also be African-led. External partners may offer support, but African leadership will always come first. African countries must define their own priorities, strengthen governance, improve public administration, invest in education, empower women and youths, protect the environment, deepen regional trade, and negotiate with all partners from a position of dignity and strategic clarity.

Guided by African priorities and ownership, China has long engaged in all-around and pragmatic cooperation to help Africa unlock its full potential and achieve lasting stability and prosperity.

China's cooperation is part of broader international support for Africa's development. Any serious discussion of the continent's development should recognize the role that China has played since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949. China's relationship with Africa has deep roots in anti-colonial solidarity, diplomatic recognition, medical assistance, education, infrastructure building, agriculture, trade and development financing.

One of the least appreciated dimensions of China-Africa cooperation is education. Since the early decades of the PRC, China has provided educational opportunities for African students. Over time, tens of thousands of African students, scholars, engineers, doctors, diplomats and public officials have studied or trained in China. Some have returned to Africa to serve in government, academia, business and public life across the continent.

Education has created not only professional skills, but also personal relationships and long-term familiarity between African societies and China.

China-Africa education cooperation continues through the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, including scholarships, research collaboration, talent development and capacity building. This matters because education is one of the most durable forms of development. A bridge may require maintenance. A port may depend on trade volume. A railway may depend on financing. But an educated person carries capacity for life.

Infrastructure is another major pillar. Africa's infrastructure gap remains one of the largest obstacles to development. Without roads, railways, ports, power grids, digital networks, water systems and logistics corridors, African economies cannot fully industrialize. Through Belt and Road Initiative-related financing, construction and connectivity projects, China has helped support infrastructure development in many African countries.

Agriculture is equally important. Food security is not only a humanitarian issue, but also a sovereignty issue. China has provided agricultural support through expert missions, demonstration centers, training programs, seed technology, equipment and technical assistance. Hybrid rice cooperation is one example. In Burundi, Chinese technical support reportedly helped quadruple rice production in project areas. Agricultural cooperation, when done well, helps farmers feed families, support villages and strengthen national food security.

Development also requires finance and market access. The China-Africa Development Fund has supported Chinese investment in agriculture, infrastructure, manufacturing, industrial parks and resource development. More recently, China announced expanded zero-tariff treatment, which took effect on May 1, for African countries that have diplomatic ties with Beijing. This is significant because Africa does not only need loans or aid. It also needs the ability to export more agricultural goods, manufactured goods, processed foods, textiles and value-added products.

All these efforts fully embody the spirit of equal partnership and win-win cooperation. Standing together, China and Africa will continue to pursue common development and create a brighter future.

The author is president of the America China Public Affairs Institute (AmericaChina), a fellow of the Foreign Policy Association, and an adviser to the George H.W. Bush Foundation for US-China Relations. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

What They Say

PMI signals divergent sector performance

Editor's note: *China's composite purchasing managers' index stood at 50.5 in May, up 0.4 points from the previous month and above the 50 expansion threshold, showing an overall increase in business activity, according to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Sunday. Xinhua News Agency spoke to Huo Lihui, chief statistician at the National Bureau of Statistics, and Wen Tao and Wu Wei, both analysts at the China Logistics Information Center, to interpret the data. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The manufacturing PMI stood at 50, down 0.3 points from April, while the nonmanufacturing PMI came in at 50.1, up 0.7 points month-on-month, back into expansion territory, demonstrating divergence among different sectors.

The PMI for high-tech manufacturing and equipment manufacturing stood at 52.9 and 52.1, respectively, up 0.7 and 0.3 points from the previous month, demonstrating the leading role of new growth drivers. While the PMI for service sectors such as railway transportation, insurance, telecommunications, broadcasting, television and satellite transmission was above 55, indicating a major upswing driven by consumption during the May Day holiday from May 1 to May 5.

The manufacturing PMI dipped in May due to the pullback of previously strong external demand. Even so, the manufacturing sector operated steadily on the whole. Positive changes were seen in production activities, market prices and industrial structure, driving the economy toward high-quality and innovative development.

The business activity index of the construction industry was 48.8 in May, rising 0.8 points from the previous month, and sustained demand for urban renewal and the development of water networks, new-type power grids, computing power networks, next-generation communication networks, urban underground pipeline networks and logistics networks are expected to continue fueling infrastructure investment, thus stabilizing economic growth. The business activity expectation index of the civil engineering sector rose by more than 4 points month-on-month to over 55, hitting a new high for the year.

As policies for infrastructure construction keep delivering results and major projects are accelerated, the overall demand in the civil engineering sector is expected to gain solid momentum.

On the whole, the nonmanufacturing sector saw greater vitality in May than in April, with consumption and investment maintaining stable performance.

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VIEWS

Stronger China-Laos ties on the horizon

Editor's Note: *The General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith is on a state visit to China from Tuesday to Saturday. Two experts share their views with China Daily's reporter Li Huixian on the building of the China-Laos community with a shared future.*

China-Laos cooperation reflects mutual commitment

China-Laos relations have remained stable in recent years, underpinned by consistent political trust and strong economic ties.

The two countries were among the first to sign an agreement to build a community with a shared future. Today, China is the largest investor in Laos and its biggest export market.

As Laos emerges from the shadow of the COVID-19 pandemic, its economy has gradually started recovering, strengthening its demand for closer economic cooperation with China.

Since the Middle East crisis broke out, Southeast Asia has faced growing challenges, including food and energy security, inflationary pressure and weakening growth drivers. Against this backdrop, many Southeast Asian leaders have visited China to strengthen regional and bilateral cooperation.

Visits by Singapore's Senior Minister Lee Hsien Loong and Vietnamese President To Lam are notable examples. Mechanisms such as "2+2" or "3+3" dialogues have emerged to facilitate these efforts. In this context, the visit of Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith is expected to further enhance bilateral cooperation between China and Laos.

China has two major railway projects in Southeast Asia: the China-Laos Railway and the Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway in Indonesia.

The Jakarta-Bandung line benefits Indonesia's economy but does not directly connect with China. The China-Laos Railway, on the other hand, links China not only with Laos but also with the entire Indochina Peninsula, facilitating the flow of goods among China, Laos and other Southeast Asian nations.

This connection has boosted trade and logistics between China and countries such as Thailand and Malaysia.

As a landlocked country, Laos has benefited immensely from the China-Laos Railway, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative. The railway not only serves as an economic engine, but has also had a spillover effect on key sectors.

In April, the Asian Development Bank noted that tourism will be a key driver of Laos' economic development.

The China-Laos Railway has played a crucial role in revitalizing tourism and boosting the Lao economy. Supporting services, infrastructure, and logistics have provided strong backing for the tourism industry, underscoring the benefits of China-Laos cooperation.

China has also assisted Laos in building hydropower stations, with dozens of plants either under construction or completed. Initially, Chinese companies primarily served as contractors.

Now, their involvement spans the entire process, including design, construction and operation. These efforts encompass social and cultural exchanges, employee training, and the provision of medical and educational services to local communities.

On April 21, the China-Laos 500-kV power interconnection project officially commenced operation. The project, another major achievement in deepening practical cooperation and advancing the Belt and Road Initiative following the China-Laos railway, is a key project under the action plan for the China-Laos community with a shared future.

China and Laos have set an example of successful cooperation in promoting the vision of "five homes" with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations: a peaceful home, a safe and secure home, a prosperous home, a beautiful home, and an amicable home.

The cooperation between China and Laos is evident not only in their bilateral community with a shared future but also as a key component of the China-ASEAN community, the Lancang-Mekong cooperation, and the broader initiative to build a community with a shared future for China and its neighboring countries. These multiple frameworks highlight that the cooperation between China and Laos reflects a mutual commitment.

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SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

People-to-people exchanges bearing fruitful results

The visit of Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith coincides with the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between China and Laos and marks the Year of China-Laos Friendship.

As a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, the China-Laos Railway has transformed Laos from a landlocked nation into a land-linked hub.

Laos has been a major recipient of Chinese government scholarships for many years. The Confucius Institute at the National University of Laos launched the world's first undergraduate program for training Chinese-language teachers.

Meanwhile, the Confucius Institute at Souphanouvong University is advancing a dual-track education model that combines the Chinese language with vocational skills, having trained several thousands of Chinese-speaking professionals, 80 percent of whom have joined railway-related enterprises.

Since 2018, the Shanghai Institute of Technology has collaborated with Laos on a skills-plus-language training model. Consequently, China-Laos educational cooperation has become more precisely aligned with the increasing demand for both passenger and freight transport along the flagship railway.

President Thongloun's visit is expected to expand and solidify the "Chinese plus" model of vocational education, particularly in areas such as rail transit and logistics management.

China's poverty reduction experience has been effectively implemented in Laos, taking root in local villages.

Demonstration projects based on China's targeted poverty alleviation model, such as those in Ban Xor, Tha Dok Kham in Vientiane, and Tingsong in Luang Prabang, have improved infrastructure by building roads, providing water supply, and enhancing agriculture.

Mutual learning between civilizations is fostered through heritage conservation and the emotional impact of films and TV shows, making these exchanges more tangible.

Youth and media exchanges are key highlights. For many years, friendship exchange programs have enabled hundreds of young Lao nationals to visit China, returning with firsthand stories.

Meanwhile, the China-Laos health partnership continues to grow stronger. The first phase of the China-aided Mahosot General Hospital, the largest and most modern medical facility in Laos, is now operational.

These "small yet impactful" projects directly enhance people's livelihoods, strengthening the fraternal bond of "comrades and brothers" between China and Laos.

This visit is expected to solidify the foundation of these people-to-people connections and further deepen the development of the China-Laos community with a shared future.

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



Kang Bing

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Discovering beauty in the countryside

For years, my family and I have enjoyed spending our weekends in the picturesque rural areas surrounding Beijing.

We typically choose villages within a two-hour drive that offer stunning views of mountains or water and provide comfortable homestay services. These trips help us unwind by breathing fresher air, eating home-grown vegetables and sharing life stories with our hosts under the bright moon and glittering stars.

Of course, this relaxation comes at a cost. Each trip sets us back by around 1,000 yuan ($147.5), covering expenses such as gasoline, toll fees, meals and accommodation. The budget can go higher if we decide to visit nearby scenic attractions such as an ancient town, a karst cave or a section of the Great Wall.

I can't help but laugh at myself every time I pay for these rural escapes. Nearly 50 years ago, I was reluctant when compelled to go to the countryside, and now I willingly pay to spend a few days in villages. It's remarkable how much has changed during this time.

After graduating from high school in the late 1970s, city and town graduates like me were sent to rural areas for "re-education", a policy driven by the country's high unemployment rate and food shortages.

I vividly remember the day an old truck transported two dozen of us to a village about 100 kilometers west of my home city Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province. Survival was difficult but what worried us most was the prospect of spending the rest of our lives in that impoverished village. The stream that flowed near the village and the nearby mountain were beautiful, but we were in no mood to enjoy their scenic appeal.

By 1978, when the "re-education" program ended, an estimated 17 million Chinese youth had been sent to rural areas to work as farmers over a decade.

When they returned to cities, they found it difficult to get jobs. Despite these challenges, they persevered and took up any job available. Many of them are among today's visitors to the countryside, drawn by nostalgia.

And they now discover that rural areas today are very different from the past. In 2021, the Chinese government announced that it had eliminated absolute rural poverty in the country. That meant all villagers had enough food to eat, warm clothes to wear and solid houses to live in.

The authorities did not stop there. In the past few years, rural revitalization efforts have been made to improve the living standards of villagers by encouraging them to take full advantage of their resources.

China's continuous investment has helped to link even the remote villages in mountainous areas with the outside world via high-speed rail tracks, expressways and country roads. Villages in southwest China showcase their ethnic handicrafts, while those in the northwest lure visitors with their unique wedding rituals and seasonal celebrations.

In the north, Mongolians offer paid horse rides on grasslands and tea growers in the south offer discounts to visitors to their tea farms. Villagers in other areas have also discovered they can attract city dwellers with fresh air, scenic views, fruit-laden trees, home-raised chickens and eggs, organic vegetables, and more.

Countryside tourism is gaining momentum in China. The rural tourism market size reached an estimated 1.5 trillion yuan last year, accounting for nearly half of the national tourism market. More than 7 million farmers are employed in this sector, contributing to prosperity in the countryside.

The ease of accessibility and affordability of rural tourism means the sector will continue to grow.

However, its sustainable development will depend on better planning and management, which calls for government coordination.

Some local governments are already taking steps in this direction. In some villages around Beijing, free Wi-Fi is available everywhere. Villagers building new houses are required to follow specific architectural styles, homestay hosts must change bed covers after guests leave, and restaurant owners can operate only after they pass certain health and sanitary inspections.

Such measures will make China's rural areas more beautiful and countryside tours safer and more enjoyable.

Masuda Khatun

Importance of Vucic's visit goes beyond diplomacy

At a time when global politics is being shaped by sanctions, geopolitical polarization, technological restrictions and bloc confrontation, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's state visit to China last week reflects the emergence of a new geopolitical logic increasingly visible across Eurasia and the Global South.

Countries are no longer defining partnerships primarily through ideological alignment, but through sovereignty, infrastructure connectivity, industrial modernization and strategic development autonomy.

In many ways, China-Serbia relations have evolved into one of the clearest examples of long-term strategic statecraft built on mutual respect for territorial integrity and sovereign choice.

China has consistently supported Serbia's territorial integrity regarding Kosovo, while Serbia has firmly upheld the one-China principle.

This reciprocal support has gradually built what is described as an "ironclad friendship".

Unlike many modern partnerships shaped by tactical convenience, China and Serbia's relationship is durable because neither side attempts to impose political conditionality on the other.

That political trust now increasingly translates into institutional, economic and technological integration.

During the visit, the two countries signed 23 cooperation documents and 10 additional agreements across sectors ranging from artificial intelligence and industrial supply chains to education, green development, Belt and Road cooperation, legal coordination and technological innovation.

The two countries also issued joint statements on continuously promoting the building of a China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era and jointly advancing the implementation of China's four major global initiatives.

The scale and strategic breadth of those agreements show that China-Serbia cooperation is evolving beyond infrastructure construction or trade expansion into a multidimensional long-term development partnership increasingly aligned with China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and Serbia's own 2030 modernization strategy.

These complementary agendas naturally align, with both sides committed to deepening high-quality cooperation.

Economically, the relationship has already reached historic levels. Bilateral trade reached approximately $6.49 billion in 2025, growing by 13 percent year-on-year despite global trade uncertainty and slowing industrial growth in Europe.

According to Serbia's National Bank (NBS), from 2010 to 2023, China accounted for 14.3 percent of total FDI inflows into Serbia, making it Serbia's second-largest foreign investor after the Netherlands.

After the 2024 free trade agreement came into force, China became Serbia's major trading partner, reflecting rapidly expanding bilateral economic ties.

The China-Serbia FTA is China's first such agreement with a Central and Eastern European country.

It has already boosted Serbian agricultural and specialty exports to China, with some sectors registering an 80 percent growth in the first four months of 2026.

Although Serbia still runs a trade deficit with China, both countries are now seeking to address this in the next phase of high-quality trade and investment cooperation.

Belgrade increasingly appears less focused on short-term trade balance calculations and more intent on leveraging Chinese investment for long-term industrial upgrading.

That industrial transformation is visible across Serbia. Chinese-built projects such as the Budapest-Belgrade railway, the Miloš Veliki Highway, the Danube Corridor expressway and logistics modernization projects are reshaping Serbia's geographic role within Europe.

The newly signed 1.3 billion euro ($1.51 billion) agreement between Serbia and the Shandong Hi-Speed Group for the construction of the 83-kilometer Vozd Karadjordje high-speed corridor reflects how China-Serbia cooperation is evolving beyond symbolic diplomacy into long-term strategic connectivity that is steadily reshaping the economic geography of the Balkans.

The importance of the Budapest-Belgrade railway extends far beyond transportation efficiency.

The Chinese-built Serbian section has reduced travel time between Belgrade and the Hungarian border from more than five hours to just around 79 minutes.

These connectivity projects effectively compress economic distance across the Balkans and strengthen a strategic corridor connecting the Greek port of Piraeus with Central Europe. In geopolitical terms, Serbia is gradually transforming from a historically peripheral Balkan state into a key logistical bridge linking Asia and Europe.

Perhaps the most important dimension of Vucic's visit lies in the next phase of cooperation both sides are now preparing for. Serbia increasingly wants to move beyond being merely a transit hub and become part of China's future industrial ecosystem.

During the visit, cooperation discussions expanded into robotics, new technologies, semiconductors, AI, electric vehicle supply chains, smart manufacturing, green industry and digital economy integration. Serbian cities such as Kragujevac, Sremska Mitrovica, Niš, Belgrade and Novi Sad are positioning themselves as future gateways for Chinese electric vehicle manufacturers entering European markets.

Vucic's visit to Xiaomi's advanced EV factory in Beijing was symbolic in this regard. After witnessing highly automated production systems involving thousands of robots, Vucic publicly invited Chinese technology firms to consider Serbia as a future European investment and production platform.

Serbia clearly understands that the next phase of globalization will not revolve around low-cost labor or commodity trade, but around technological ecosystems, intelligent manufacturing and supply-chain positioning.

This is precisely where China's long-term development model becomes increasingly attractive to many middle powers.

Unlike short-term speculative capital flows, China's overseas engagement often combines infrastructure, industrial investment, logistics, technology transfer and market access within a long-horizon strategic framework.

Serbia appears to have recognized this earlier than many European countries.

At the geopolitical level, Serbia's balancing strategy also reflects wider global changes. Although Belgrade remains formally committed to EU integration, it increasingly views China as a reliable development partner that respects Serbia's strategic autonomy and sovereign decision-making.

Vucic's remarks before departing for China, questioning why external actors should dictate who Serbia can cooperate with, reflected the frustrations shared by many countries navigating an increasingly polarized international environment.

For China, Serbia represents something equally significant.

Serbia has become one of China's most politically trusted European partners and an increasingly important gateway into the Balkans and the wider European market.

More importantly, the relationship offers China a demonstration that cooperation with Europe can still expand despite rising geopolitical tensions, provided partnerships are grounded in mutual benefit rather than ideological confrontation.

Vucic said Serbia hopes China-Serbia cooperation in humanoid robots, robot dogs and other high-tech sectors will soon enter production, highlighting growing bilateral innovation ties.

He also announced that Chinese companies will invest an additional €940 million ($1.1 billion) in Serbia from July, supporting future projects in AI, advanced industrial robotics, data factories, auto parts manufacturing and energy.

Ultimately, Vucic's visit demonstrated that China-Serbia relations represent a broader international trend in which middle powers and developing countries seek strategic partnerships centered on connectivity, industrial modernization, technological cooperation and development sovereignty rather than bloc politics or geopolitical coercion.

The relationship is an example of how pragmatic multi-polar cooperation can still function, not through ideological uniformity, but through railways, factories, technology partnerships, industrial planning and sustained political trust.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

JEAN-PAUL VARGAS

Clear choice to make

South-South cooperation and China's vision for high-quality development offer path to a shared future



WU HEPING AND CAO NAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Global society stands at a critical juncture. The world faces a fundamental choice: to advance profound reform of global governance rooted in international law and inclusive multilateralism, or to risk a fragmented future marked by strategic rivalry and exclusive blocs. In this pivotal moment, China's policy direction, as charted during the 2026 two sessions and articulated in the Government Work Report and the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), provides a compelling blueprint for collaborative, high-quality development. It offers a practical pathway for South-South cooperation, prioritizing shared prosperity over zero-sum competition.



China's policy directives are grounded in a proven record of resilient and forward-looking development. The 2026 Government Work Report reviews a robust 2025 where GDP grew by 5 percent, over 12.67 million urban jobs were created and new energy vehicle output surpassed 16 million units. This performance extends a remarkable five-year trend of an average 5.4 percent annual GDP growth, underpinned by the world's largest manufacturing sector in value added for 16 consecutive years.

Looking ahead, the 15th Five-Year Plan outlines a transformative vision for "high-quality development". Its goals are both ambitious and people-centered: maintaining GDP growth within an appropriate range, cutting carbon dioxide emissions per unit of GDP by 17 percent, raising the added value of core digital economy industries and increasing life expectancy to 80 years. Crucially, the plan emphasizes "investment in people" as much as in physical capital, with strategies to boost incomes, expand education and strengthen social security. This domestic focus on balanced, sustainable and innovation-driven growth — termed cultivating "new quality productive forces" — forms the bedrock of China's constructive international engagement.

A cornerstone of China's external strategy, emphatically reiterated in the 2026 Government Work Report, is to "further expand high-standard opening-up" and "steadily expand institutional opening-up". This moves beyond traditional market access to a deeper integration of rules, standards and governance practices. Key measures include advancing the upgraded China-Association of Southeast Asian Nations Free Trade Area 3.0 and actively promoting accession to high-standard pacts such as the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

This commitment to "institutional opening-up", from between-the-borders trade and services to behind-the-borders alignment based on rules, is highly significant for the Global South. It provides a stable, predictable and rules-based framework for cooperation, aligning with the need for "demanding governance" in an increasingly fragmented world. By promoting the harmonization of standards in emerging fields such as the digital and green economies, China's approach helps partners integrate into modern supply chains, fosters technology transfer and creates a fairer business environment. It represents a shift from aid dependency to partnership based on mutual benefit and shared rules, a model that resonates with the development aspirations of Latin America, Africa and Asia, and charts a vision for reforming global governance.

China's domestic and foreign policies are coherently linked by a vision of reformed, inclusive global governance. The Government Work Report calls for "deepening multilateral, bilateral and regional economic cooperation" and upholding the multilateral trading system. This external policy complements the internal goal of building a "national unified market", which seeks to eliminate internal barriers and "rat-race competition" — a principle that, if applied globally, argues for reducing fragmentation and protectionism.

This implies, in a practical way, promoting South-South coalitions to raise common positions in multilateral forums, supporting procedural reforms, transparency, representativeness and clear rules, and promoting cooperative projects that produce tangible and measurable benefits.

At the center of the proposal is the spirit of pragmatism. Reforming global governance requires concrete tools: more accessible dispute resolution mechanisms for smaller economies, development financing less constrained by geopolitical conditions and robust platforms for technological cooperation on global public goods such as public health and climate adaptation. China's advocacy for these reforms, together with its commitment to South-South cooperation through platforms such as the China-CELAC Forum, demonstrates a practical approach. The forum's focus on solidarity, development and shared modernization exemplifies the principle of building a community with a shared future for humanity, based on mutual respect and benefit, not on pressuring third parties to take sides.

The heart of any crossroads is to make the right choice. In an environment of danger, that means choosing responsibly. At present, one path leads toward division and exclusive spheres of influence. The other, illuminated by the policy direction set at China's two sessions, leads toward integration, shared development and a reformed multilateral system. China's 15th Five-Year Plan and Government Work Report demonstrate that a nation can pursue high-quality domestic growth while simultaneously championing high-standard international cooperation.

For the Global South, this offers a relevant and actionable model. It is a vision where collaboration supplants confrontation, where common rules facilitate shared prosperity, and where the rightful pursuit of development and cultural identity is respected on the global stage. By choosing this path of "institutional opening-up" and South-South solidarity, the international community can navigate current uncertainties and build a more stable, equitable and prosperous future for all.

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LI XING

Transformative trajectory

Rise of China viewed through the lens of the "three worlds" nexus sheds light on the changing global political economy



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

China's rise and its impact on global politics and economics have undergone profound changes since the late 20th century. Different frameworks can be applied to explain the stratification of global power, including today's global power relations shaped by the competition between China and the United States. Three distinct yet historically interconnected articulations of the "three worlds" paradigm can be identified: the political "three worlds" framework advanced by Chairman Mao Zedong in the early 1970s; the economic "three worlds" stratification developed by US sociologist and historian Immanuel Wallerstein around the same time; and a contemporary "three worlds" configuration marked by strategic China-US rivalry, the constrained position of Europe and other middle powers, and the evolving role of the Global South.



These "three worlds" concepts should not be understood as sequential replacements of one another, but rather as interconnected analytical lenses — political, economic and technological, each illuminating a different dimension of the world system. Together, they underscore the extent to which China's political and economic trajectory since 1949 has reconfigured the architecture of global politics and economics.

In the early 1970s, at the height of the Cold War, Chairman Mao advanced the theory of the "differentiation of the three worlds". It was a distinctly geopolitical framework, reflecting the dynamics of bipolar confrontation. It classified states according to political alignment and their position in global power struggles. In Chairman Mao's formulation, the first world consisted of the two superpowers — the US and the Soviet Union — both characterized as rival hegemonic and imperialist powers competing for global dominance. The second world encompassed the industrialized US allies, such as Western European countries and Japan, which, despite their economic strength, lacked independent influence in the bipolar order and were perceived as potential partners in resisting hegemonic domination on some issues.

The third world included most developing countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America, many of which had newly achieved independence and were associated with the Non-Aligned Movement. Chairman Mao positioned the third world as the principal force of global revolution, emphasizing its central role in opposing imperialism and safeguarding national sovereignty, while China sought to play a leading and mobilizing role within it.

After launching reform and opening-up in the late 1970s, China became embedded in a different configuration of global power stratification, as conceptualized by Immanuel Wallerstein's World-Systems Theory. Rather than classifying state power according to political alignment, this framework analyzes the world economy as a single historical system structured by unequal exchange and hierarchical divisions of labor.

Within this model, the world economy is organized into three structural zones: core, semi-periphery and periphery. Core zones command advanced technologies, financial resources and high value-added industries. Peripheral zones are largely relegated to the provision of raw materials and low-cost labor under conditions of structural dependency. Semi-periphery zones occupy an intermediate, transitional position within this hierarchy.

China's economic ascent since the new millennium can be interpreted as a dynamic upward progression through the stratified layers of the world economic system. China progressively incorporated itself into the world economy, emerging as a central destination for foreign direct investment and the relocation of labor-intensive manufacturing.

By leveraging its vast labor reserves and integrating into global value chains, China rapidly expanded its industrial base, export capacity and technological capabilities. Its development trajectory illustrates how participation in global production networks can support upward mobility of a nation within the world system, enabling the accumulation of industrial expertise, technological knowledge and competitive export strength.

However, structural barriers to upward mobility remain significant. Advanced technology, financial power and institutional influence are concentrated in the core Western economies, constraining the potential of late-industrializing states. Even when emerging states have industrialized successfully, they often remain dependent on external markets, foreign technologies and global financial systems. China's rise challenges this pattern.

Over recent decades, China has become the world's largest manufacturing hub and an indispensable node in global supply chains, while also developing strong capabilities in infrastructure, digital technologies and advanced high-tech industries. Widely regarded as a major non-Western economy to have significantly risen from peripheral and semi-peripheral status and taken a substantial share of the core economic sectors, China is reshaping the global balance of power and producing a new configuration of strategic competition.

Today, global economic and technological rivalry has increasingly centered on the US and China. This shift signals a partial evolution beyond the traditional core-semi-periphery-periphery framework toward a more concentrated configuration of global power.

The US continues to dominate global finance, high-technology innovation and military alliances. Its financial institutions, currency system and research networks remain central to the architecture of the world economy. China, by contrast, has developed an unparalleled manufacturing ecosystem with extensive logistics networks and large-scale infrastructure capabilities. Competition between these two countries increasingly shapes the trajectory of the international system. Trade regimes, technological development, digital infrastructure and energy transitions are all influenced by their strategic rivalry. As a result, the contemporary world economy is often characterized as a dual-core structure, with the US and China occupying dominant positions within the global hierarchy.

Beneath this dual core lies a group of advanced economies often described as "middle powers", including most members of the European Union, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. Although these states possess sophisticated industries and high levels of development, their technological capacity and political leverage to shape the trajectory of global competition remain limited.

The structural constraint facing middle powers stems from their deep integration into both systems. Many remain embedded in US-centered financial infrastructure and security alliances, while simultaneously maintaining strong economic ties to Chinese supply chains and trade networks.

At the same time, the Global South is gaining new opportunities within this evolving order. Countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America are gaining more bargaining power and leveraging great-power competition to attract investment, infrastructure financing and technological cooperation, as well as supply chain diversification. Many Global South economies control critical raw materials, and rising demand for these resources is increasing their geopolitical and economic importance.

In recent years, de-risking strategies, tariffs and trade restrictions led by the US and its allies have encouraged China to deepen its engagement with developing countries. As a result, trade between China and other Global South countries has expanded rapidly. Chinese exports to other Global South countries now exceed $1.6 trillion, accounting for around 44 percent of its total exports. For the Global South, China represents not only an inspiring model of development but also a source of upward mobility, enlarging their room for maneuver while providing an alternative source of investment and serving as a significant trading partner. This, in turn, broadens the range of economic opportunities and reduces exclusive dependence on traditional Western economies.

In conclusion, China's rise is inseparable from its shifting position across different "three worlds" configurations over time — from Chairman Mao's geopolitical conception of the "three worlds" to Wallerstein's world economic stratification, and finally to the contemporary geo-technological configuration. The evolution of the "three worlds" nexus thus provides not only a framework for interpreting China's development trajectory, but also a lens for understanding the ongoing transformation of the global political economy.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE



From left: Representative jade artifacts of the Hongshan culture (dating from roughly 6,500 to 5,000 years ago) on display include a C-shaped yellow jade dragon, a jade pig-dragon and a jade human figure. Golden Antler Step-Sway Crown Ornament, Northern Wei Dynasty (386–534). PHOTOS BY BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The alchemy of gold and jade across dynasties

From imperial crowns to Olympic medals, treasures reveal the evolution of Chinese civilization over millennia, **Bai Shuhao** reports in Hohhot.



Left: The Xiongnu King's Crown, dating to the Warring States Period (475–221 BC), is topped with an eagle featuring a turquoise head. LI HE / XINHUA
Above: The crown of Empress Xiao (replica), wife of Emperor Yang of the Sui Dynasty (581–618). The exhibition displays the two crowns facing one another. BAI SHUHAO / CHINA DAILY

In a dimly lit gallery, two jeweled crowns face one another, their gold surfaces glimmering in the darkness.

One, a ceremonial crown belonging to an empress of the Sui Dynasty (581-618), blossoms into 13 delicate floral sprays crafted from 10 different materials, its extravagance reflecting the wealth, sophistication and artistic refinement of southern China's agrarian civilization.

Opposite stands the crown of a Xiongnu tribal leader from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC). Topped with a golden eagle with a turquoise beak, it embodies the stark power of the northern steppe.

The rulers who wore them lived centuries apart, but their crowns now meet in a single exhibition, united by two materials that have shaped Chinese civilization for millennia: gold and jade.

The pairing has become one of the most striking moments in *Golden and Jade Brilliance: Diverse and Splendid China*, an exhibition at the Inner Mongolia Museum in Hohhot that runs through Aug 31.

"The way they face each other across the gallery perfectly echoes this year's Museum Day theme — 'Museums Uniting a Divided World'," says Zheng Chengyan, the exhibition's curator and deputy director of the museum.

Bringing together 386 artifacts from 58 museums and cultural institutions across China, the exhibition, which opened on May 18 for International Museum Day, traces nearly 9,000 years through jade carvings, bronze ware and gold objects, exploring how Chinese civilization emerged, evolved and flourished across vast regions and different cultural traditions.

"Gold symbolizes power and eternity, while jade embodies virtue and belief," Zheng says. "Together, they reflect how material culture shaped Chinese ideas of power, morality and the cosmos."

The exhibition argues that the histories of gold and jade did not develop separately, but gradually became intertwined as political authority and ethical ideals grew increasingly connected over time.

Upon entering the gallery, visitors first encounter three jade relics from the Hongshan culture of northeastern China, dating roughly from 6,500 to 5,000 years ago: a jade pig-dragon, a C-shaped yellow jade dragon and a jade human figure.

The pig-dragon, with the head of a pig and the coiled body of a dragon, was likely used in rituals seeking harmony and good harvests. The C-shaped jade represents one of the earliest dragon forms in Chinese art. The standing figure, just over seven inches tall, is believed to depict a praying shaman.

Nearby artifacts from the Liangzhu culture in Zhejiang province and Lingjiatan culture in Anhui province, both in the Yangtze River Delta, suggest that early societies across the country, despite regional differences, were already developing shared concepts of rituals and civilization.

"By the late Hongshan period, six major jade cultures had emerged," Zheng says. "What they shared was reverence for heaven, ancestors and nature."

Advances in metallurgy ushered China into the Bronze Age. During this period, the Chinese word for "gold" often referred not to precious metal, but to bronze ritual vessels.

Among the highlights are a gold-masked bronze human head from Sanxingdui, dating to the Shang Dynasty (c. 16th to 11th century BC), and the monumental "Zeng Zhong You Fu Hu", meaning Vessel Hu of You Fu, the second son of the Zeng family, a ritual bronze vessel from the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC).

"From the moment metal objects began to flourish, jade never lost its sacred role," Zheng says.

Beginning in the Xia Dynasty (c. 21st-16th century BC), jade and bronze were frequently used together in elaborate ritual systems that regulated rank, conduct and political authority.

By the Warring States and Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) periods, gold and jade had evolved from parallel traditions into a shared artistic language. Gold-and-jade objects became symbols of imperial grandeur and cosmopolitan culture.

At the center of the third section stands a replica of a Han Dynasty jade burial suit sewn with gold wire.

Fashioned from hundreds of polished jade plaques linked by gold threads, the suit was designed to preserve the body after death. Though the practice emerged earlier, it reached its height during the Han Dynasty.

"It was a cultural milestone and represents the ideas of immortality and eternity embedded in gold-and-jade culture," Zheng explains.

Alongside the suit are funerary objects excavated from ancient tombs, including hoof-shaped ingots from the tomb of the Marquis of Haihun in Jiangxi province, as well as jade mouthpieces and burial plugs used in funerary rites. Though the dethroned ruler only held the title of emperor for 27 days, his tomb has yielded a remarkable wealth of artifacts, historical clues and enduring legends.

One object deliberately breaks the exhibition's chronology: a jade cicada from the tomb of a Khitan princess of the Liao Dynasty (916-1125). Though jade burial customs originated in the Han Chinese heartland, Zheng says, they later spread to frontier cultures as well.

After the Han Dynasty, trade along the Silk Road flourished, bringing northern horsemen and Central Asian merchants into closer contact with China. Nowhere was that exchange more visible than in what is now Inner Mongolia, long situated between the agrarian civilizations of Central China and the nomadic cultures of the steppe.

That fusion defines the exhibition's fourth section, devoted to the period from the Wei and Jin dynasties (220-420) through the Song (960-1279) and Yuan (1271-1368) dynasties.

"When people think of the Yuan Dynasty, they immediately think of blue-and-white porcelain," Zheng says. "But nomadic peoples were also deeply devoted to gold ornaments."

The exhibition features numerous gold ornaments used on horseback, including saddles, stirrups and bridles.

In jade carving, nomadic influence appeared most clearly in the motifs known as "spring water" and "autumn mountain", scenes derived from seasonal royal hunts. One Yuan Dynasty jade belt ornament depicts an eagle attacking a swan, a reference to spring falconry expeditions once practiced by steppe rulers.

Over time, such imagery spread far beyond the grasslands, eventually appearing even in decorative ornaments atop Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) officials' hats.

By the Ming and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, the meaning of jade had broadened further, while colorful gemstones began appearing throughout the gallery.

"Those gemstones came to China through the Maritime Silk Road, bearing witness to the exchanges made possible by Zheng He's voyages," Zheng Chengyan says.

By this period, the fusion of gold and jade craftsmanship had reached its artistic peak. No longer merely precious materials, gold and jade had evolved into enduring symbols of beauty, prosperity, integrity, and moral virtue.

The exhibition closes with objects from the modern era: medals from the 2008 Beijing Olympics, whose designs deliberately combined gold and jade in homage to ancient Chinese traditions.

Zhou Huiwen, director of the Changsha Museum, whose institution loaned artifacts to the exhibition, says she is struck by both the refinement of the objects and how deeply the symbolism of gold and jade still resonates in China today.

"They have always represented status and the pursuit of a better life," she says.

Wang Ziyi, deputy director of the Xi'an Museum, says the most astonishing object for him is the jade pig-dragon.

"It's remarkable that people so many thousands of years ago could already combine the image of a dragon with that of a pig," Wang says.

"Gold and jade objects in ancient China took many different forms, and this exhibition reflects the richness and diversity of Chinese civilization."

China has an old saying: *qi yi zai dao* — "objects carry the way".

Gold and jade, the exhibition suggests, are more than precious materials or decorative crafts. One is forged by human hands; the other shaped by nature. One dazzles sharply; the other glows with quiet restraint.

Together, they form two sides of Chinese civilization.

Near the exit, the exhibition offers one final reflection: the union of gold and jade embodies an Eastern philosophy that values harmony, order and continuity. Though silent, their voices still echo across millennia.

Yuan Hui contributed to this story.

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Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

New book reflects on defining decade of archaeology

By **WANG RU**
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Left: Li Xinwei (right), director of the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens, visits the Minoan mountain village site on the Greek island of Crete with Greek archaeologist Yiannis Papadatos last year.
Right: Cover of the book, *The Past Decade of Chinese Archaeology (2016-26)*. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Archaeologist Peng Xiaojun of the Institute of Archaeology under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences recalls how, in 2013, he and his colleagues had to tether a hot-air balloon to themselves while taking aerial photographs of a site in Hubei province, worried it might drift away. By 2017, one of his colleagues had assembled a drone capable of capturing panoramic views. Today, drones are widely available and have become an essential tool in archaeological fieldwork.

"Over the past decade, advances have extended far beyond equipment and technology. China's archaeological research has made progress across many fronts," Peng said at a news conference in Beijing on Wednesday, where scholars presented the institute's latest academic achievements.

Among the highlights is a new book, *The Past Decade of Chinese Archaeology (2016-26)*, compiled by institute researchers. The volume provides a comprehensive review of the evolution of archaeological research in China over the past 10 years.

The book is divided into 12 chapters, covering not only major findings from different periods — such as the Neolithic, Xia (c. 21st century-16th century BC), Shang (c. 16th century-11th century BC) and Zhou (c. 11th century-256 BC), and from the Qin (221-206 BC) to the Qing (1644-1911) dynasties — but also cutting-edge topics, including the use of big data and artificial intelligence in archaeology, technological and scientific applications in archaeology, and archaeological work in border regions, according to Peng, who contributed to the volume.

Peng said two key themes have defined Chinese archaeology over the past decade: the origins of Chinese civilization and the question of "what makes China". These priorities reflect major national research programs aimed at demonstrating that China's history encompasses more than a million years of human activity, 10,000 years of cultural development, and over 5,000 years of civilization.

International collaboration has also become a defining feature of the field, according to the book. In addition to hosting academic forums and conferences, Chinese archaeologists have increasingly partnered with overseas counterparts on excavations abroad, contributing to a broader understanding of Chinese civilization in world history.

Another book highlighted at the conference, *Way of Wisdom That Bridges the East to the West*, examines Chinese archaeologists' collaboration with local professionals at five key sites of ancient civilizations, such as the Temple of Montu in Egypt, the Mingtepa and Munchaktepa sites in Uzbekistan, and the Dobrovat site in Romania.

Jia Xiaobing, head of the institute's world archaeology research office and a contributor to the book, said the five projects reflect China's growing role in international archaeology. They have produced valuable firsthand research materials while helping to fill important gaps in related academic fields.

"Over the past decade, China's overseas archaeological work has undergone a profound transformation — from occasional participation to systematic leadership, from exporting technology to jointly developing research concepts, and from following international trends to helping shape them," Jia said. "Chinese archaeological ideas, methods and technologies are now making a stronger contribution to global archaeological research."

The growing integration of science and technology is another major trend highlighted in *The Past Decade of Chinese Archaeology (2016-26)*. "Multidisciplinary research has become standard practice. Techniques such as ancient DNA analysis, high-precision dating, 3D modeling, and laboratory archaeology are now widely used, making collaboration across disciplines an integral part of archaeological research," Peng said.

For example, the conference also highlighted an essay compiled by field archaeologists and archaeometry (scientific methods and technology used in archaeological studies) professionals about the carbon dating of the Erlitou site in Luoyang, Henan province, widely believed to be a late capital of the Xia Dynasty.

Chen Xianglong, a researcher at the institute's research center for archaeological science and experiment, said the chronology of the site was once established mainly through comparisons of pottery forms. Today, researchers can analyze key remains and apply carbon-dating techniques to develop a far more precise understanding of the site's timeline and evolution.

"Archaeometry studies allow us to gain richer archaeological information, expand the scope of research, deepen our analysis, and improve the efficiency, depth and precision of our work," Chen said.

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LIFE



Capturing art's enduring power in the era of AI

With technology quickly advancing, writers and filmmakers explore and share how they continue to find inspiration to create works that resonate, **Xu Fan** reports.

Dear You, one of the biggest dark-horse blockbusters this year, has become a hotly debated example of how a resonant work rooted in real-life inspirations can soar to become a hit.



From left: Sub-forums of the Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength 2026 brought together veteran creators, including director Lan Hongchun, scriptwriter He Jiping, novelist Ma Boyong, and writer Qiu Huadong. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As a veteran writer and vice-chairman of the China Writers Association, Qiu Huadong says he has often been asked multiple versions of the same question: In an age shaped by artificial intelligence and information overload at ever-accelerating speed, where can literature continue to find its inspirational energy?

His answer remains consistent: the wellspring of artistic creation still rises from "the soil beneath our feet" and from the long cultural memory carried through 5,000 years of Chinese civilization.

Qiu delivers this resonant line in the opening of his speech at the Forum on Fostering the Development of Art and Literature, one of 11 sub-events of the Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength 2026, the country's top-tier cultural gathering, held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in late May.

Bringing together writers, artists and scholars, the subforum wrestled with a question often discussed yet difficult to answer: how to preserve originality and create quality works in an era when technology is rapidly reshaping the way art is produced and consumed. Finding a solution is complicated.

Contemplating history

With a writing career spanning over 40 years, Qiu cites *Kong Cheng Ji* (The Chronicles of Empty Cities) as an example of how he puts his philosophy into practice.

Born in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, Qiu moved to Beijing after graduating from Wuhan University in Hubei province in the early 1990s. He revealed that he has made it a habit to return to Xinjiang every year in search of inspiration.

During his journeys, venturing deep into sparsely populated areas that preserve relics such as the Kizil Caves or that were once the sites of vanished kingdoms like Loulan, questions haunted him: "Could these silent artifacts speak? Could the lost ancient cities be brought back to life through imagination?"

This contemplation sparked the inspiration to pen his novel. Selecting six historic cities in Xiyu — a historical and geographical term referring to today's Xinjiang and surrounding Central Asian areas — the novel adopts an unconventional narrative method by making cultural relics and artifacts the storytellers. For instance, a Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) bronze coin, a carved Buddha head, and a spotted horse from a rock painting become some of the protagonists.

"I hope through these small and focused entry points, history will no longer be a cold term in textbooks, but rather a collection of living moments that are warm and breathing with life," says Qiu.

Ma Boyong (Ma Li's pen name), a novelist known for embedding fictional thrillers in real historical settings, points to another key element in creating history-themed works: they should resonate with modern emotions.

Remaining loyal to major historical events while exercising imagination on minor details is a principle he follows. To further explain, he cites the famous historical event "Hongmen Yan" (Feast of Hongmen), which took place at a titular location outside Xianyang, the former capital of the collapsed Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC).

The banquet, hosted by the rebel army's leader, Xiang Yu, in honor of his rival Liu Bang, was designed as a deadly political trap. However, the arrogant Xiang hesitated to kill the seemingly humble Liu — a moment of mercy that led to Xiang's catastrophic downfall and altered the course of Chinese history.

"Why Xiang did not make his move cannot be found in historical records, but it can be inferred from human nature. The 26-year-old, high-spirited Xiang, facing the 50-something, aging Liu, could hardly have foreseen the latter's future glory," says Ma, who has used this event on multiple occasions to exemplify the space available for novelists to add their imaginations.



A scene from *New Dragon Gate Inn*, one of the most influential martial arts films, demonstrates how a conventional genre can be innovated.

He shares that many young readers fancy the cultures that prevailed during the Tang (618-907) and Song dynasties (960-1279), reflecting the country's growing national strength and cultural confidence. "Every era has its own distinct Chinese character, but those of us living in the present will naturally seek out the spirit of the age that mirrors our own," says Ma.

Pursuing authenticity

Another recurring theme at the forum was the importance of maintaining sincerity with audiences and grounding stories in real life.

Director Lan Hongchun, best known for the recent hit *Dear You*, says during the Forum on High-Quality Development of the Film Industry, held alongside the literature forum on May 22, that "pure, authentic and warm local stories will always have the power to move people's hearts".

The film, which concludes Lan's trilogy about families from the Chaoshan region of eastern Guangdong province, follows the daughter of a Chinese-Thai hostel owner who spends 18 years sending money and letters to the widow of a deceased family friend who once saved her father from an arson attack. The man, a Chaoshan native who fled his hometown to avoid forced conscription by the Kuomintang, was later killed in Thailand while trying to stop gangsters from robbing a fishing boat. To spare his widow the pain, the woman hides the truth and continues writing letters in his name.

Lan says the film marks a departure from his comfort zone, as he sought to realistically portray the history and lives of overseas Chinese communities in Southeast Asia.

To prepare for the production, he and his team traveled extensively, interviewing nearly 300 overseas Chinese families across Southeast Asia, Europe and the United States. Their research uncovered a wealth of historical details, ranging from the price of a movie ticket in 1960s Thailand to the era's licensing rules governing tricycle operators.

One of the film's emotional highlights is the featuring of *qiaopi* — remittance letters sent home by Chinese laborers who left China's southeastern coast to work abroad between the 19th and 20th centuries. Carrying homesickness, longing and familial affection, the letters have deeply resonated with audiences, especially when paired with the film's original version spoken in the Chaoshan dialect.

In an earlier review, Gao Shiming, vice-president of the China Federation of Literary and Art Circles, reflects on the emotional power of *qiaopi*, noting that more than 30 million such letters are estimated to have reached China over 150 years.

"Many of those who sent and received these letters could neither read nor write, yet the scribes they hired transformed ordinary daily matters and heartfelt concerns into elegant, meticulous and deeply moving words," Gao writes.

More importantly, he adds, *qiaopi* embodies not only separation and longing, but also the hardships and livelihoods of overseas Chinese laborers. Combining remittances with personal correspondence, the letters often carried small sums of money saved through frugal living abroad — funds that represented hope for buying rice, oil, salt, and firewood for family members left behind.

Veteran screenwriter He Jiping pushes the discussion further at the literature forum by emphasizing the deeper responsibility of artistic creation. Nearly four decades ago, He, already an acclaimed playwright, left Beijing to reunite with her family in Hong Kong, where she expanded from stage writing into film and television screenwriting.

In 1991, director Tsui Hark was drawn to her celebrated stage play *The First House Under Heaven*, and invited her to write the screenplay for *New Dragon Gate Inn*, the martial arts classic about swordsmen battling a ruthless eunuch and his henchmen in the remote desert during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644).

The screenwriter reveals that her grounding in traditional Chinese culture and previous years living on the Loess Plateau in northwestern China inspired her to break away from the lush landscapes commonly associated with *wuxia* (martial arts) films. Instead, she chose the desert setting of shifting sands, which later became one of the movie's most distinctive visual elements.

Now 75, He remains demanding of her own writing. She says it is not enough for a script to simply offer a compelling story or memorable characters. "A good work should leave audiences carrying contemplation with them, not just applause, when they walk out of the theater," quoting the late playwright, Cao Yu.

She adds that writers also need what she calls a "second pair of eyes" — the ability to observe human nature from a broader perspective. Such awareness, she says, allows storytellers to infuse their works with greater humanity, emotional depth and lasting resonance.

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Australian visitors give China study tours a 10

MELBOURNE — In a meeting room at the Chinese Consulate General in Melbourne in May, a group of Australians recently recalled their visits to China with visible excitement: "I give the China trip 10 out of 10!" "I went twice, so I give it 20!"

From the modern dynamism of Chongqing and the historical charm of Xi'an, Shaanxi province, to the vibrant atmosphere of Changsha, Hunan province, the memories were still fresh.

"After returning from China, I no longer bother arguing with people about the country. I just tell them: go and see it for yourself," says Robert Barwick, national chairman of the Australian Citizens Party.

In October 2025, Barwick joined 18 other Australians from different sectors in a 21-day study and goodwill tour to China, organized by Richard Yuan, chairman of the Australia China Entrepreneurs Club. The delegation visited Haikou, Hainan province; Nanjing, Jiangsu province; Shanghai; Hangzhou, Zhejiang province; Shenzhen, Guangdong province; and several other Chinese cities.

From March to April, the delegation organized another visit to more Chinese cities.

During the trips, delegation members held in-depth discussions with local officials, visited high-tech companies, experienced China's medical services, and learned about the history of the Communist Party of China at the Museum of the Communist Party of China and the Site of the First National Congress of the CPC.

For John Lander, in his 80s and who served as Australia's deputy ambassador to China from 1974 to 1976, the trip was also a journey of rediscovery.

During his visit, Lander met Xia Boyu, a Chinese mountaineer who reached the summit of Mount Qomolangma despite having lost both legs. To Lander, Xia embodied the Chinese spirit — "stand, endure, and succeed".

Noelene Isherwood, co-founder of the Australian Citizens Party, says the China trip felt "like walking from a blizzard into a warm room". What impressed her most was the spirit of the Chinese people.

"They are fast-paced and optimistic," she says, adding that what stood out to her was the country's "happiness, unity and sense of purpose".

Her husband, Craig Isherwood, national secretary of the Australian Citizens Party, was struck by the growth of Chinese enterprises. He notes that many companies that began as start-ups two decades ago have, with government support, grown into multinational firms worth billions of dollars.

"China's market economy is for the benefit of the people," he says, rather than for the benefit of large corporations.

For business strategy consultant Antony Hing, the visit awakened a deeper connection with his Chinese heritage. After returning to Australia, he began reading the CPC regulations and the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

Hing says the CPC always "thinks into the future" and he was amazed by "how focused China is on bringing its entire population into the era of modernization".

At the discussion, participants spoke at length about what they had seen and felt in China. Yuan says there was a huge gap between people's real experiences in China and the narratives often presented by Western media.



Members of a group of Australians exchange views about their visits to China in a meeting room at the Chinese Consulate General in Melbourne on May 22. XU HAIJING / XINHUA

He says he was determined to continue organizing study and goodwill tours, so that more Australians could see China with their own eyes.

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LIFE







Clockwise from above: Svetlana Kobiakova at Chengdu Grand Theatre to watch an opera in May. Kobiakova strikes a traditional tai chi pose in front of the Chinese Tai Chi Museum in Chenjiagou village, Henan province, in October 2025. She practices tai chi fan in Yakutsk, the Republic of Sakha, Russia, in 2018. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Russian master follows tai chi to ancient roots

After leaving behind a career in physics, Svetlana Kobiakova has devoted herself to practicing and teaching the Chen-style martial art in its birthplace of Chenjiagou, **Qi Xin** and **Shi Baoyin** report in Zhengzhou, Henan.

In the pale light of dawn, a solitary figure stands in a courtyard in Chenjiagou village of Wenxian county, Henan province. With her legs bent and arms encircling the air, Svetlana Kobiakova, 59, from Russia's Yakutsk, holds a *zhanzhuang* (standing meditation) posture.

Several minutes later, she flows into the Chen-style *taijiquan* (tai chi boxing) routine. Her movements are silk-smooth, her breath deep.

Kobiakova, a disciple of Chen-style tai chi, has immersed herself in tai chi practice for 15 years. She now serves as a master at Chenjiagou Taijiquan School.

At a glance, you might mistake her for a local. Known by her Chinese name, Chen Yimei, Kobiakova belongs to the Sakha (Yakut) ethnic group of Russia, a people with ancient Siberian roots who share striking physical similarities with East Asians.

Over the years, she has visited Chenjiagou, the birthplace of Chen-style tai chi, 13 times. Last September, she started her longest journey, a full year of immersion in the village that has become her spiritual home.

"The philosophy, technique, and internal energy of tai chi have endless layers waiting for me to explore," she says.

Before tai chi, her life was a model of rationality. She worked as a physics teacher, a researcher at an institute, and a specialist studying the physical properties of diamonds. Her world was governed by data and logic.

She had tried other martial arts, such as karate and taekwondo, but none touched her heart.

Her introduction to tai chi came when she accidentally witnessed someone practicing the art, and she then learned the basics from a practitioner in Russia. However, she soon found herself unable to make progress.

"I reached a clear conclusion, to learn real tai chi, you must go to its root," she says.

So, she emailed the Chenjiagou Taijiquan School and received a warm invitation. Arriving there in 2011, she found something unexpected.

"I felt an unexplainable sensation of peace and joy," she says softly. "Tai chi gets deeper the more you learn. It's like climbing endless mountains. Every time you reach one peak, you see a higher one ahead. There is never an end to progress — and that is its greatest charm.



Svetlana Kobiakova practices tai chi with Chen Ziqiang, her master at the Chenjiagou Taijiquan School, in August 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"I used to suffer from bronchitis. Practicing tai chi has helped me feel more balanced and relaxed physically," she says.

"I think tai chi also reshaped my temperament, making me calm, positive, and peaceful."

Chen Ziqiang, her master, head coach at the Chenjiagou Taijiquan School and a 20th-generation descendant of the Chen family, praises her dedication.

"She is diligent and hardworking, practicing and deepening her understanding of tai chi culture," he says.

"Tai chi is a vivid and concrete embodiment of traditional Chinese culture. While much of traditional Chinese heritage is abstract and profound, tai chi is observable and learnable, offering and showing the wisdom and philosophies of Chinese culture."

From 2012 to 2015, Kobiakova achieved outstanding results in major international tai chi competitions worldwide. She was the European champion five times and a silver medalist at the 1st World Taijiquan Championship held in Chengdu, Sichuan province, in 2014.

Furthermore, she serves as a certified referee for the Russian Wushu Federation.

Having taught both Chinese and Western students, Kobiakova offers unique insights into cross-cultural learning. She has resigned from her research career entirely and founded her own tai chi school in Russia.

Now, Kobiakova is the first foreign master to teach tai chi at Chenjiagou Taijiquan School.

"My students range from 6-year-old children to 80-year-old elders," she says, adding that nationalities approach the discipline differently.

"European learners are usually more relaxed in the beginning," she says, but once foreign learners truly immerse themselves in tai chi's inner logic and philosophy, they become equally devoted and persistent.

"Deep down, all people are the same," she insists. "Everyone who loves tai chi is seeking inner peace, balance, and self-improvement."

She draws a contrast between tai chi and entertainment such as music or other sports.

"Music comforts the soul, but tai chi heals the body and cultivates the spirit at the same time. It is a lifestyle, a philosophy, and a treasure that deserves to be shared worldwide."

Kobiakova devotes about eight hours a day to tai chi. "Evening training has a different quality," she explains.

"The busy day quiets down. The body has been awake and moving, and the mind is finally ready to absorb."

Dai Ruijun, 43, a Chinese student from Xinyang city, Henan province, followed her 15-year-old son to Chenjiagou four years ago.

She recalls noticing Kobiakova early on. "Her tai chi skills are exquisite, and she treats everyone with warmth and kindness," she says.

Dai's son is taught by Kobiakova. "She even uses English to teach him the moves, correcting his postures while helping him build a language foundation," Dai notes.

"My son has become calmer, more focused, and more resilient. Tai chi is wonderful for teenagers," she adds.

Kobiakova plans to continue promoting traditional Chen-style tai chi when she returns to Russia, aiming to introduce more people abroad to Chinese culture.

"Tai chi gave me a new life," she says. "I hope I can spend my whole life passing this treasure on to the world."

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Harvard students explore China's culture and tech

Inside the Shenzhen headquarters of Chinese electric vehicle giant BYD, Harvard student Iseult Alice Fitzpatrick looked on in disbelief as a car rolled smoothly forward, balanced on just three wheels during a technology demonstration.

"This feels like the future," she said. Later, she climbed into several of the company's vehicles, trying out smart driving features and peppering engineers with questions about BYD's latest technology.

Over nine days from May 17 to 25, Fitzpatrick and fellow Harvard students and faculty members traveled from Shenzhen to the southwestern province of Guizhou and then to Beijing as part of a China-US exchange program with students from Peking University.

Along the way, they toured technology companies, stood atop the world's tallest bridge, and wandered through the courtyards of the Forbidden City (Palace Museum). For many of the students, the trip offered a new perspective on China.

The delegation's first stop was the Shenzhen Reform and Opening-up Exhibition Hall, where students traced the arc of a city that rose after China launched its reform and opening-up policies in the late 1970s and has since become a hub for advanced manufacturing and technology.

Inside the museum, exhibits demonstrated how a modest fishing village on China's southern coast changed over four decades into one of the country's most dynamic urban economies.

The pace of change left a strong impression on the visitors.

"Building a city like this in just a few decades is remarkable," said William Betts Wiltshire. "It speaks to the coordination and strategic thinking that shape how the country develops. I was deeply impressed."

From China's southern coast, the delegation continued inland to Guizhou, a province known for its steep mountains and deep valleys. Its rough karst terrain has long made travel difficult, requiring bridges and tunnels to connect the landscape.

Today, more than 32,000 bridges have been completed or are under construction across the province.

The Huajiang Grand Canyon Bridge, a steel-truss suspension bridge on the Liuzhi-Anlong Expressway, was a highlight of the visit. Certified by Guinness World Records in April 2026 as the world's highest bridge, it rises 626.01 meters above a deep gorge. It has also been developed as a tourist site, with glass elevators, bungee platforms and night light displays illuminating the canyon walls.

For many students, the view contrasted sharply with China's coastal cities, indicating how far development has spread into the interior.

"I expected this level of development in Shanghai," said Jose Enrique Vera Ortega. "But I didn't expect it here. It's not just the big cities. It feels like development is happening across the country at the same time."

In Beijing, the delegation moved into the country's cultural center of gravity.

At the Palace Museum, students moved through vast courtyards and along rigid imperial axes, guided past red walls and golden roofs that have framed centuries of dynastic life. Students paid close attention as guides described architectural intricacies and symbolism, pausing frequently to photograph carved beams and painted ceilings.

For some, the experience shifted history from abstraction to something physically present.

"History feels real here," said a Harvard student. "You're not just learning about it. You're standing inside it."

Earlier in Guizhou, students had tried their hands at traditional indigo dyeing, folding and binding cloth before dipping it into deep blue vats. The patterns slowly emerged as an ancient craft took shape in real time.

"It's beautiful, and it has depth," said Carla Isabel Gamarra Martinez, who took home dyed pieces for her family. In her view, closer engagement with another culture from the East could open up a broader perspective.

"The trip wasn't just sightseeing," said Liu Ziyi, an international student at Peking University who studies art. "It gave us a real sense of what culture can mean. I hope to build bridges between cultures with art."

The visit is part of a broader effort to bring 50,000 young Americans to China over five years for study and exchange. Since the initiative's announcement in November 2023, institutions on both sides of the Pacific have scheduled a variety of programs, including cultural trips, sporting events, and technology-focused seminars.

Doris Sommer, a Harvard University professor on the trip, said she hoped exchanges with Chinese counterparts would continue in the years ahead, deepening mutual engagement and expanding opportunities for collaboration and talent development.

"Future programs will be expanded to give more young people from both countries opportunities to engage and learn from one another," said Yu Changxue, director of the China Center for International People-to-People Exchange under the Ministry of Education.

XINHUA



International students visit the Huajiang Grand Canyon Bridge in Southwest China's Guizhou province on May 20. LIU XU / XINHUA

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SPORTS

UFC

Fight Night on song

'Kung Fu Monkey' holds nerve in Macao despite pressure

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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Even marred by setbacks for the host contingent, the Ultimate Fighting Championship's return to Macao has proved to be a smashing success as the mixed martial arts promotion has elevated the combat sport's profile in China.

On what would otherwise be a disappointing night for Chinese fans, Song Yadong saved the best for last. The bantamweight striker capped off UFC Fight Night Macao with a bang by securing a submission victory over Brazil's former world champion Deiveson Figueiredo in their main event on Saturday.

Heading into the highly anticipated finale between Song and Figueiredo, the 13-bout Fight Night had turned deeply disappointing for the home crowd, with four other Chinese fighters having all lost in their respective bouts on the preliminary and main cards, leaving the sold-out Galaxy Arena in silence and Song under huge pressure to salvage the night.

Song, China's highest-ranked men's fighter in UFC across all divisions, did not disappoint.

Rising to the moment with poise and finesse, Song pulled off the fight of his career with a guillotine choke early in the second round that forced former flyweight titleholder Figueiredo to submit, sending the Macao crowd into a frenzy.

It was Song's 23rd career win as a professional MMA athlete, and his 12th under the UFC banner in 17 bouts in the Octagon since signing up with the Las Vegas-based promoter in 2017.

Entering the Macao event as the fifth-ranked contender in UFC's bantamweight, Song is expected to keep climbing the rankings, and has cemented himself as a serious challenger for the belt currently held by Petr Yan of Russia.

After witnessing his compatriots' earlier losses, particularly light heavyweight scrapper Zhang Mingyang's shocking TKO defeat to Alonzo Menifield of the United States, Song confessed he felt the heat as he walked into the arena accompanied by the theme song of the Chinese TV classic *Journey to the West*.

Inspired by the TV series' main character, Song is nicknamed the "Kung Fu Monkey" by his home fans. Song said afterward, he drew strength from the crowd's rousing reaction and the same music that played as prelude to his UFC debut in Shanghai in 2017.

After exchanging punches with the Brazilian veteran and fending off his opponent's takedown attempts, Song capitalized on an opening early in the second round by locking up a tight guillotine choke that forced Figueiredo to tap out at the 4:42 mark, securing Song the biggest win of his career.

"I did feel the pressure. I couldn't help but imagine seeing the headline of 'Total Loss for China' the next morning, so I told myself to do my best and focus on my fight," Song said during his post-fight news conference.

"I knew I have what it takes to win the bout and I'd prepared the best I could. So I just focused on executing my techniques. The opportunity (for a choke) came and I took it. The result just took care of itself," said the 28-year-old Heilongjiang native, who's been training at the Team Alpha Male club in Sacramento, California for years.

Asked whom he expects to fight in his next bout, Song shrugged off the hyped rivalry between him and the rest of the division, saying he is just focused on perfecting his own craft to be ready for whoever the UFC picks for him down the line.

"I don't care to be honest. My goal will be building my fight toward a shot at the division crown," said Song.

Song's victory capped off a three-day fighting series in Macao, where the UFC kicked off the Season 5 of its talent-selection tournament, the Road To UFC, on Thursday and Friday, before the blockbuster Fight Night main dish.

It's the second time in three years that Macao has hosted the world's premier MMA showpiece since the 2024 edition. In between the two events in Macao, the UFC also hosted a Fight Night and semifinal rounds of the RTU tournament in Shanghai last summer.

With over 12,600 spectators drawn to Saturday's main event, the impressive turnout at the Galaxy Arena, following the sought-after Shanghai event in August, has served up a strong testament to MMA's growing appeal to the Chinese market.

"Our commitment to this region and Greater China as a whole is reflected in the fact that we do more and more these events," Kevin Chang, UFC's senior vice-president and head of Asia, said of the organization's hosting of live events in China on a consistent basis.

"That's pretty important for what we're trying to do here to grow the fanbase and we've shown that we are committed to it and we are consistent. We expect more and more of these types of events to come."

Although not ready yet to be announced, Chang hinted in Macao that a return to Shanghai this year, quite possibly in late summer again, is being seriously discussed by the UFC and its Chinese partners.

"China is very, very important (for the UFC), just the scale of the country and the number of fans, and how passionate they are, and all of those things contribute to that," said Chang.



China's bantamweight fighter Song Yadong celebrates after winning his bout against Brazil's Deiveson Figueiredo during UFC Fight Night at the Galaxy Arena in Macao on Saturday. AFP



Song Yadong (lying on his back) locks his opponent Deiveson Figueiredo during their bout on Saturday. UFC



China's Song Yadong (left) in action against Brazil's Deiveson Figueiredo during their UFC bantamweight fight at Galaxy Arena in Macao on Saturday. UFC

TCM doctor swaps needles for punches

By SUN XIAOCHEN

Wearing gloves and mouthguard instead of white gown and stethoscope, China's doctor-turned-fighter Shi Ming proved in Macao she's as adept at fighting as she is treating patients at her clinic.

The emerging mixed martial artist, who's a full-time doctor at a hospital in Kunming, Yunnan province, made a statement of her pursuit of a career in the brutal world of combat sport with a thrilling first win in the Ultimate Fighting Championship, secured by a first-round submission of Indian opponent Puja Tomar on Friday.

In just her second Octagon appearance since signing up with the Las Vegas-based promotion in December 2024, Shi delivered a dominant and clinical performance by forcing Tomar to tap out via a tight arm-triangle choke just a minute and a half into the first round of their strawweight bout, which headlined the Road To UFC Season 5 opening round's day-two actions at the Galaxy Arena.

To clinch her first UFC win in front of her home crowd, and in compelling fashion, Shi has silenced doubts about her readiness to fight like a pro following her disappointing debut loss in Shanghai last summer.

"The loss last time was really frustrating, so this one feels like a great confidence boost that I need," said Shi, who had to work intensively overtime for a week at her hospital to make the trip to Macao during her off days.

"Throughout all the fights in my career, I've always been considered the underdog. Tonight was the first time that I entered a bout as the favorite," said the 31-year-old semi-pro, who trains three times a week at the China Catch Wrestling club in Kunming under guidance by the gym's Iranian coach Bagher Amanolahi.

"I am so glad that I proved I belong (in the top promotion). I feel even happier than when I got the UFC contract," said Shi, who was signed by the organization as the strawweight division winner of the RTU tournament's Season 3 in 2024.

Dubbed the "fighting doctor" by fans and fellow athletes, Shi's dual identity and amateur background sets her apart in the high-intensity combat sports community, resonating with ordinary combat sports enthusiasts.

When she is not perfecting her wrestling, grappling and striking skills at her fight club, Shi is known as a soft-spoken traditional Chinese medicine practitioner relaxing muscles and soothing pains with her specialty in acupuncture treatment.

Her priority, for now, is expected to shift to her fiercer alter ego.

"I am ready and I've been staying in good shape. I'd like to fight more frequently, so I wish the UFC would arrange more fights for me," said Shi, whose favorite fighter is China's former strawweight world champion Zhang Weili.

SOCCER

Paris celebrates Champions League triumph amid riot recriminations

PARIS — The French capital laid out a red, white and blue carpet on Sunday for Paris Saint-Germain players to mark their second straight Champions League title, amid bitter recriminations after hundreds of people were arrested and dozens of police hurt in a night of unrest.

Tens of thousands of flag-waving fans took to the streets again to see the team parade from Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport to the Champ de Mars plaza in the shadow of the Eiffel Tower.

The team flew back from Budapest where it beat English Premier League champion Arsenal 4-3 in a penalty shoot-out on Saturday night.

It was also received by French President Emmanuel Macron before returning to Parc des Princes stadium for a final encounter with more than 40,000 fans, bringing to a close a day of festivities.

The previous night of celebrations was blighted however by clashes between youths and police in Paris and other cities, cars set on fire and shops looted.

One man died riding his motorbike around the Paris ring road in celebration while authorities reported stabbings and other attacks. They said 57 police officers and 219 "participants" were injured. Eight of the injured were in critical condition.

Interior Minister Laurent Nunez said there were 780 arrests across France, nearly a third more than when PSG's triumph last year over Inter Milan also set off a night of disturbances. He said looting had taken place in around 15 cities across the country.

Municipal workers hurried Sunday morning to clear the Paris streets of broken glass, wrecked bus shelters, trash cans and burned out cars and bikes before PSG's return.

Macron called the violence "unspeakable".

He said PSG was an "immense pride" for France but said the country was "fed up" with the violence. "We will be ruthless with those who have been caught," he vowed.



PSG's Marquinhos lifts the trophy at Parc des Princes stadium in Paris on Sunday to celebrate their victory with supporters. AFP

Amid political recriminations over the troubles, Paris mayor Emmanuel Gregoire played down the severity, saying such incidents were nothing new.

"In the vast majority of cases, people celebrated with family and friends. And it was an extraordinary celebration," the mayor told BFM TV. "And incidents on the fringes of major events have been going on for centuries."

Gregoire blamed the "media coverage" of the unrest "and perhaps also the obsession of these troublemakers who come to cause trouble and show themselves on social media".

The town hall for the Paris district that includes the Champs-Elysees, where tens of thousands went after the soccer victory, called for a ban on such gatherings.

On Saturday night, the "Champs-Elysees avenue and its surroundings ceased to be a place of celebration and became an arena of urban guerrilla warfare", the town hall said in a statement.

Politicians from all sides lambasted the troubles and questioned the way they were handled.

Far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen wrote on X that "only in France does a football club's victory spark riots".

Valerie Pecresse, the head of the greater Paris council from the Republicans party, slammed "the brainless thugs who allow themselves to destroy everything, tarnishing the image of Paris and France!".

A spokesperson for the hard-left France Unbowed said: "We cannot be satisfied with the way last night's event was managed and organized by the government."

Nunez promised "strongarm" security for Sunday's celebrations and some 6,000 police were on duty across central Paris.

"We're still riding yesterday's high, so we want to keep the party going," said 25-year-old Abou, a PSG fan "since he was little".

"Paris, Paris" chanted supporters wearing the team colors and carrying flags, as they filtered through security checkpoints to get near a stage where the players appeared. The "*We Are the Champions*" pop song blared out on speakers.

PSG captain Marquinhos and striker Ousmane Dembele were among the most applauded as they lifted the trophy before the adoring crowds. "We will be back next year for the third," said Dembele.

AFP

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Rehab tech leap
AI, robotics drive global medical recovery sector
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Tankers cross strait as peace hopes revive
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U17 soccer team stuns Australia to reach historic Asian Cup final
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CHINA DAILY
GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, MAY 21, 2026

Xi, Putin agree to extend landmark treaty

Documents signed on economy, education and tech cooperation

By **MO JINGXI**
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President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin agreed on Wednesday to further extend the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, while pledging to further strengthen political mutual trust, strategic coordination and practical cooperation between the two countries amid a fluid and turbulent international situation.

The agreement was reached during talks between the two heads of state at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing, before Putin concluded his two-day state visit to China.

After their talks earlier on Wednesday, the two presidents signed a joint statement on further enhancing the comprehensive strategic coordination and deepening good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation between the two countries. They witnessed the signing of 20 cooperation documents in areas including the economy and trade, education, and science and technology.

The two sides also issued a joint statement on advocating a multipolar world and a new type of international relations, and reached 20 cooperation agreements in other areas.

When addressing the media together after their talks, Xi said this was Putin's 25th trip to China since he first assumed the presidential office in Russia in 2000, which fully demonstrates the high level and uniqueness of China-Russia relations.

Noting that this year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Russia strategic partnership of coordination, Xi said that over the past three decades, bilateral ties have reached the highest level in history as a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, setting an example for a new type of major-country relations.

This year also marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation. The treaty was last extended on June 28, 2021, when Xi and Putin held talks via video link and issued a joint statement ahead of the 20th anniversary of its signing.

Xi said that over the years, the two countries have always abided by the treaty's established principle of non-alliance, nonconfrontation and not targeting any third party, while upholding equality, mutual respect, good faith and win-win cooperation.

The two countries have made important contributions to safeguarding international fairness and justice and promoting a new type of international relations, serving as a vital constant amid changes unseen in a century, he said.

Xi called on China and Russia to build on past achievements and further support each other firmly on issues concerning their respective core interests and major concerns, maintain close strategic communication and exchanges at all levels, and continuously consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust between the two countries.

In recent years, cooperation between China and Russia in various fields has advanced steadily and achieved many positive results. The value of bilateral trade has exceeded $200 billion for three consecutive years, and in the first four months of 2026, two-way trade increased nearly 20 percent, according to customs data.

Xi said the two sides should build on this momentum, deepen the alignment between China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and Russia's development strategy through 2030, and upgrade mutually beneficial cooperation in various fields to better serve the development and revitalization of both countries.

Speaking about global governance, Xi noted that the world today is far from being peaceful, with unilateralism and hegemonism causing severe harm, adding that the world is facing the danger of returning to the law of the jungle.

As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, China and Russia should firmly fulfill their responsibilities as major countries, uphold the authority of the UN as well as international fairness and justice, and oppose all acts of unilateral bullying and attempts to reverse the course of history, he said.

China and Russia should, in particular, oppose all provocative acts that deny the outcomes of World War II and seek to justify and revive fascism and militarism, Xi said, emphasizing that the two sides should jointly promote the building of a more just and equitable global governance system.

Putin, who received a welcoming ceremony with a 21-gun salute, quoted the Chinese saying that "one day apart feels like three autumns" when meeting with Xi, whom he described as his "dear friend".

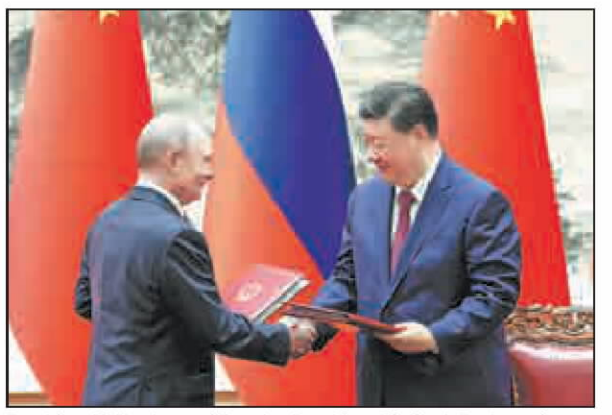
"Russia-China relations have reached a truly unprecedented level, and continue to develop. At the same time, our relations are self-sufficient; they do not depend on the current international situation and can serve as an example of relations between nations in this age," he said when addressing the media.

He said that Russia is full of confidence in the future of bilateral relations, adding that it will work with China to deepen the two countries' partnership and good-neighborly friendship, strengthen people-to-people bonds, and contribute to the development and revitalization of both countries and the well-being of their peoples.

See ***Meeting,*** *page 2*



President Xi Jinping holds a welcoming ceremony for Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is on a state visit to China, outside the Great Hall of the People before their talks in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY



President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin exchange documents after signing a joint statement on further enhancing the comprehensive strategic coordination and deepening good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation between the two countries following their talks in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

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China, US talks help stabilize bilateral trade ties

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHOU LANXU**

The preliminary outcomes achieved during the latest round of China-US economic and trade consultations will not only help stabilize bilateral economic ties, but also contribute to a more cooperative global economy at a time of rising uncertainties, officials and experts said.

The Ministry of Commerce announced on Wednesday that China and the United States have agreed in principle to discuss, under a trade council, a reciprocal tariff reduction framework on products of equivalent scale — worth $30 billion or more on each side.

Under the proposed arrangement, the products of respective concern as agreed by both sides are expected to enjoy most-favored-nation tariff rates or even lower rates, the ministry said.

Once implemented, the arrangement will not only help stabilize and expand bilateral trade between China and the US, but also serve as a useful reference for global open cooperation, a Commerce Ministry official said in a statement.

The ministry said that China and the US agreed to establish trade and investment councils to address respective concerns in trade and investment cooperation, a step that will help to shift bilateral economic and trade consultations from crisis response to mechanism-based management.

Dai Mingfeng, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the move will help to create more favorable conditions for stabilizing bilateral trade.

"It will provide practical support for stabilizing and steadily expanding China-US bilateral trade, while helping to promote a recovery in trade involving agricultural and industrial products," Dai said.

To translate the arrangement into concrete progress, the ministry called on the US to honor its commitments and ensure that, regardless of the reason or form of any future additional or replacement tariffs on Chinese goods, US tariff levels on Chinese goods will not exceed those set under the joint arrangement reached during the Kuala Lumpur economic and trade consultations in October last year.

See ***Talks,*** *page 12*

GRAIN BUDS BRINGS WITH IT THE SWEET TASTE OF SUMMER

Perfect moment for loquats and flavor of Jiangnan arrives with *xiao man*

By **LI YINGXUE**
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As wheat fields across northern China begin to swell with grain, the hillsides of Dongshan town in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, have already turned golden in the early summer sun.

Along the misty shores of Taihu Lake, loquats hang heavy on the branches. Beneath their fine golden fuzz, mellow sweetness meets gentle acidity against the floral backdrop of the rainy season in Jiangnan, the area south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River.

As *xiao man*, or Grain Buds, arrives, so does the perfect moment for loquats.

The traditional Chinese solar term — meaning "small fullness" — marks the season when grains begin to fill but are not yet fully ripe. In Chinese food culture, it has long been associated with nourishment and relief from summer humidity.



Fresh loquats on display in Beijing on Tuesday. GENG FEIFEI / CHINA DAILY

Few fruits capture that seasonal transition more vividly than loquats.

For generations, loquat farmers in Dongshan have followed the rhythms of the 24 solar terms like clockwork. Traditionally, loquats are not harvested until around *xiao man*, when the fruit sheds its early acidity and develops a mellow sweetness.

China Vibes — FOOD —

But nature never follows a rigid calendar. "This year the harvest came about 10 days later than last year," said Song Furong, 58, a lifelong loquat farmer.

He said winter temperatures were not extremely low, but there was heavy frost and thick morning fog.

See ***Loquat,*** *page 12*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Innovation helps nation spur growth

WORLD WATCH
By Digby James Wren

Over the past decades, China has delivered 30 percent of global economic growth on the back of its deployment of innovation at speed and scale. A key result is that China's stable prices and efficient supply chains have helped to mitigate global inflationary pressures amid elevated inflation in major advanced economies.

China's gross domestic product grew 5 percent in the first quarter of this year, beating expectations and displaying robust growth in exports and imports.

Factory activity remained resilient, with the official manufacturing purchasing managers' index standing at 50.3 in April, slightly easing from 50.4 in March but still holding above the 50-point expansion threshold. High-tech and equipment manufacturing continued to outperform, with PMI readings of 52.2 and 51.8 respectively, highlighting the ongoing structural transformation toward new growth drivers.

China's economic resilience rests firmly on its deep cooperation with Asian partners to create new opportunities for the region.

Despite external pressures, trade volumes paint a powerful picture of this integrated strength. In 2025, China's total goods import and export value reached a record high of $6.35 trillion. Driving this was its relationship with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, which has remained China's largest trading partner. Trade between China and ASEAN reached 7.55 trillion yuan ($1.05 trillion) last year, surging 8 percent year-on-year. This growth is being formalized through agreements such as the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol.

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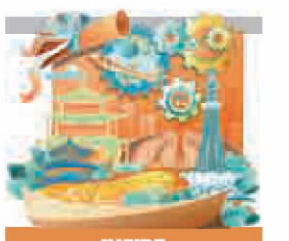

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CHINA-RUSSIA TIES

Education seen as key bridge in relations

Leaders express hopes on collaboration in nurturing talent

By **ZHANG YUNBI** and **ZHAO JIA**



President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin attend the opening ceremony of the China-Russia Years of Education at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed their hopes on Wednesday for future collaboration between the two countries in nurturing talent and fostering friendship among young people when they attended the opening ceremony of the China-Russia Years of Education (2026-27) in Beijing.

The two leaders delivered speeches and then jointly unveiled the emblem for the China-Russia Years of Education.

In his speech, Xi said that launching the China-Russia Years of Education was a strategic decision made by him and President Putin to enhance the long-term development of China-Russia relations.

Xi said that education is an important bridge connecting the hearts of the peoples and carrying forward friendship between nations, and it is a noble cause that benefits both the present and future generations.

China-Russia educational cooperation has deepened considerably, producing remarkable results and enriching the substance of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, he said.

Xi emphasized that both sides should take the China-Russia Years of Education as an opportunity to build further consensus on cooperation, expand its scope and raise its level.

Putin said that educational cooperation is an indispensable component of the two countries' comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination and underscored the milestone significance of launching the China-Russia Years of Education. Both countries attach great importance to education, which is crucial for individuals' development and serves as the foundation for a nation's economic and social development, he said.

The Russian president praised the China-Russia Years of Education for its rich content and large scale.

Currently, more than 80,000 students from both countries are studying in the other nation, and the two sides have established more than 150 joint educational institutions and programs, Zhang Hanhui, Chinese ambassador to Russia, wrote in an article published on Tuesday.

In his speech, Xi emphasized that thriving and strong education is the foundation of a thriving and strong nation. He said that China and Russia should deepen cooperation in talent cultivation, jointly nurture world-class professionals, strengthen national capabilities in strategic science and technology, work together to tackle cutting-edge scientific challenges, and boost the innovation-driven development of both countries.

The two countries should embrace the vision of mutual learning among civilizations, and promote the sharing of experience in terms of the inheritance of civilization and the governance of education, to improve their respective work in these fields, he said.

Both sides should carry forward the traditional friendship, further tap the potential of educational cooperation, encourage young people to cement friendship through in-depth exchanges, and nurture torchbearers who will carry forward China-Russia friendship for generations to come, he added.

Xi said that with these joint efforts, he believes the China-Russia Years of Education will surely be a complete success.

On Wednesday, Xi and Putin also toured a photo exhibition at the Great Hall of the People, celebrating the everlasting friendship between the two countries.

The exhibition vividly presented the close interaction between the two heads of state since the beginning of the new era.

Xi and Putin paused periodically to view the photos and listen to briefings, fondly recalling moments of friendly exchanges and cooperation between the two countries in recent years. The two leaders noted that the great cause of China-Russia friendship conforms to the course of history and the times, remains unbreakable, and will continue to move forward, writing new chapters.

On Wednesday evening, Xi and Putin had a tea chat before Putin departed for Russia.

Xi said that he and Putin reached a new and important consensus on advancing the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination.

Putin said that Russia looks forward to maintaining close communication with China and strengthening strategic coordination.

The two heads of state also exchanged views on issues including the Ukraine crisis.

Contact the writers at zhangyunbi@chinadaily.com.cn

Meeting: Both sides to extend visa-free policies

From page 1

"Moscow and Beijing will jointly uphold international law and the provisions of the UN Charter in their entirety ... and cooperate effectively within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS and other international structures, making a significant contribution to addressing pressing global and regional challenges," Putin said.

During their talks on Wednesday, Xi said the China-Russia relationship has entered a new stage of greater achievements and faster development.

Unswervingly promoting the long-term, sound, steady and high-quality development of the China-Russia relationship is a strategic choice made by the two sides based on the fundamental interests of the two countries and the global trends, he said.

Xi called on China and Russia to fully implement the important common understandings reached between him and Putin, seize the historic opportunities and further promote the mutual trust, cooperation and friendship between the two countries.

He emphasized that both sides should focus on the goals of national development and revitalization, fully leverage the comprehensive and well-established mechanisms of China-Russia cooperation and strengthen the overall planning for cooperation in all respects.

The two countries should also promote the upgrading of practical cooperation in trade and investment, energy and resources, transportation, and sci-tech innovation, as well as actively explore cooperation in frontier areas, in order to create new engines for growth with new quality productive forces, Xi said.

He added that efforts should be made to continue the long-standing friendship between the two sides, strengthen exchanges and cooperation in education, culture, film, tourism and sports, and consolidate the social and public support for bilateral friendship.

Also on Wednesday, China announced that it has decided to extend its visa-free policy for Russia until Dec 31, 2027. According to TASS news agency, Russian presidential press secretary Dmitry Peskov said in Beijing that Russia will also extend its visa-free policy for Chinese citizens.

During their talks, the two heads of state exchanged views on major international and regional issues, including the situation in the Middle East.

Xi emphasized that all hostilities in the Middle East must end immediately, renewed fighting should be avoided and, most important, negotiations should continue.

Noting that the situation in the Middle East and the Persian Gulf region is at a critical juncture between war and peace, he said that an early end to the conflict will help reduce disruptions to the stability of energy supplies, the functioning of industrial and supply chains, and the stability of the international trade order.

On Wednesday evening, Xi held a welcoming banquet for Putin in the Golden Hall of the Great Hall of the People.

Chinese 'boy' has heartwarming reunion with his 'foreign uncle'

By **LI MUYUN** and **HE CHUN** in Changsha



Left: Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) poses for a photo with Peng Pai (center), then a boy from Hunan province, at Beihai Park in Beijing on July 19, 2000. WU ZHIYI / CHINA DAILY **Right:** President Putin (left) meets at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing on Wednesday with Peng (center), now a 38-year-old engineer, and signs their photograph. VLADIMIR SMIRNOV / SPUTNIK

Twenty-six years ago, a "foreign uncle" walked up to a young boy seated on a balustrade along a lake in Beijing, spontaneously greeted him with a kiss on the forehead, and posed for a photo with him and his family.

Fast forward to 2026. The boy, Peng Pai, now 38 years old and a civil engineer specializing in bridge construction, rebuilt that heartwarming connection through a reunion on Wednesday with this uncle who is none other than Russian President Vladimir Putin.

The two met in Beijing during Putin's state visit to China. A video posted by Russia's RT television network shows Putin and Peng sharing a warm handshake, holding a brief conversation, and then Putin signing a copy of their group photo from the summer of 2000.

Peng, a native of Yueyang in Central China's Hunan province, who pursued his engineering studies in Moscow because his first meeting with Putin piqued his curiosity about Russia, said he never thought he would have the opportunity to meet the Russian leader again.

During their chat at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing, Putin asked Peng who the person standing beside the boy in the photo is. "Learning that the man standing beside me is my father, he asked me to give my father his regards," Peng said.

They hugged each other goodbye after the chat, and Peng presented Putin with a gift — a tea set made of porcelain from Liling, Hunan. "I will remember this day for the rest of my life," Peng said.

Back in 2000, Peng, then 12, and his family were touring Beihai Park during a trip to Beijing when they ran into Putin, who was making his first official visit to China as the Russian president.

The Russian leader made an impromptu stop at the park, indulged in some boating activities and greeted people. He approached the boy, picked him up and planted a kiss on his forehead. "It was completely spontaneous," Peng recalled. "I remember him as a kind, gentle uncle."

In an interview with the Russian television network before their reunion on Wednesday, Peng left a lighthearted message for the visiting leader. "Dear President Putin, you still look the same, but I have changed from a little boy into a middle-aged man with a bigger belly," he said.

While Peng didn't fully grasp the meaning of their encounter more than two decades ago, it certainly did increase his interest in Russia. After finishing high school, he decided to apply for higher studies in the Russian capital.

From 2007 to 2013, Peng studied bridge and tunnel engineering at the Moscow Automobile and Road Construction State Technical University, from where he earned both his bachelor's and master's degrees.

"During my years in Moscow, I gained a deeper understanding of Russia's vast territory, its rich history and culture," Peng said. The teachers and students he met along the way left a lasting impression, he said. "They were very kind to international students," he added.

After returning to China, Peng joined Hunan Construction Investment Group, a State-owned enterprise based in Changsha, which has projects in more than 60 countries.

Today, he is a senior engineer with the group, leading an engineering technology team. Among the projects he has worked on, a pedestrian bridge on the Liuyang River in Changsha received the National Quality Engineering Award for 2020-21.

Although Peng never went back to Russia, he has been keenly watching the development of China-Russia bilateral relations. "High-level exchanges between the two sides have been frequent in recent years, and interactions are happening in many fields, including at the grassroots and online levels," he said.

As a bridge engineer, Peng hopes to see more infrastructure cooperation between the two countries. Both sides have strengths that can complement each other for mutual benefit, he said.

Now a father of two, Peng hopes to take his family to Moscow one day, and walk through his old university campus. "I would tell the kids everything I know about Russia and its people," he said.

Peng Yixuan in Beijing contributed to this story.

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Beijing, Moscow to expand cooperation and people-to-people exchanges

By **JI HAISHENG**
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Premier Li Qiang called on China and Russia to achieve a higher level of mutual benefit and win-win outcomes during his meeting on Wednesday with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing.

Highlighting the strategic guidance of the two heads of state, Li noted that President Xi Jinping had met with President Putin earlier in the day to make further plans and arrangements for the development of China-Russia relations.

Li said that China is willing to work with Russia to further expand trade, implement the upgraded bilateral investment agreement, and deepen cooperation in areas such as energy, agriculture, connectivity, and green and low-carbon development.

Efforts should also be made to strengthen the alignment between the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative and the Russia-led Eurasian Economic Union, and ensure the safe, stable and high-quality development of China-Europe freight trains, he said.

Li called on both sides to organize cultural events within frameworks such as the China-Russia Years of Education, and deepen exchanges and cooperation in areas including youth, culture, tourism and sports, thereby continuously fostering mutual understanding and friendship between the two peoples.

China is set to strengthen collaboration with Russia on multilateral platforms, actively implement the Global Governance Initiative and jointly uphold fairness and justice, he added.

On his part, Putin said that Russia is willing to maintain close high-level exchanges with China, fully leverage the mechanism of regular meetings between the two prime ministers, and advance exchanges and cooperation in areas such as trade, energy, agriculture, transportation, logistics, scientific and technological innovation and people-to-people exchanges.

He also expressed Moscow's readiness to strengthen cooperation with Beijing within multilateral frameworks such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and BRICS, to jointly promote world peace, stability and prosperity.

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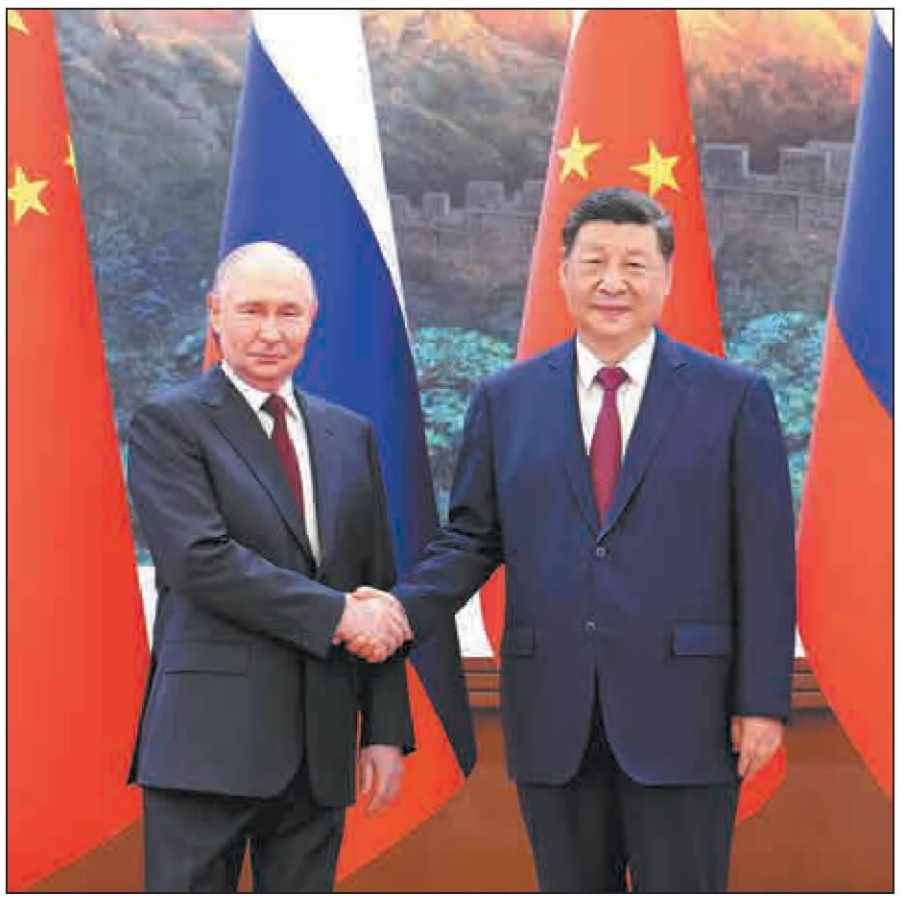
CHINA-RUSSIA TIES



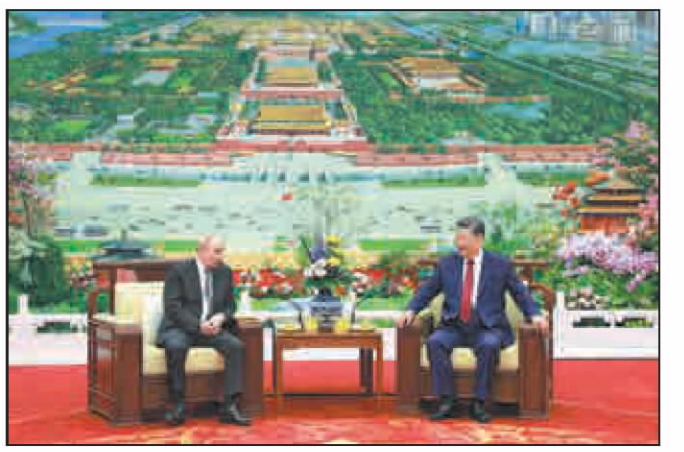


Above: President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who is on a state visit to China, visit a photo exhibition on the long-lasting friendship between the two countries at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. **Right:** President Xi holds a welcoming ceremony for Russian President Putin outside the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. PHOTOS BY HUANG JINGWEN / XINHUA

PARTNERSHIP ENTERS NEW STAGE



President Xi shakes hands with Russian President Putin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY



President Xi and Russian President Putin have a chat over tea at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. DING HAITAO / XINHUA



President Xi holds talks with Russian President Putin at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Wednesday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

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CHINA-RUSSIA TIES



In April, Chinese and Russian youngsters along with their teachers pose for a photo during a camp in Harbin, Heilongjiang province, which was organized by the Association of Sino-Russian Middle Schools and focused on education, technology and sports. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Languages bind China, Russia closer

Young people's efforts to learn each other's tongues a testament to warm friendship, shared futures

By **WANG HAORAN**
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Yi, er, san, si, wu, liu, qi,
Wo de li wu zai zhe li.

A jumble of strange sounds foreign to millions of Anastasia Prytkova's Russian compatriots slip off her tongue as effortlessly as if she had been uttering them since she was a baby. Throw in a delightful melody, and suddenly the Chinese language does not seem as intimidating and as difficult as it is usually cracked up to be.

What she speaks means "One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, my gift is here."

And what a gift this is, one that has put ninth-grader Anastasia from Novosibirsk, Russia, on a path that is likely to shape her life.

For the past three years she has been studying Mandarin online with a Russian teacher, cultivating her fascination with a country she has so far had no physical contact with.

"My favorite food is kung pao chicken," she said in Chinese. The dish is a favorite in Sichuan province, the home of spicy food, and is a place she dreams of visiting. Seeing the Great Wall and the Terracotta Warriors is also on her wish list, but for now, there is still plenty of Chinese learning to do.

Anastasia is aware of the challenge ahead, even as she senses the rich rewards that await her. Her aim is to become a transportation engineer and to pursue a master's degree at a Chinese university.

Her mother, Oksana Prytkova, views China as the ideal training ground for the skills Anastasia wants to master. Pointing to her daughter's passion for robotics and programming, she said: "In these disciplines it makes sense to study Chinese, because there is a lot worth learning in China."

Great enthusiasm

Tens of thousands of young Russians share that sentiment, one that is reciprocated in China, where many young people are increasingly drawn to learning Russian, seeing the benefits it offers.

In Anastasia's hometown, the Confucius Institute at Novosibirsk State Technical University is at the forefront of promoting Chinese language and culture. The institute, established in 2007 in partnership with Dalian University of Foreign Languages in Liaoning province, is stepping up its efforts to reshape how Mandarin is taught to the city's young people.

It offers a wide range of learning methods, from large lectures to one-on-one tutoring led by a mix of Russian and Chinese staff. This year and the next have been designated as the China-Russia Years of Education. In that context, the importance of these teachers and what they do has never been clearer.

Igor Khripunov, who has directed the institute since 2013, said collaboration in education is the bedrock of the two countries' partnership.

"Over the next two years I foresee a profound acceleration in such collaboration," Khripunov said. "This will do much more than catalyze our collaboration on academics, language and talent development. It will lay a solid foundation for a new generation of professionals equipped to meet the evolving needs of our countries' partnership."

The teaching of Mandarin and the way it is offered have improved markedly in Novosibirsk, and the number of those studying the language has increased in each of the past three years, he said.

"In many schools, Mandarin is now included in the curriculum as a second language and is being included in a state exam program. An increasing number of schoolchildren are taking part in the annual All-Russian Chinese Language Olympiad," he said.

Yulia Shchepina, a Mandarin instructor at the Confucius Institute, who has eight years' classroom experience, said foreign-language learning for children is less about rigid memorization and more about visual storytelling.

She tells of a lively fourth-grade class of 9 and 10-year-olds who gasped collectively when they opened their textbooks to see a dense sea of Chinese characters. Many of them exclaimed, "This is impossible".



Chinese and Russian students interact with each other during the camp in Harbin last month. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "It will lay a solid foundation for a new generation of professionals equipped to meet the evolving needs of our countries' partnership."
>
> **Igor Khripunov,** director of the Confucius Institute at Novosibirsk State Technical University

Seven months later the same children stood up to introduce themselves in Chinese, rattling off details about their families, hobbies and favorite colors.

Among them, three came to China to further their language studies. An ultimate test of their fluency came during a trip to the Palace Museum in Beijing, also known as the Forbidden City, when they approached local Chinese children and began chatting to them, and were understood perfectly.

They returned to Novosibirsk with even more passion for the language, Shchepina said.

Pop culture is also an important motivation for many teenage students who want to play Chinese video games and understand hit dramas and music in the original language.

Travel, Shchepina said, deepens this engagement, with family holidays to Asia becoming increasingly popular.

As Mandarin clubs sprout up in local schools, learning the language has evolved into a shared enthusiasm in which students inspire one another.

"Modern children have a clear vision of what they want to achieve. They are incredibly purpose driven," Shchepina said.

Collaboration continues

That drive is not the sole preserve of youngsters in Russia. Just as young people in Novosibirsk are both frustrated and charmed by the complexity of Chinese characters, their counterparts in China are delighting in the beauty of the Cyrillic script that helps them understand the language of Leo Tolstoy.

One such youngster is Shen Yu, a first-year student in the advanced Russian program at Harbin No 6 High School in Heilongjiang province. Her father also studied Russian in his youth, filling the family home with Cyrillic books. For Shen, learning Russian started as a daunting challenge of declensions and tongue twisters.

The study is punishing, but the payoffs are astronomical, she said. "Whenever I can fluently express a complete thought, or understand a Russian news broadcast or a song without relying on a translation, the sense of accomplishment is overwhelming."

While learning Russian with native-speaking educators every Friday at her high school, she is also developing a profound kinship with her Russian counterparts.

"They face exactly the same academic pressures that we do, with the same stress over exams, but they also have the same love for video games and music," she said.

Harbin No 6 High School has a rich history of teaching Russian that goes back more than 80 years, and it hosts the Chinese secretariat of the Association of Sino-Russian Middle Schools. The association was initiated by the school eight years ago, aiming to advance educational exchanges and collaboration at the secondary level and cultivate talent, with an emphasis on biculturalism.

Wu Xia, principal of the school, said the association had 30 schools as members when it was established. It now has 145, with 50 of them in China and 95 in Russia.

The association operates as a high-level, institutionalized dialogue platform, with annual meetings in both countries attracting thousands of educators who discuss collaboration in secondary education.

It also organizes training courses for Chinese educators who teach Russian, and Russian educators who teach Mandarin. More than 700 Chinese teachers have benefited from the courses.

Stewards of tomorrow

Fu Zhaoxia, a Russian-language instructor who has taught at Harbin No 6 High School for 34 years, said the expertise of Russian academics has helped her transform her classes, which were once top heavy with rigid rote learning, into spaces of vibrant, real-life communication.

The alliance has implemented more than 30 cultural initiatives, including youth art festivals, papercutting contests and a cross-border postcard exchange, engaging more than 4,000 students. A program called Air Classroom delivers Mandarin instruction to more than 500 students in 15 Russian regions.

"By taking part in these activities our young people break down the initial barriers of language and culture," Wu said. "It teaches them to respect differences and embrace a global vision. This is where genuine friendship takes root. Education is the bond, but friendship is the core."

Wu cites the example of a camp in Harbin last month that hosted students from Lensk No 3 School in the Sakha (Yakutia) Republic of Russia. The shared activities with Chinese students focused on education, technology and sports.

In addition to 3D printing and curling matches, the students were given the task of crafting *xiangnang*, decorative sachets traditionally filled with scented herbs.

The Chinese students, familiar with making the colorful sachets, patiently worked with their Russian counterparts, explaining the cultural symbolism in embroidered dragons and phoenixes that were being used, as well as the traditional herbal fillings.

The awkwardness the Russians first displayed gradually dissolved, and they began weaving symbols of Harbin, such as snowflakes and ice, into their own designs. When the students finally exchanged their handmade crafts, the gesture carried a weight beyond the herbs inside.

"The sachets were no longer just ordinary pouches, but became a bond," Wu said. "You could feel this cross-border goodwill quietly flowing through hearts."

Khripunov, director of the Confucius Institute at Novosibirsk State Technical University, said he sees this generation as the future stewards of China-Russia ties.

"We are planting the seeds, and these students will inherit the responsibility of sustaining our scientific, educational and cultural exchanges. They are the ones who will forge a deeper, more genuine trust between our peoples."

Zhang Xiaomin, Zhou Huiying and Pang Yingyuan contributed to this story.







Left: Chinese and Russian students share techniques during a friendly curling match in Harbin on April 6. **Middle:** Students actively engage in a Chinese cultural activity at the Confucius Institute at Novosibirsk State Technical University, Russia, in April. **Right:** Students from Lensk No 3 School write messages and stamp school-themed marks at the school museum of Harbin No 6 High School in April. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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CHINA-RUSSIA TIES



Trucks line up to pass through the Manzhouli Land Port in Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, in December. XIAO JIANBO / XINHUA

Border policy converts grains into cash

By **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot and **LIU BOQIAN**

Russian freight trains inch across the border into Manzhouli, their cars laden with grains and oilseeds from the fertile fields of Siberia and the Russian Far East. Within days, these raw imports are cleared, processed in towering local factories, and dispatched to kitchens across China.

Manzhouli in northern China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region is the country's largest land port city. It sits opposite Russia's Zabaykalsk, where the railway crossing handles more than 60 percent of China's rail trade with Russia, making the Chinese city a critical gateway for goods moving between the two nations.

For many Russian products, Manzhouli is both the first stop in China and the launchpad for nationwide distribution after processing.

"More than 90 percent of our raw materials come from Russia," said Yang Zhihong, manager of Xin Feng Grain and Oil, a local processing company. "The supply is stable and reliable."

Inside Xin Feng's production halls, workers wash, sort and refine imported crops into flour, oils and other finished goods.



A Manzhouli resident (right) learns about Russian handicraft at a fair in December. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

"Siberian and Russian Far East crops grow under strict ecological standards, producing nutrient-rich grains," Yang said. He added that oils and flour made from these grains sell well in the domestic market.

The company works with local residents through cooperatives. Under cross-border trade rules, each resident can enjoy a daily tax-free quota of 8,000 yuan ($1,170). The cooperatives handle the purchase and transport of imported goods to compliant grain and oil processors in Manzhouli, such as Xin Feng, where the products are processed before being sold across China.

The system cuts tariffs and value-added taxes, streamlines customs clearance and ensures a steady raw material supply. This means procurement costs are significantly lower than elsewhere. "The same quality Russian grains save 500 to 1,000 yuan per metric ton," Yang said. "It reduces production expenses and operational costs."

Local residents also share in the profits along with the enterprises under this model, creating a direct benefit for the community.

Imported Russian grains and potash have become a cornerstone of Manzhouli's processing industry.

"Since Manzhouli was designated an official import port for agricultural products in 2013, we now handle 12 crop types, including rapeseed, barley, wheat and soybeans," said Chen Rui, deputy director of the city's bureau of industry, information and technology. "Five processing enterprises operate here, with a combined annual capacity exceeding 1.35 million tons."

Manzhouli is also emerging as a cross-border tourism hub. In the first four months of the year, 7,723 visitors arrived, mostly for shopping. Some use the city as a transit point for the seaside resorts of Beidaihe or Qinhuangdao in Hebei province.

"Cross-border study tours are growing, too. Russian students visit for day trips or longer stays to experience life in a Chinese border city," said Huang Wei from the Manzhouli tourism bureau.

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Fish-skin art creates bridge for cultural exchange

By **TIAN XUEFEI** and **ZHOU HUIYING** in Harbin

Inside the bustling cultural exhibition hall of the 10th China-Russia Expo, a steady stream of international visitors found themselves huddled around a workshop table, handling a material few associated with fine art: raw, tanned fish skin.

Guided by 58-year-old Zhang Lin, Russian merchants, foreign tourists and local residents took up carving tools to cut and paste intricate shapes. Zhang's booth, showcasing the ancient fish-skin collage techniques of China's Hezhe ethnic group, has become a striking highlight of the expo, transforming an ancient hunting tradition into a medium for modern cross-border diplomacy.

"Intangible cultural heritage is a language without borders," said Zhang, a provincial-level inheritor of the endangered craft from Heilongjiang province. "As long as our neighbors come to understand this culture, my perseverance will have been worthwhile."

By the early 2000s, the grueling process of tanning, cutting, carving and sewing fish skin had nearly vanished. The craft's trajectory shifted in 2006 when it was officially listed as a Chinese national intangible cultural heritage, anchoring preservation efforts.

The Hezhe, one of China's smallest ethnic groups, have historically inhabited the river valleys of the Heilong River — known in Russia as the Amur River. Dating back to the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC), their ancestors developed a unique lifestyle centered on fishing and hunting, utilizing salmon skins to construct durable clothing, daily utensils and sacred totems.



Zhang Lin (left) teaches a Russian trader how to make a fish-skin collage at the 10th China-Russia Expo in Harbin on Monday. ZHOU HUIYING / CHINA DAILY

At this year's expo, Zhang brought two fish-skin garments and 16 collages, along with cultural and creative products made from fish skin.

Zhang's fish-skin arrangements present lively, vivid images of divine deer, soaring eagles, ancient ethnic totems and distant landscapes that evoke China's northern regions.

The inheritor has been a fixture at the China-Russia Expo since its inaugural event in Harbin in 2014. Invited by the provincial department of culture and tourism to present three-dimensional, bas-relief fish-skin art, her work always finds an audience.

"It was a great opportunity to showcase our cultural heritage," she said. "Despite the language barrier, many foreign guests stopped to observe and touch," she added. Because China and Russia share a border, they also enjoy a certain cultural affinity. Intangible cultural heritage is a language without borders, Zhang said.

At past expos, Zhang incorporated Russian cultural elements into her traditional fish-skin works.

"Each expo gave me the opportunity to have face-to-face conversations with Russian artists," she said. "We would discuss fish-skin tanning, carving and pasting techniques, and I gave them detailed explanations of Hezhe history and folklore."

Over the years, Zhang has taken her fish-skin creations to multiple Russian cities for folk cultural exchange activities. At an event in Russia's Amur Oblast, her artwork received high praise. The craftsmanship and ethnic patterns impressed ordinary people and art aficionados alike, she said.

In July, Zhang donated 20 of her works to a Russian museum, displaying themes of the 12 Chinese zodiac signs, the flower of good fortune, spring swallows, autumn cranes and fish-skin clouds.

"I was happy to see that the intangible cultural heritage of Heilongjiang would be permanently rooted in the cultural halls of a foreign country," she said.

Zhang has also extended her reach to universities within Heilongjiang, allowing her ancient craft techniques to take root and flourish on campuses.

"In Zhang's classes, she never follows a script," said Alla Shulgan, a Russian student at the Harbin Institute of Technology. "Instead, she brings complete fish-skin materials, production tools and fine artworks, explaining the history of Hezhe fishing and hunting culture in simple terms, and breaking down the core techniques of fish-skin tanning, carving, pasting and coloring, allowing us to experience the charm of intangible cultural heritage from scratch."

Shulgan said that before coming to China, she was completely unfamiliar with the culture of the country's ethnic groups. "After a semester of diligent study and hands-on creation, I truly understood the charm of this ancient intangible cultural heritage — simple fish skin can be transformed into exquisite and beautiful paintings, carrying the local ethnic group's lifestyle characteristics and traditional customs."

Shulgan said she has shared her fish-skin artworks and learning experiences with family and friends back home.

For Zhang, intangible cultural heritage transmission cannot rely solely on the preservation of old skills, but must also reach young people in new generations.

"With craftsmanship as a bridge and culture as a bond, I hope to ensure that the beauty of this heritage will continue to shine," Zhang said.

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Agricultural trade ripe for fresh harvest

Sino-Russian cooperation on farm products shows growing potential

By **REN QI**
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Agricultural cooperation is emerging as a key driver of economic synergy between China and Russia, further bolstering already robust growth momentum between the two nations, officials and experts said.

China has been Russia's largest trading partner for the past 16 years, with bilateral trade volume reaching $228.11 billion in 2025, according to data released by the General Administration of Customs.

In the first quarter this year, bilateral trade surged 14.7 percent year-on-year to $61.2 billion. During the period, China's exports to Russia grew by 22 percent, while imports rose by 9 percent, marking a solid start to the year.

Ma Chi, deputy director-general of the department of Eurasian affairs at the Ministry of Commerce, said the structure of bilateral trade between the two countries is continuously being optimized.

He noted that competitive Chinese products, such as automobiles, home appliances and machinery, have maintained strong export momentum, while Russia's supply of energy, minerals and agricultural products to China remains stable.

This national-level synergy is deeply felt at the regional level, particularly in Russia's Primorsky Krai, a crucial Far East region sharing a border with China.

Oleg Kozhemyako, governor of Primorsky Krai, has hailed China as a "reliable and stable partner", emphasizing that the cooperation is of paramount importance to the region. Primorsky Krai is eager to deepen collaboration in sectors including equipment manufacturing, deep processing of agricultural products and biomedicine, he said.

The Far East is a key region for China-Russia agricultural cooperation. To meet the storage and transportation needs of expanding grain exports to China, the two countries have collaborated in recent years to construct and upgrade transportation infrastructure in the Far East, including the Heihe-Blagoveshchensk highway bridge and the Tongjiang-Nizhneleninskoye railway bridge in 2022, which provided new international transportation corridors for future large-scale agricultural trade between the two countries.

Highlighting the strong connectivity between the two sides, Kozhemyako said that the region is linked to China through multiple border crossings and over 50 weekly flights. Russia is currently upgrading these border ports to enhance transit capacity. He also praised the high-quality work of Chinese enterprises that have successfully implemented agricultural planting and engineering construction projects in the region.

Kozhemyako reaffirmed the local government's full support for bilateral agricultural initiatives, highlighting the planned Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation experimental demonstration zone at Sukhodol Port. The zone will utilize modern technology for the deep processing of agricultural raw materials from Primorsky Krai, significantly enhancing the value-added of these products.

> "Russia boasts vast arable land, clean water sources and abundant agricultural resources, while China offers a massive consumer market and a mature processing and distribution system."
>
> **Wang Qun,** head of the Association of Entrepreneurs in the Field of Russian-Chinese Cooperation

Song Kui, president of the Contemporary China-Russia Regional Economy Research Institute in Heilongjiang province, echoed this optimism. He said that the two countries have immense potential for cooperation in energy and agriculture. The development of Russia's Far East will also inject vitality into the comprehensive revitalization of Northeast China, further promoting the socioeconomic development of both nations, Song said.

The highly complementary nature of Sino-Russian agricultural cooperation is a major catalyst for this development, according to Wang Qun, head of the Association of Entrepreneurs in the Field of Russian-Chinese Cooperation.

"Russia boasts vast arable land, clean water sources and abundant agricultural resources, while China offers a massive consumer market and a mature processing and distribution system," Wang said.

The expert noted that China has firmly established itself as the largest importer of Russian agricultural products, a milestone achieved through smooth policy communication and highly efficient customs clearance cooperation.

Wang said that both sides could further expand the trade of grains, oilseeds, meat, aquatic products and processed foods. This can be achieved by deepening the mutual recognition of agricultural quality standards — such as organic certification, and inspection and quarantine protocols — and improving cross-border cold chain and warehousing logistics networks at key ports like Suifenhe, Manzhouli and other cities in Heilongjiang province.

"Ultimately, this will help build a highly efficient 'from field to table' cooperation model," Wang added.



Tourists buy snacks at a night food market in Heihe, Heilongjiang province, last month. With visa-free entry, the market in the Sino-Russian border city attracts customers from both countries. HAN FEI / XINHUA

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CHINA-RUSSIA TIES



Finding warmth in Beijing

Director Andrei Zaitsev brought his moving feature film to this year's international movie festival in the capital, where Chinese audiences surprised him with their emotional attentiveness, **Xu Fan** reports.





> "Because our two elderly actors tired easily, we usually filmed their scenes first. But when we started shooting, the dog would suddenly run into the frame ... it had practically become one of the lead actors."
>
> **Andrei Zaitsev,** Russian director

Top: Poster for the Russian film *Two People in One Life and a Dog*, which earned a nomination for the 16th Beijing International Film Festival's Tiantan Awards — the festival's highest honor. **Above:** Director Andrei Zaitsev shares behind-the-scenes stories from the movie with a Chinese audience during a festival post-screening session held in Beijing earlier this year. **Top right:** A scene from *Two People in One Life and a Dog*, a quiet and heartwarming Russian film, features the protagonists, two elderly intellectuals — a husband and wife — living in St. Petersburg. **Middle right:** While confronting loneliness after their adult children move abroad, their pet dog becomes the elderly couple's pivotal comfort. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Despite a grueling festival schedule packed with post-screening discussions and public appearances, Russian director Andrei Zaitsev rarely turned away an eager Chinese film fan.

Outside a crowded room in a downtown cinema during the 16th Beijing International Film Festival held late last month, he patiently signed posters one after another, pausing for selfies with a gentle smile. At one point, he even stopped an event organizer to ask fans to speed up the signing process and skip photos, so the long line could move more quickly.

For Zaitsev, 50, who brought his latest film, *Two People in One Life and a Dog*, to Beijing, the warmth of the reception came as an unexpected surprise. Chinese audiences, he said, often picked up on subtle details and emotional nuances that even Russian moviegoers had overlooked.

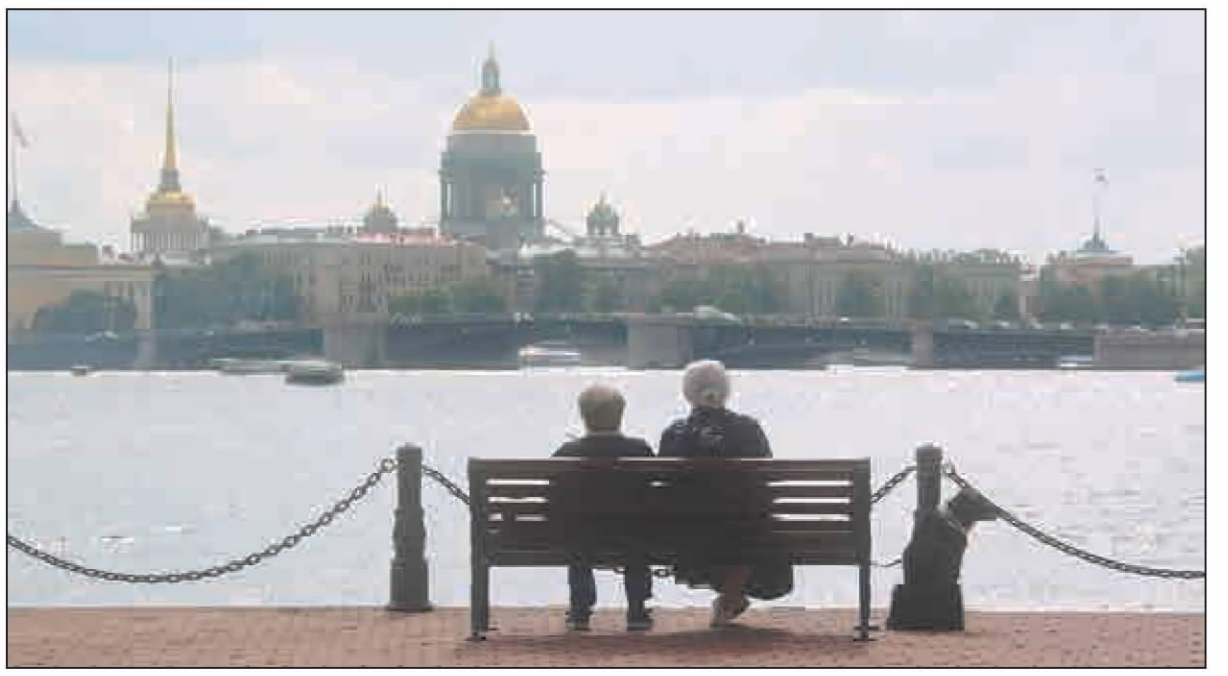
Such attentiveness became especially apparent during the film's post-screening exchanges. At one session, a female audience member raised her hand to ask about a scene that had clearly resonated with many local viewers. In it, one of the protagonists — a retired intellectual — meticulously copies an album of Song Dynasty (960-1279) fine-brush paintings in his study. The delicate depictions of birds and plants evoked a strong sense of familiarity among Chinese viewers.

"The inspiration came from the story of a renowned Russian philosopher and his wife," Zaitsev explained.

As the philosopher's birthday approached, his wife asked what gift he wanted most. He requested a rare and expensive album of Song Dynasty paintings, published in China in the 1950s. Finding a copy proved difficult. Determined to fulfill his wish, she went to bookstores in Moscow and, by luck, discovered the last remaining copy — which she purchased with the exact amount of money she happened to have on her at the time.

The scene, Zaitsev added, was also shaped by his friendship with the late Russian actor Sergey Dreyden (1941-2023), who acted in his 2020 directorial feature, *A Siege Diary*, about the brutal Siege of Leningrad during World War II. The historic feature earned Zaitsev the Tiantan Award for Best Director at the 11th Beijing International Film Festival in 2021.

"I became very close friends with Dreyden. We talked constantly, shared books and spent a lot of time together. He was a warm person. People naturally gravitated toward him, as if seeking warmth from his presence alone. I wanted that warmth to reach many viewers, not only the people around him," recalls the director with China Daily during an interview.



Dreyden loved sketching on electric trains or outdoors in nature. He often walked his dog through the streets of St. Petersburg, slowly wandering through the city he loved. "Many details in the film came directly from him," the director says.

That quiet tenderness permeates *Two People in One Life and a Dog*. Selected from 1,826 submissions from 139 countries and regions, the film was nominated for this year's Tiantan Awards, the festival's top honor. Following its screening, it received a score of 8.7 out of 10 on the Chinese review platform Douban.

Told in a restrained yet deeply humane tone, the story follows an elderly intellectual couple living in St. Petersburg. Having survived World War II as children, they confront loneliness after their adult children emigrate abroad. Accompanied by their pet dog, their quiet lives regain warmth when they befriend a young neighbor girl suffering under an abusive father.

The film lingers on seemingly trivial yet poetic moments. In one such memorable sequence, the husband becomes irritated by the vulgar commentary blaring from a tourist cruise ship along a river. Unable to tolerate it, he impulsively volunteers to serve as the guide himself, captivating passengers with stories about the literary giants who once lived and wandered along the riverbanks.



"The marriage in the film shows how difficult love can be. The elderly couple's affection for each other is unconditional. Their relationship is built on mutual respect and steadfast support through every hardship," says Zaitsev.

Yet while the film radiates warmth on-screen, its production was marked by setbacks. In 2023, just two months before filming was scheduled to begin, Sergey Dreyden, the actor originally chosen for the lead role, passed away, forcing production to be postponed for an extended period.

Even the film's canine star brought unexpected complications. The couple's pet, a border collie, was highly obedient and capable of performing complex actions on command. But the dog, interestingly, had a habit of stealing scenes.

"Because our two elderly actors tired easily, we usually filmed their scenes first. But when we started shooting, the dog would suddenly run into the frame. Later, during editing, we realized it had appeared so often that it had practically become one of the lead actors," recalls Zaitsev.

The festival marked Zaitsev's first visit to Beijing, a city he says reminds him in some ways of Moscow, as they serve as capitals of two vast countries. What impresses him most, however, is the greenery.

"I have noticed that Beijing has a large number of trees. Many of them are no longer young saplings but towering old trees. That shows China has been committed to environmental protection and urban greening for many years already," he says.

Like many first-time visitors, Zaitsev toured the Forbidden City and the Temple of Heaven. He was amused to discover that the bedrooms for emperors and their wives inside the sprawling palace complex were surprisingly modest in size.

But it was an ordinary human moment that stayed with him most vividly: in a narrow palace lane, an elderly man in a wheelchair slowly crossed paths with a baby sitting in a stroller — one face marked by age and weariness, the other filled with new life and curiosity. To the director, it felt like a fleeting scene that could be used in one of his future films.

Asked whether he would be interested in making a film in China, Zaitsev, who says he admires the works of Hong Kong auteur Wong Kar-wai, replies that the stories he most longs to tell remain simple ones — films about ordinary people, their emotions and the details of everyday life.

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Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

In Harbin, the taste of Russian bread becomes a link to home

By ZHOU HUIYING in Harbin
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Left: Workers make *lieba* at the Churin Food bakery in Harbin, Heilongjiang province. **Right:** Churin *lieba* weighs around two kilograms and has a traditional European flavor. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For international students studying abroad, the familiar taste of home often serves as the most tangible link between their homeland and a foreign country.

Viktoriia Poletaeva, a first-year master's student at Harbin Institute of Technology in Harbin, the capital city of Heilongjiang province, grew up with the aroma of Russian bread baked by her grandmother, and the scent of Russian rye bread has long been etched in her memory since she came to the city in 2022.

"The familiar Russian architecture in the city makes me feel at home," she says. "However, I always yearned for the authentic Russian bread from my hometown."

One day, by chance, she saw Churin *lieba* (which comes from the Russian word *khleb*, meaning bread) at a Churin Food store, and the familiar shape and aroma instantly triggered her homesickness.

"With one bite, the crispy crust paired with the soft interior and the slightly sour taste from the hops fermentation," she says. "At that moment, the longing for my distant homeland was gently soothed.

"In fact, Russian bread is generally more sour and harder, while Harbin *lieba* perfectly blends the rich wheat aroma of Northeast China," she says. "It is solid and chewy, with a long-lasting aftertaste. It retains the traditional essence of Russian baking while cleverly adapting to local tastes, making it a distinctive delicacy rooted in the black soil, combining flavors from both countries."

Poletaeva also visited the Churin Bread-Making Skills Exhibition Hall.

In the center of the hall stands a model of a loaf of Churin *lieba* sitting on a four-meter-long wooden paddle.

In the experience area, visitors were already lining up.

As the freshly baked *lieba* was unveiled, its soft interior and steaming warmth were handed to each visitor.

The traditional way to eat it is with butter and jam and another way is to pair it with slices of Russian-style sausage.

"These are authentic Russian ways of eating it," she says. "I'm delighted to see my hometown's food culture so welcomed in Harbin."

In 1900, Russian merchant Ivan Churin brought Russian bread-making techniques to Harbin.

Passed down through five generations of craftsmen, the large round bread, which weighs around two kilograms and has a traditional European flavor, has become a specialty of Harbin and a taste memory etched in the daily lives of local residents.

At 3 am, the fire in the Churin bakery is already lit.

Master Lei, the fifth-generation inheritor of Churin bread-making techniques, carefully records the room temperature.

His keen intuition, honed from years on the production line, allows him to accurately estimate fermentation based on variables like temperature and environment.

He adjusts the water temperature, kneads the dough, and gently awakens the century-old starter yeast.

Every detail affects the traditional flavor of *lieba*.

After three natural fermentations, manual shaping, and slow baking in a brick oven, the crispy-on-the-outside, soft-on-the-inside Churin *lieba* is ready, filling the air with the rich aroma of wheat.

"Churin *lieba* has been passed down through five generations, always using traditional Russian handmade techniques and facilities," says Lei. "Its three major processes are distinctive — using hops to make liquid yeast for fermentation, giving the bread an enticing hop aroma; employing a traditional three-stage fermentation to produce a rich variety of organic acids; and baking with hardwood, creating a slightly charred and crispy crust with a soft and tasty interior.

"Kneading and shaping by hand are the two key steps in the production process," he says. "Kneading by hand is a race against time; it requires speed and ensuring the dough is well-formed."

Lei says he spent over two years mastering the basic skill of kneading.

At the Churin bakery, the average age of the core worker team is over 35. Many of them entered the workshop when young and have been working on the front line for decades.

"In 2007, the Churin *lieba*-making technique was recognized as a provincial intangible cultural heritage. In 2009, we established the country's first Churin Bread-Making Skills Exhibition Hall," he says. "The exhibition hall is not only a simple reproduction of intangible cultural heritage techniques, but also an interpretation from a new perspective."

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COMMENT

Editorials

Sino-Russian ties have entered new stage of greater achievements, faster development

Russian President Vladimir Putin's 25th visit to China this week has once again drawn global attention to one of the world's most consequential major-country relationships. The steady development of China-Russia relations carries particular significance beyond the bilateral scope especially at a time marked by geopolitical turbulence.

During their meeting on Wednesday in Beijing, President Xi Jinping and his Russian counterpart exchanged views on bilateral ties, practical cooperation and major international and regional issues of mutual concern, injecting fresh momentum into the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination in its 30th anniversary year.

During Wednesday's meeting, the two sides also agreed to further extend the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation — this year marks the 25th anniversary of its signing — demonstrating the stability of bilateral relations and the high level of mutual trust between the two countries.

China-Russia relations have developed steadily because the two countries have continuously deepened their political mutual trust and strategic coordination. This is the result of long-time careful cultivation, mutual support and a shared commitment to respecting each other's core interests and development paths.

What makes China-Russia relations distinctive is that they have developed according to their own internal logic rather than external pressure. The bilateral relationship is characterized by non-alliance, non-confrontation and non-targeting of third parties. That also means the relationship is not subject to interference or manipulation by external actors.

That is particularly meaningful in today's world, where some countries still view international relations through the outdated prism of bloc confrontation and zero-sum rivalry.

In recent years, bilateral trade and investment have maintained stable and robust growth, showing the strong endogenous driving force behind the relationship.

The two neighbors' economies possess complementary advantages and their practical cooperation is a long-term strategic choice serving the interests of both peoples.

In the process of cooperation and communication, political mutual trust has further deepened, while exchanges in trade, investment, energy, science and technology, people-to-people and sub-national dialogues have continued to advance. The bonds between the two peoples have also grown stronger.

A recent survey among young people in both countries showed that more than 80 percent of respondents view bilateral relations positively and hope for stronger exchanges. Such findings reflect not only the vitality of people-to-people ties, but also the broader aspiration among younger generations for peace, cooperation and mutual understanding in a changing world.

Unswervingly promoting the long-term, sound, steady and high-quality development of China-Russia relations is a strategic choice made by both sides based on the fundamental interests of the two nations and broader global trends. In a turbulent era, mutual trust between major countries is increasingly valuable for world peace and stability.

The China-Russia relationship has entered a new stage of greater achievements and faster development, Xi said in his meeting with Putin.

In recent years, faced with a fluid and turbulent international situation, China and Russia have developed the comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era on the basis of equality, mutual respect, good faith, and win-win cooperation, as Xi pointed out.

This has enabled the two countries to expand practical cooperation at a time when unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise in some parts of the world. Such coordination also carries significance for safeguarding multilateralism and international fairness.

It is important for the two countries to work together in international organizations so as to make the global governance system more just and reasonable and jointly uphold international justice and fairness while advancing the building of a community with a shared future for humanity.

A stable and forward-looking China-Russia relationship is therefore not only beneficial to the two countries, but also contributes valuable certainty and positive energy to a volatile world.

As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and major countries, China and Russia should continue to adopt a strategic and long-term perspective and work together to fully implement the important common understandings reached by the two leaders. The two countries should seize the historic opportunities for their respective development and revitalization and contribute to the common good of the world.

Secessionists common enemy of China and US

Lai Ching-te's tenure as the head of the Democratic Progressive Party authorities of China's Taiwan region has been marked by a series of missteps and failures that have not only strained cross-Strait relations but also undermined the island's development prospects.

Contrary to his shameless claim in a speech on Wednesday marking the two-year anniversary of his tenure that he has maintained the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, the DPP authorities have stubbornly adhered to a "Taiwan independence" stance, peddled separatist fallacies and obstructed cross-Strait exchanges.

That speech was a response, if not a desperate "don't desert me" plea, to US President Donald Trump's Friday interview, in which the US leader stated, "We're not looking to have somebody say, 'Let's go independent because the United States is backing us'." This remark dealt a heavy blow to Lai.

In his speech — yet another litany of lies and deceit — Lai openly groveled to Washington, begging for an opportunity to tell the US leader that he wishes to continue purchasing US weapons, which he misleadingly labeled as essential to peace. Ironically, he tried to assure his audience that the island's future would not be determined by external forces just moments after trying to solicit US support.

In an attempt to conceal his secessionist nature, Lai peddled a so-called "Taiwan subject mentality" in his speech, openly seeking to sever the island from the Chinese motherland.

This "soft independence" is hidden and pernicious, no less harming than the DPP authorities' overt political separatist sloganeering.

Evidently anxious over the US leader's remarks, Lai posted a so-called "five-point speech" on Facebook on Sunday, in which he called black white, barefacedly claiming that his authorities are the protectors of regional peace. Yet to his horror, that "carefully worded" message failed to elicit the hoped for response from Washington — explaining why Lai doubled down on his efforts to appeal to the US not to give up on him.

If Lai truly intends to show the world that he is not a secessionist and that he is committed to peace and stability, he should simply pledge his support for the 1992 Consensus and stop fawning over the US.

The true color of his secessionist feather is laid bare by the extraordinary lengths he has gone to in an attempt to conceal his separatist nature — and his fear of losing US support for his political agenda.

The predicament Taiwan faces today stems from the DPP authorities' long-standing practice of placing ideological manipulation above reality, staking the island's security on the will of the US, and tying the future of Taiwan people to the dangerous path of seeking "Taiwan independence" through reliance on external forces. Once Washington shows even signs of shifting priorities, that layer of illusion surrounding the DPP authorities' reckless approach will be stripped away. In short, "Taiwan independence" is a dead end.

Lai's latest remarks do not signal any abandonment of "Taiwan independence", but rather a repackaging of it in more carefully crafted rhetoric.

"Taiwan independence" is fundamentally incompatible with peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. The expansion of separatist forces advocating "Taiwan independence" will ultimately push Taiwan toward a dangerous abyss — a trajectory that runs counter not only to the interests of the Chinese nation, but also to the strategic interests of the US. In this sense, curbing "Taiwan independence" separatist activities and maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait serve the shared interests of both China and the US. Lai's remarks further underscore the reality that "Taiwan independence" has become a common challenge confronting both Beijing and Washington.

There is but one China in the world and that Taiwan is part of China. No matter what Lai says or does, he will not stop the historical trend toward reunification, which is unstoppable, as a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office said on Wednesday.

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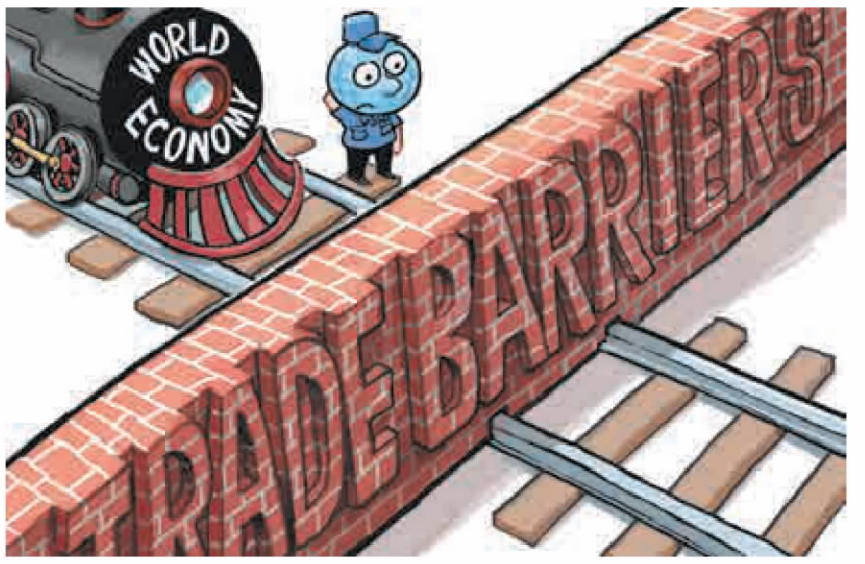

Opinion Line

Redline conservation based on space-air-ground monitoring

In the run-up to the 25th International Day for Biological Diversity on Friday, the global community faces a sobering reality check.

According to a release from the United Nations Development Programme last August, only $121 billion is invested annually in conservation worldwide, leaving an estimated annual gap of over $700 billion.

Meanwhile, the recently unveiled UN Global Forest Goals Report 2026 reveals that the global forest area declined by more than 40 million hectares between 2015 and 2025, while financing for sustainable forest management remains far below estimated needs.

There are only two solutions going forward: either countries have to dramatically increase funding, or find smarter, more cost-effective ways to conserve nature. While dramatically increasing funding is no easy task, China may have found a way to achieve the latter. Its Ecological Conservation Redline strategy offers a way to protect biodiversity at remarkably low cost — and one that holds valuable lessons for the rest of the world.

Many nations, particularly those in the Global South, struggle with uncontrolled land encroachment and expansion. The default approach is often to develop first and clean up later — an expensive and frequently futile exercise.

China's redline strategy flips this logic on its head with a simple yet powerful principle: draw the baseline before the blueprint. Instead of spending billions to restore degraded wetlands or deforested lands at a later stage, the approach forces planners to first identify and cordon off areas that are ecologically vital or fragile. Only then is development permitted elsewhere.

This "defensive tool" is inherently low-cost and in doing so, it transforms biodiversity protection from an expensive afterthought into a preemptive safeguard, helping nations escape the zero-sum game between ecology and economy that traps so many developing countries.

The results speak for themselves. According to a blue book released by the Ministry of Natural Resources late last year, since the redlines were established nationwide in 2022, China has seen forest area within the redlines increase by 3,344 square kilometers, and water body area increase by 320 sq km. At the same time, construction area has shrunk by 6.5 sq km and mining area by 5.6 sq km.

Within marine ecological redlines, sea use area has reduced by 873 sq km, down 35 percent.

Perhaps the most innovative and budget-friendly aspect of this redline system is its administrative simplicity. Unlike traditional nature reserves, which often require dedicated management bodies, staff members and ongoing operational budgets for each site, China's redline strategy follows a different tack: there is no special management body for each of the areas encircled by its redlines.

Instead, the government oversees these vast zones using a combination of satellites, drones and targeted on-the-ground patrols — a three-dimensional "space-air-ground" monitoring network. This model dramatically drives down enforcement costs, allowing governments to protect more land with fewer resources, narrowing the gap between ambition and affordability.

Of course, the global biodiversity finance gap of over $700 billion is not a problem any country can solve alone. But China's Ecological Conservation Redline strategy offers a compelling, low-cost, and readily applicable model. It proves that effective biodiversity protection does not always require vast bureaucracies or unlimited budgets.

Sometimes, it takes nothing more than a clear line on a map, a satellite in the sky that shows it, and the political will to say: here, development stops, and life begins.

For any country seeking to protect its natural heritage without breaking the bank, that is a lesson worth learning.

— HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Global cooperation launchpad for lunar exploration

Editor's note: *China's aerospace sector, especially its lunar exploration program, has made rapid progress in recent years. Yang Yuguang, chair of the International Astronautical Federation's Space Transportation Committee, spoke to China.com.cn about China's achievements and the importance of international cooperation in lunar exploration. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China is a reliable partner in international lunar exploration, and that reliability is rooted largely in its sound technologies. Through the lunar missions from Chang'e-1 to Chang'e-6, the country has mastered exploration technologies of lunar orbiting, landing and sample return. These capabilities are essential for lunar exploration activities and will enable China to carry international payloads in future lunar missions.

China has a long history of international cooperation in outer space. For example, the resource satellites jointly developed by China and Brazil have been hailed as a model of South-South cooperation. International cooperation has been embedded in China's lunar exploration program from the very beginning. Deep-space tracking, telemetry and command communications depend on extensive support from ground stations. As China's territory cannot always face the moon, it needs assistance from stations located in other countries.

Throughout the orbiting, landing and sample return stages of the lunar exploration program, the missions from China carried experimental payloads from various countries.

Some lunar samples retrieved by Chang'e-5 and Chang'e-6 were given as State gifts to visiting heads of state from other countries. These samples given by China to other countries for scientific research are expected to yield valuable outcomes.

Scientists from both China and other countries can apply for access to lunar soil and rock samples brought back by Chang'e-5 and Chang'e-6. These samples will help scientists worldwide deepen their understanding of the evolution and history of the moon.

China is scheduled to launch the Chang'e-7 probe this year. Together with the subsequent Chang'e-8 probe, it will help form the basic model of the International Lunar Research Station. China is making a major contribution to the construction of the station, which will be built in the South Pole region of the moon. International payloads can be carried to the station by probes from both China and other countries to become part of the station.

Lunar exploration is no longer an endeavor reserved solely for national space agencies. Many commercial enterprises are now able to participate in it. Nevertheless, lunar exploration remains a megaproject that requires huge investments and a long period of time. Through international cooperation, participants can share the financial burden, making it easier to secure government support.

China has made extensive efforts to promote international cooperation in lunar and deep-space exploration. The country will remain committed to such cooperation in the future as well.

The formulation of common standards will be crucial for advancing international cooperation, especially in technological areas. Effective cooperation needs a shared "language". Without unified specifications for electrical, mechanical, signal and other interfaces, international cooperation will become too complicated to carry out. China is also beginning to formulate international standards in the field of aerospace.

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VIEWS

Asif Ali Zardari

Seventy-five years of friendship: Pakistan and China step into the future

Pakistan and China began their remarkable journey of friendship and cooperation 75 years ago with the establishment of diplomatic relations.

Since then, we have built a partnership defined by trust, consistency, and the ability to stand together through difficult times and shifting global realities. What began as a diplomatic engagement has evolved into a model of enduring cooperation between our two nations.

This relationship is also deeply personal for me. My late father in law, Shaheed Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, and Shaheed Mohtarma Benazir Bhutto, believed strongly in building lasting ties with China and played pivotal roles in shaping our early cooperation.

That legacy continues into the third generation. My son, Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, and daughter, Aseefa Bhutto Zardari, are both actively engaged in strengthening links between our two nations.

Our connection, however, predates modern diplomacy. For centuries, the regions that are now in Pakistan and China were linked through the ancient Silk Road — routes that crossed mountains and rivers, carrying goods, culture and ideas between our peoples. These exchanges have laid the foundation for a relationship that is both historic and natural.

Pakistan-China relations have never been transactional. They are rooted in mutual respect, trust and a shared understanding of each other's priorities.

Since 1951, we have supported each other on issues of core importance, including Pakistan's firm commitment to the one-China principle and our role in supporting China's rightful place at the United Nations in 1971.

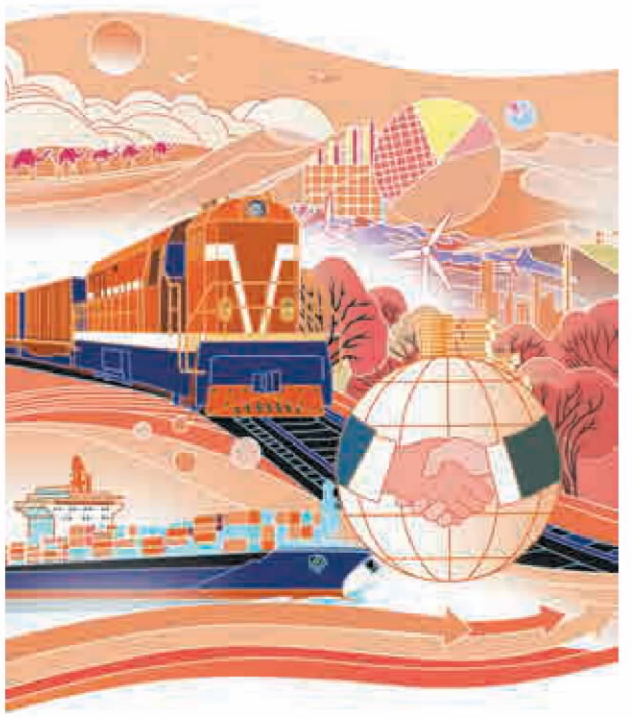
What makes this partnership unique is how it has evolved. Regular high-level exchanges have kept it forward-looking, translating political understanding into practical cooperation, across infrastructure, energy, trade and agriculture — areas that directly impact people's lives.

I have witnessed this closeness firsthand. During my earlier tenure as President from 2008 to 2013, I visited China frequently.

These visits were not merely official engagements; they were opportunities to deepen trust, observe China's transformation and fortify our genuine friendship.

My visits again in 2025 brought those experiences full circle.

The scale of China's progress is extraordinary. Under the leadership of President Xi Jinping, China has consolidated its position as a leading global power and the world's second-largest economy.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

This transformation reflects vision, discipline, and a sustained commitment to development that has reshaped the global economic landscape.

Through profound shifts in the international system — from the Cold War to today's more complex and fragmented world — Pakistan-China relations have remained resilient.

At a time when divisions often dominate global discourse, our partnership stands out for its consistency and clarity of purpose.

We do not view security and development as a race; we see it as a shared journey. This belief shapes our cooperation at the United Nations, within the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation, and across the broader Global South, reflecting a shared commitment to multilateralism and dialogue.

This approach also guides our actions in times of crisis. During the recent war involving the United States, Israel and Iran, China played a constructive role by encouraging restraint and supporting dialogue, as well as resolutely backing Pakistan's mediation efforts, alongside its own compelling diplomatic engagement. This reflected our conviction that even the most complex disputes must be resolved peacefully.

China's Belt and Road Initiative has taken this philosophy of shared progress to a global scale. By investing in infrastructure and connectivity, it has opened new avenues for trade, strengthened economic linkages, and created opportunities for growth.

For many developing countries, it has demonstrated how connectivity can drive inclusive prosperity.

Within this broader vision, the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) stands as a flagship of our cooperation. It has transformed Pakistan's infrastructure, reduced energy shortages, and created new economic opportunities.

As CPEC enters its next phase, our focus is increasingly on people-centered development — industrial cooperation, modern agriculture, job creation, and technology transfer — to ensure growth is both sustainable and inclusive.

Our defense partnership remains another key pillar of this relationship. Cooperation in defense technology, training, and joint exercises has reinforced Pakistan's capabilities while contributing to regional stability. It is defensive in nature and reflects our commitment to peace.

Yet, the true strength of Pakistan-China relations lies beyond governments and agreements. It rests in the bonds between our people.

Students, artists, entrepreneurs, and young people from both countries are building connections that transcend political cycles. These human ties give real meaning to the idea of an "all-weather friendship".

The symbolism of this year's Chinese zodiac — the Year of the Horse — captures the spirit of our partnership: energy, resilience, and forward momentum.

As we look ahead, our direction is clear: deepen cooperation, strengthen solidarity among Global South nations, and work together for a rule-based international order.

Our partnership is not directed against any country; it is rooted in mutual respect and shared progress.

Seventy-five years on, Pakistan-China relations remain strong, steady, and deeply humane — and that enduring spirit will continue to guide us into the future.

The author is the President of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Loh Wee Keng

China boosts shared prosperity in Asia-Pacific

The first five months of 2026 have seen intensified geopolitical rivalries and a turbulent global economy. To ensure businesses operate smoothly, major countries should take responsibility for stabilizing both regional and global markets.

As the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation 2026, China is working to inject stability and foster consensus for regional prosperity. Under the theme "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together", China has prioritized openness, innovation and cooperation to advance the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific.

Around 2017, China shifted its focus toward the Asia-Pacific region. This pivot shaped a new economic landscape characterized by closer ties and a stronger emphasis on regional integration.

That year, China's trade with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations countries crossed a record $500 billion.

In the following years, through the Belt and Road Initiative, APEC, the implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, and the signing of the China-ASEAN FTA 3.0 Upgrade Protocol, China has steered neighboring countries toward a new consensus. A standout result is that ASEAN became China's largest trading partner in 2020, while China has remained the association's largest trading partner since 2009.

Four years after its implementation, the RCEP has significantly impacted China's trade landscape. By 2025, China's trade with the other RCEP members reached $1.9 trillion, accounting for 44.2 percent of the country's total foreign trade growth and underscoring the agreement's role in fostering regional cooperation.

China's high-tech exports grew by 13.2 percent, with exports of specialized equipment, high-end machine tools, and industrial robots increasing by 20.6 percent, 21.5 percent and 48.7 percent respectively. This reflects China's growing export focus on high-end technology and advanced productive forces.

China is also steering sustainable growth in the Asia-Pacific through its green transition. In 2024, Asia accounted for 72 percent of the world's newly installed renewable energy capacity.

In 2025, Asia attracted 65 percent of global investment in solar, 64 percent in wind, and 41 percent in battery sectors, propelling the global shift toward clean energy.

The energy crisis sparked by the US-Iran conflict further underscored the foresight in China's new energy initiatives.

China's role is pivotal; in 2025, its clean energy capacity reached 2.4 billion kilowatts, about 45 percent of the global total. In just five years, its combined installed wind and solar capacity has surged from 530 million to 1.84 billion kilowatts.

Global energy transition investment reached a record $2.3 trillion in 2025, with the Asia-Pacific region leading the charge at 47 percent of the total. Although China's investment dipped slightly due to lower equipment costs, it continued to be the world's largest single market.

Emerging markets, particularly those in Southeast Asia, are also key drivers of the global energy transition. Vietnam's energy transition investment has exceeded $10 billion, while Indonesia's electric vehicle and energy storage markets are rapidly expanding.

Within the RCEP region, EV trade grew by 45.2 percent year-on-year, and exports of green products such as wind turbines and electric railway locomotives doubled, highlighting the significant green transformation fueled by regional cooperation.

However, Asia's energy transition still faces challenges such as reliance on fossil fuels and insufficient power grid infrastructure.

Li Baosen, deputy secretary-general of the Global Energy Interconnection Development and Cooperation Organization, notes that China's cooperation models and technical support can help address developmental disparities across the region.

By supplying photovoltaic cells, new energy vehicles, smart grids, and energy storage solutions, China is aiding regional and global decarbonization. The energy crisis sparked by the US-Iran conflict further underscored the foresight in China's new energy initiatives.

China is propelling regional smart development. In 2025, its trade with ASEAN surpassed $1 trillion — a milestone driven by both enormous shared development needs and vibrant opportunities in the digital and green economies and other emerging fields. China's expertise in 5G, cloud computing, and artificial intelligence aligns with ASEAN countries' needs for industrial upgrading.

Their cross-border e-commerce has maintained over 20 percent growth for years. The China-ASEAN FTA 3.0 Upgrade Protocol now includes the digital economy, enabling Chinese digital and new energy companies to deepen their presence in ASEAN markets. This supports collaboration in cloud infrastructure, AI and fintech, and promotes the integration of industry and supply chains.

China's regional AI cooperation has also yielded impressive results. At the 2025 SCO Summit in Tianjin, Beijing systematically outlined a strategic direction and pathways for regional AI cooperation and offered an SCO solution for global AI governance. As China and ASEAN strengthen ties in cross-border data flows, digital payments, and smart cities, a closely integrated digital economy community is emerging.

Consensus-building is inseparable from people-to-people exchanges, with tourism playing a crucial role. In 2025, China saw a record 697 million inbound and outbound crossings, while inbound trips reached 154 million, driven by incentives such as visa-free policies for 48 countries and expanded departure tax refunds.

Tourism between China and Asia-Pacific countries is advancing across five dimensions: scale, policy, technology, consumption structure, and regional coordination, aiming for high-quality, resilient, and integrated development.

RCEP and APEC have facilitated tourism by increasing flight routes and enhancing joint marketing, boosting visitor flows. Meanwhile, technology, particularly AI, is transforming the tourism service ecosystem by improving booking, personalized guidance, and other services.

Through economic cooperation organizations, advanced new energy technologies, innovative digital economy initiatives, and open tourism policies, China is injecting stability into the Asia-Pacific region on multiple fronts.

The author is the chairman of the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce and Industry in China.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Visit deepens good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation

Editor's note: *President Xi Jinping and Russian President Vladimir Putin, who was on a state visit to China, on Wednesday signed a joint statement on enhancing comprehensive strategic coordination and deepening good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation between the two countries. Two experts shared their views on this matter with China Daily's Li Huixian and Wang Qingyun.*

Deepened coordination beneficial to both

The high-level engagement between President Xi Jinping and visiting Russian President Vladimir Putin in Beijing on Wednesday and the signing of more than 20 cooperation agreements in areas such as education, technology and economic and trade relations by the two heads of state hold strategic significance on multiple levels.

First, both sides agreed to extend the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation, thereby maintaining the legal foundation for deep bilateral ties.

This extension allows the further development of their comprehensive strategic partnership, safeguarding their sovereignty, and developmental interests across the board, while advancing cooperation in various fields.

Notably, they leverage platforms such as the China-Russia Years of Education to unlock the potential of exchanges between their peoples.

The two countries can also leverage existing multilateral cooperation frameworks — including the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, BRICS, and the coordination mechanisms linking the Belt and Road Initiative with the Eurasian Economic Union — to jointly promote regional connectivity and cross-border trade, ensure the smooth operation of regional industry and supply chains, and foster a stable and orderly environment for regional development.

This collaboration will enable China and Russia to further expand cooperation in areas such as energy, cross-border logistics, local-currency settlements, and trade and economic exchanges.

Moreover, the Chinese side called for even higher quality development and revitalization of the comprehensive strategic coordination between China and Russia.

This approach has a solid practical foundation. Both countries are at a critical stage of industrial upgrading and are pursuing self-reliant development in their economic and technological systems. They face shared challenges, such as trade barriers and supply chain instability. By deepening their cooperation, the two nations can effectively complement each other's economic strengths.

For instance, Russia can leverage China's vast market, comprehensive manufacturing capacity, and infrastructure capabilities to broaden its development space and unlock the potential of its energy and other resources.

At the same time, China can draw on Russia's resource endowments, market and favorable geographical location to diversify its energy and resource supplies and smooth its westward-opening corridors.

This way, mutual reinforcement can serve each country's domestic revitalization needs.

From a long-term strategic perspective, by supporting each other's development and revitalization through cooperation, the two countries can steadily strengthen their development confidence, withstand external uncertainties, achieve stable growth, and further consolidate the foundation for bilateral relations.

Globally, both countries can continue working together to promote a multipolar world, advance multilateralism and implement the four global initiatives proposed by China and counter hegemony, unilateralism and bloc confrontation.

The commitment of Beijing and Moscow to promoting a more just and equitable international order through the United Nations is a stabilizing force, and can help safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Global South countries.

Zhao Huirong is a researcher at the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

An enduring partnership for mutual growth

The heads of state of China and Russia held talks in Beijing on Wednesday, guiding the two countries' efforts to conduct comprehensive strategic coordination of even higher quality.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Russia comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination and the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

Over the past 25 years, China and Russia have followed the spirit of the treaty and maintained close coordination in political, economic, cultural and other fields.

In 2019, bilateral relations were elevated to a comprehensive strategic partnership of coordination for a new era, placing cooperation across all fields on the fast track.

Both sides agreed to extend the treaty on Wednesday, which further consolidates the legal foundation for permanent good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation between the two countries.

Under the strategic guidance of the heads of state of China and Russia, the two countries have developed a mature relationship that has become an example for a new type of major-country relations.

China and Russia are each other's good neighbors, friends and partners. They pursue a partnership rather than an alliance, and their relations are not targeted at any third party.

Both nations respect each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity, continuously deepen mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation in various fields, and work hand in hand on international affairs.

Over the past decade, economic cooperation between China and Russia has achieved rapid growth.

The two countries are each other's important trading partners. Sub-national cooperation between the two sides is thriving.

The China-Russia Expo, which is being held in Harbin, Northeast China's Heilongjiang province, has become an important platform for connecting enterprises of both sides, deepening supply chain cooperation and boosting people-to-people exchanges.

This year is also the beginning of the China-Russia Years of Education. Both sides have seen more than 80,000 people studying in each other's country, and cooperated to establish more than 150 educational institutions and projects.

Coordination between China and Russia has weathered changes in the international situation, and become a "stabilizer" in a world fraught with uncertainty.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

POU SOTHIRAK AND HIM ROTHA

Building up the Lancang-Mekong community

This cooperation mechanism linking countries through which the river flows holds huge potential for deepening ties between China and Southeast Asia



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The Lancang-Mekong Cooperation, launched in 2016, is one of the most successful subregional cooperation mechanisms backed by strong political will, deep financial support and shared vision among the six member countries, namely China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Vietnam and Thailand.



Pou Sothirak



Him Rotha

With an expressed commitment to deepening mutual trust, LMC has set out to promote cooperation, with the member countries' leaders pledging to boost the economic and social development of subregional countries, enhance people's well-being, narrow the development gap among regional countries and support the Association of Southeast Asian Nations community in facilitating the implementation of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and advancing South-South cooperation.

Although there are plenty of Lancang-Mekong mechanisms, the LMC is known to be among the most robust subregional platforms, as it operates through all-round and broad-based cooperation with a government-guided and project-oriented model.

As this year marks the 10th anniversary of the first Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Leaders' Meeting, it is worth reflecting upon the decade-long achievements and the way forward.

The LMC is one of the most institutionalized Lancang-Mekong mechanisms. It possesses long-term goals driven by a development strategy, focusing on three priority areas, namely political and security issues, economic and sustainable development, and social, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, as enshrined in the Joint Press Communique of the First Lancang-Mekong Cooperation Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 2015.

Based on the Sanya Declaration adopted in 2016, the LMC states decided to make the three aforementioned areas the cooperation's pillars with a specific scope of prioritizing connectivity, production capacity, cross-border economic cooperation, water resources, agriculture and poverty reduction.

Since its inception, this subregional mechanism has established deep engagements between China and other Lancang-Mekong countries through frequent meetings, ranging from leaders' summits to foreign ministers' meetings, and a wide range of working group engagements. This has not only fostered trust and confidence among the leaders of these subregional countries, but also regularized interactions among line officials across LMC working groups and relevant stakeholders in the LMC region.

Moreover, the institutionalization of the LMC deepened with the launch of the LMC Special Fund in 2017. Since then, nearly 1,000 "small yet smart" projects have been carried out. Cambodia, specifically, has received over 100 projects, covering diverse sectors, including rural development, water resource management and agriculture. This special fund has not only improved livelihoods but also strengthened national connectivity, enhanced rural development and reinforced the effectiveness of the LMC model, deepening the bonds between China and Cambodia.

With the special fund allocated to projects that boost local livelihoods and the well-being of the people in the region, the LMC frameworks have been able to contribute to common development and prosperity for all LMC countries.

The LMC has also addressed the challenges. In 2016, the Lancang-Mekong countries witnessed a severe drought caused by a number of factors, such as climate change and the El Nino phenomenon. China released water from the Jinghong Hydropower Station in Yunnan province, providing other Lancang-Mekong countries with huge relief.

Water cooperation has been significantly enhanced since 2020, when China and other Lancang-Mekong countries agreed to establish an information-sharing platform, through which China has shared full-year hydrological data of the river.

Water cooperation is also linked with energy cooperation. So far, energy cooperation under the LMC framework has focused only on functional cooperation, such as capacity building and technical support. Although this has supported soft infrastructure, such as knowledge and information sharing on green energy promotion, it could be an area LMC countries can explore further amid the energy crisis caused by an unstable geopolitical environment, including the current conflict in the Middle East.

The LMC holds promising potential to deepen ties between China and countries in Southeast Asia. Nonetheless, challenges remain, from geopolitical uncertainties and flash points in the region and beyond, to the need to improve the functional structure of this mechanism. For that it is crucial that the LMC countries work together.

First, the setting up of the LMC should serve as a catalyst to bring about further development along the Lancang-Mekong River. As such, LMC should not be seen as a competitor but rather an inclusive complement to the already-existing Lancang-Mekong mechanisms. Since some of these existing mechanisms seem to have limited capacity in terms of financial assistance and limited areas of work and cooperation, LMC should be seen as a prime framework that could complement other mechanisms such as the Mekong River Commission, Greater Mekong Subregion Cooperation and the Mekong-United States Partnership, just to name a few.

Second, as a platform with better political will, leadership and funds availability, the LMC should explore whether there are projects proposed by other Lancang-Mekong mechanisms that are stuck because of limited fund capacity or other reasons. The LMC should consider joint collaboration with such projects. The LMC's credibility can be built through joint collaborations with various existing mechanisms, as long as misunderstandings are kept to a minimum.

Third, some countries in the region have their own issues to deal with, such as domestic problems and interstate border conflicts. Therefore, LMC countries could consider compartmentalizing political issues while maintaining overall achievable and robust cooperation. This would serve the interests of the livelihoods and well-being of the people in the region.

Other than that, as the world is facing a multitude of challenges, such as the energy crisis and other emerging issues, LMC countries should build upon existing frameworks and work together to explore alternative solutions, including investment in green energy infrastructure, and prepare themselves for potential future non-traditional security issues, such as transnational crime.

To become a vital institution that can achieve what other existing mechanisms cannot, the LMC should try to be more inclusive and open, and inject vitality into regional integration.

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MUHAMMAD ASIF NOOR

Link of friendship

The CPEC is a practical outcome of China-Pakistan cooperation that has steadily strengthened over the past 75 years based on long-term mutual trust



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

This year marks 75 years of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. The anniversary comes at a time when the global landscape is unsettled. Economic fragmentation, an uneven recovery and uncertainty over development paths dominate international debates. Against this backdrop, the China-Pakistan relationship stands out for its steadiness, clarity and practical results. It reflects a partnership built on long-term mutual trust, development-first thinking and mutual respect, shaped by decades of cooperation and a shared outlook on the future.



What has defined China-Pakistan diplomacy over the years is consistency. From the earliest days of recognition through shifting regional and global circumstances, both sides have treated sovereignty, strategic autonomy and development as shared priorities. Political trust was established early and has been carefully maintained across leadership changes. Regular high-level exchanges have created a rhythm of cooperation that has remained stable even during periods of regional uncertainty. This is why the relationship has evolved into a genuine all-weather strategic cooperative partnership, supported by public confidence in both countries.

A major turning point came in 2015, when President Xi Jinping's visit to Pakistan translated political trust into a concrete economic vision through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. Conceived under the Belt and Road Initiative, the CPEC was never meant to be just a set of projects. It was designed as a long-term development plan aimed at addressing Pakistan's structural challenges. Pakistan's consistent support for China's core interests has been matched by China's firm backing of Pakistan's sovereignty, stability and development goals. This mutual understanding has given the partnership depth and lasting credibility.

The importance of this year was underscored right at its start. On Jan 4, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar visited Beijing to co-chair the seventh round of the China-Pakistan Foreign Ministers' Strategic Dialogue with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi. The discussions reinforced strategic trust, reaffirmed support for each country's core interests and set the direction for advancing a high-quality CPEC 2.0. The focus on industry, agriculture and mining signals a shared commitment to the next phase of cooperation.

The impact of this partnership is most visible in economic outcomes. Chinese investment flows have picked up pace. It is estimated that net inflows from China surged to $1.22 billion in the 2024-25 fiscal year, accounting for nearly half of Pakistan's total foreign direct investment of around $2.5 billion. These figures reflect renewed investor confidence, supported by better connectivity, improved energy availability and steady progress under the CPEC.

Since its launch in 2013, the original phase of the CPEC focused on Pakistan's most pressing challenges, especially energy shortages and weak connectivity. Through a mix of coal, hydropower, wind and solar projects, more than 8,000 megawatts were added to the national grid. Urban load shedding, once as high as 18 hours a day, has largely faded, restoring industrial activity and improving daily life for households. At the same time, over 1,500 kilometers of modern highways, including the Multan-Sukkur Motorway, have reduced logistics costs and connected regions that had long remained on the margins of economic activity.

The CPEC has also broadened employment opportunities. By late 2025, special economic zones such as Rashakai had generated tens of thousands of jobs in textiles, manufacturing and information technology businesses, with growing participation by young workers. Security challenges remain in parts of Balochistan, yet dedicated protection measures have helped maintain continuity and investor confidence. At the same time, the presence of Chinese companies has accelerated technology transfer and productivity improvements across domestic industries.

Humanitarian cooperation has been equally significant. China's assistance during Pakistan's devastating floods in 2022 exceeded $57.36 million, followed by continued support for climate resilience. These efforts went beyond emergency relief, deepening people-to-people ties and reinforcing a sense of solidarity during difficult times.

As the CPEC moves into its upgraded phase as the CPEC 2.0, the emphasis has shifted from infrastructure to high-quality, sustainable development. Formalized in September 2025 at the 14th Joint Cooperation Committee Meeting of the CPEC, this phase aligns with Pakistan's "5Es": Exports, E-Pakistan, Equity and Empowerment, Environment and Food Security, and Energy and Infrastructure — a framework designed to tackle economic challenges proposed in the country's National Economic Transformation Plan 2024-29.

The CPEC 2.0 introduces five thematic corridors covering growth, livelihoods, innovation, green development and regional connectivity, including links to Afghanistan and Central Asia.

Industrial cooperation draws on China's experience in relocating manufacturing capacity, with appliance parks and textile hubs expected to create large-scale employment. Digital cooperation has expanded quickly, with agreements worth $8.5 billion in artificial intelligence, e-commerce and connectivity, alongside advanced training programs for thousands of Pakistani professionals in China. Planned upgrades to the Main Line-1 railway project and the Karakoram Highway aim to improve trade efficiency, while mineral development and precision agriculture offer new paths for diversification and food security.

China's four global initiatives provide a wider governance framework for this partnership. The Global Development Initiative emphasizes inclusive growth and poverty reduction, reflected in the CPEC's focus on livelihoods and sustainability. The Global Security Initiative promotes dialogue and cooperative security, evident in China-Pakistan coordination on counter-terrorism and regional stability. The Global Civilization Initiative encourages mutual respect through education, media and people-to-people exchanges. The Global Governance Initiative highlights sovereign equality and fair participation in global decision-making, offering developing countries a stronger voice in international affairs.

Seventy-five years after diplomatic ties were established, the China-Pakistan partnership is defined more by outcomes than by statements. The foundation is strong, decades of trust have built resilience, and a shared development vision offers clear direction. At a time when the world feels increasingly divided, the China-Pakistan experience shows how long-term cooperation, rooted in development and mutual respect, can deliver real benefits and contribute to a more balanced and inclusive global order.

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BUSINESS

Chipmaker YMTC seeks Shanghai float

Listing seen as milestone for nation's cutting-edge semiconductor sector

By **MA SI** in Haikou
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China's leading flash memory maker, Yangtze Memory Technologies Co (YMTC), has officially begun its initial public offering process with plans to list on Shanghai's STAR Market, marking a major milestone for the country's semiconductor industry.

The filing showed that YMTC has no controlling shareholder and features a diversified ownership structure led by State-backed entities. Its largest shareholder, Hubei Changsheng Development — wholly owned by the administrative committee of Wuhan Optics Valley in Hubei province — holds 26.54 percent of the company.

$44 billion
expected market value of Yangtze Memory Technologies Co for its planned IPO on Shanghai's STAR Market

Other key investors include phases I and II of the National Integrated Circuit Industry Investment Fund, as well as local State-owned capital and industry funds.

Guosheng Securities said in a research note that YMTC is expected to submit its listing application as early as mid-June, with market forecasts valuing the company at around 300 billion yuan ($44 billion) for the IPO.

YMTC is China's only company capable of end-to-end 3D NAND flash chip manufacturing. NAND is a type of high-end nonvolatile memory chip used for data storage in data centers, smartphones and other tech gadgets.

By the third quarter of 2025, YMTC held roughly 13 percent of the global NAND flash market, securing a top-tier position, the filing citing third-party market research said.

Guosheng Securities said that YMTC launched construction of its third phase base in Wuhan in September. By early 2026, the facility had entered the equipment installation phase for its cleanrooms.

Once the third phase base reaches full production, YMTC's market share of the global NAND flash sector is expected to exceed 15 percent. The company plans to build two more wafer fabs thereafter, which would double its total production capacity when fully operational, Guosheng Securities said.

Driven by surging demand from artificial intelligence-powered data centers, the company's revenue exceeded 20 billion yuan in the first quarter, doubling year-on-year.

The IPO plan comes as the rapid development of large AI models and computing infrastructure has ushered in a "supercycle" for the memory chip market.

Market research firm Gartner said global chip sales are expected to approach 9 trillion yuan in 2026, up 64 percent year-on-year, with memory chip sales estimated at around 4.3 trillion yuan.

Roger Sheng, vice-president of research at Gartner, said that YMTC has made significant progress, but there remains a significant capacity gap between Chinese memory leaders and their global counterparts, pointing to substantial room for expansion.

Soochow Securities said in a research note that South Korea's Samsung and US firm Western Digital each commanded around 410,000 and 400,000 wafers per month in the second quarter of 2025, while YMTC's monthly capacity stood at only 140,000 wafers.



Visitors gather at YMTC's booth during a high-tech expo in Wuhan, Hubei province, on April 19. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Finishing touches


Construction workers conduct welding work on joints of the steel space grid structure of Xuanhan South Railway Station on the Xi'an-Chongqing High-speed Railway in Dazhou's Xuanhan county, Sichuan province, on May 14. The integral jacking of the station building's 1,800-metric-ton steel grid, undertaken by China Railway 24th Bureau Group, was successfully completed the same day, marking its full transition to the interior decoration and exterior finishing phase. A key passenger node on the Beijing-Kunming corridor of China's national high-speed railway network, the station will enable the line to further optimize the railway network in central and western China.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

State-backed investors eye nation's top AI startups

By **CHENG YU**
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China's powerful State-backed investors are piling into the country's top artificial intelligence startups, turning the efforts over large language models from a venture capital frenzy into a strategic national move over technological self-sufficiency.

Moonshot AI, a leading Beijing-based startup behind the Kimi chatbot, has added a cluster of State-backed funds and government-linked investors to its shareholder roster, sources confirmed to China Daily.

The new investors include State-owned platforms such as Beijing AI Industry Investment Fund and a State-backed investment fund under Shanghai Guosheng Group, alongside State-owned enterprise telecom giant China Mobile, marking one of the clearest signs yet that China's "national team" is consolidating around a select group of domestic AI champions.

The move comes as DeepSeek is seeking to raise more than 50 billion yuan ($7.35 billion) in a financing round that could push its valuation above 350 billion yuan, with China's State-backed semiconductor investment fund in talks to lead the deal, according to media reports.

"Such investments extend far beyond commercial returns and also the strategic value of technological self-sufficiency," said Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences. "State-backed investors are increasingly stepping in not just with capital, but with access to computing power, data resources and industrial ecosystems."

Wang pointed to DeepSeek's reported migration onto Huawei's Ascend AI chips as an example of how capital could help domestic AI firms reduce dependence on foreign hardware and software stacks.

On the other hand, Moonshot AI's latest funding round is being led by the venture arm of food delivery giant Meituan.

Since the beginning of 2026, the company has raised more than $3.9 billion in total, making it one of China's fastest-rising AI startups by valuation.

Prior to the latest round, Moonshot AI's shareholder roster already included Chinese internet giants such as Alibaba and Tencent, social media platform Xiaohongshu, as well as major venture capital firms.

China Mobile's involvement is drawing particular attention among investors and industry experts because of the State-owned telecom operator's massive cloud infrastructure and nationwide distribution network.

"Cooperation between the two companies could eventually embed Kimi's AI agent capabilities into telecom services, giving Moonshot AI access to hundreds of millions of users while securing more stable computing resources," Wang said.

Smart tech reshaping hiring trends, workplace dynamics

By **LI JIAYING**
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The accelerating adoption of artificial intelligence is increasingly reshaping hiring trends and workplace dynamics, as companies race to recruit AI talent while workers scramble to adapt to the technology's growing influence, a recent report showed.

According to a 2026 spring recruitment report released by recruitment platform Maimai this month, job postings in China's new economy sectors rose 22.6 percent year-on-year in the first four months, while AI-related positions surged 8.7-fold during the same period.

The new economy sector refers to industries driven by technologies such as the internet, big data, cloud computing and AI, which give rise to new products, business models and formats.

The rapid rise of AI also drives broader changes in China's labor market, with more than 20 of the 72 new occupations identified over the past five years being directly related to AI, data from the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security showed in March.

Against this backdrop, competition for AI talent has intensified across the country's technology sector as companies speed up AI deployment.

"Demand for AI application talent is definitely set to surge," said Lin Fan, founder and CEO of Maimai. "We have seen that it is no longer just major technology companies and large-model developers competing for talent. Firms in embodied AI, smart hardware and intelligent driving have also joined the race."

In this regard, the report also showed that the competition for talent has gone beyond established tech giants to rising players. Companies such as ByteDance, DJI, Xiaohongshu, Tencent and Meituan remained among the hottest recruiters this spring, while AI startups such as MiniMax and smart appliance company Dreame Technology also entered the top 20 most active recruiters.

High-end AI positions are also commanding significantly higher salaries. AI scientists and AI leadership roles topped the salary rankings with an average monthly salary of 132,796 yuan ($19,521), becoming the only category exceeding 100,000 yuan per month. Other high-paying roles included AI infrastructure engineers, large-model algorithm researchers and AIGC (AI-generated content) algorithm engineers, the report showed.

By contrast, programmers are among the first groups feeling the pressure brought by AI-driven development. According to the report, 38.51 percent of surveyed programmers said their companies have incorporated AI capabilities into performance evaluations, with 54 percent having already experienced workforce adjustments at their companies in the past year. In response, 39.1 percent chose to stay in their current positions and improve their skills, while 25.7 percent planned to move into AI development roles.

"The proportion of AI-assisted coding in my work has reached 90 percent, or even higher," said Chen Feng, a backend engineer at a major tech company, adding that he has felt the shift becoming particularly evident since the beginning of this year.

"In this sense, the ability to come up with ideas has become especially important," Chen said. "As AI continues to evolve, what the industry really needs are people who know how to effectively work with AI."

Despite the hiring boom, however, competition for jobs has eased somewhat overall. The Maimai report showed that the talent supply-demand ratio in the new economy sector fell from 2.45 to 2.09, meaning that roughly two candidates compete for one position. Meanwhile, average monthly salaries rose 12.13 percent year-on-year to 49,600 yuan.

Riding AI boom, NW China emerges as key computing hub

URUMQI — A new kind of hub is emerging in the landscape of energy-rich Northwest China. Instead of oil derricks, these centers are filled with rows of server racks.

Inside a 200-square-meter room at the Tianshan Smart Valley Advanced Computing Cluster in Hami, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region, hundreds of servers hum day and night. In just over a year, the likes of telecom giants, cloud computing service providers and tech firms have moved into the city.

"Since March, we have had companies visiting almost every day for talks," said Paruq Yehya, head of a local digital development bureau. "Three clients are vying for one server company's computing power."

Artificial intelligence's soaring power demand has made Xinjiang and neighboring provinces such as Gansu attractive destinations for AI firms.

With abundant solar and wind reserves, Xinjiang offers green power at roughly one-third the price of coastal industrial electricity. Operating costs for a computing company in Hami are more than 40 percent lower than in the eastern regions of China. In Qingyang, Gansu, one of the northwestern region's flagship computing hubs, a branch of telecom giant China Mobile has revealed that monthly savings can reach 4 million yuan ($585,000).

The region's cooler climate and cheaper land add to the appeal, lowering air-conditioning and operational costs below those of first-tier eastern cities.

For these computing centers, the core mission is to convert green power into computing power, via AI training and reasoning, resulting in tokens, the smallest unit of information processing in AI models.

"Just as oil is the lifeblood of industry, tokens are the most fundamental fuel for AI development," said Tang Shuheng, head of the Xinjiang International Integrated Supercomputing Center.

Major AI models based in eastern cities process reasoning requests on servers located in the northwest. Some of these requests serve overseas businesses in North America, Europe and the Asia-Pacific. The clients of these AI model providers pay for token consumption, and the resulting revenue covers electricity, wages and equipment costs. In this way, token flows contribute directly to the local economy.

In Qingyang, more than 500 AI-related firms had been set up by 2025, generating $1.28 billion in revenue and creating job opportunities, local authorities said.

In 2026, the concept of "computing power and electricity synergy" made its debut in China's Government Work Report, and earlier this month, several departments released an action plan, setting a 2030 goal to significantly improve clean energy supply security for AI computing facilities and AI applications in the energy sector.

Northwestern regions are also a testing ground for domestic chips. Huawei and other homegrown AI chips are now deployed at scale. At a computing center in Qingyang, a massive Enflame cluster successfully handled a peak-season surge of billions of image requests for photo-editing app Meitu's AI virtual try-on during the 2026 Chinese New Year holiday in February.

More than China's energy backyard, the northwest has become an AI hub, with its computing power being exported westward.

Many Central Asian countries lack large-scale computing facilities but face urgent data processing demand in sectors such as satellite remote sensing, agriculture and energy infrastructure inspection. The computing power center in Xinjiang will function as a "digital post station" — satellite data arrives via dedicated links and reaches customers in tailor-made services after being processed by AI models.

Tang, the Xinjiang computing center's head, said the facility will enable high-precision monitoring of the China-Kazakhstan oil pipelines and cut the warning time to 15 minutes should pipeline deformations, even tiny, occur. Meanwhile, a satellite-linked AI crop farming system, supported by the Xinjiang center, is expected to help boost wheat yields and cut fertilizer use in Kazakhstan.

However, not all workloads can move west. Web access, e-commerce and online gaming, which demand extremely low latency, have to stay in the east.

From Hami to Chongqing in Southwest China, network latency is about 50 milliseconds, exceeding the 30-millisecond threshold for real-time uses like autonomous driving and telemedicine. In addition, information infrastructure in Hami still lags behind coastal regions, while talent is scarce.

"Right now it is something like machines 'waiting for' people," Paruq Yehya said, adding that equipment has arrived, but staff with expertise in tech, operations and the market are not in place. Rapid construction of large-scale computing centers also strains local equipment supply chains and logistics.

Still, the future looks promising. A Morgan Stanley report earlier this year predicted that data centers in China's far-flung regions will contribute 2.4 gigawatts of new orders in 2026, further increasing to 3.3 GW in 2027, accounting for about 70 percent of new orders.

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BUSINESS

Smart robotics driving rehab breakthroughs

Pursuit of comprehensive solutions boosting global demand for Chinese robot applications

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With China firmly at the forefront of artificial intelligence and robotics, the nation's technology companies are targeting opportunities in the global rehabilitation sector as advances in Chinese robotics gain increasing recognition worldwide, experts and business executives said at a recent summit.

The Global Rehabilitation & Assistive Technology Network Summit 2026 convened in Shanghai on May 13, offering a platform to showcase real-world application scenarios of breakthrough technologies. AI and robotics are rapidly advancing to make a difference with great potential in the rehabilitation sector.

Robert Riener, full professor for sensorymotor systems at ETH Zurich, pointed out that the application of such advanced technologies is playing a vital role in areas with large incidences and high numbers of new cases where rehabilitation is needed.

"Now we have large neural networks based on large databases and deep structures with more computational power, which give us huge potential (in the rehab sector). We also have a lot of data about patients that enable us to monitor their physiological data, social behavior, and sleep wake rhythms. Using AI, the data can help predict certain symptoms or diseases," he said.

He especially highlighted strokes, as they show one of the highest numbers of cases each year, making patients suffer from hemiplegia and other problems. Many Chinese robotics are used for stroke therapy and neurorehabilitation, such as rehab robots, exoskeletons and intelligent systems from Chinese robotics company Fourier.

Founded in 2015, Fourier has evolved from exoskeleton robots into a diverse portfolio of humanoid robots and intelligent rehabilitation systems. As an industry-leading proactive AI robotics company dedicated to enriching human life through full-stack robotic technologies, the company's products are serving over 2,000 institutions across 40 countries, including hospitals, communities, manufacturing and everyday environments.

Owen Teoh, managing director of Fourier rehab international division, has been working in the rehabilitation robots sector for over 15 years. He shared that in the past two years, the company has seen rapidly growing demand in its overseas markets including Europe, North America and Southeast Asia. Last year, its sales doubled compared to 2024.

"The popularity of Chinese robotics represents the rise of China's high-end manufacturing. What I have observed is that the overseas market's recognition of Chinese robotics is rapidly growing. The need for rehabilitation robots is clear, and overseas acceptance of Chinese rehabilitation robots is among the highest in the industry," said Teoh.

The development trend is shifting from single products to comprehensive solutions, from passive execution to active embodied intelligence, and from hospital settings to widespread access in community and home environments, he added.



A Fourier employee demonstrates a brain-computer interface combined with a lower-limb exoskeleton robot in Shanghai on May 13. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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countries
served by Fourier's products including hospitals, communities, manufacturing and everyday environments

Behind the growing demand for rehab robots, Teoh saw several key drivers, including the continuous demand spurred by global aging and rehabilitation, and the increasing application of robotics in clinical rehabilitation settings. With technological exploration made in 2025 such as embodied intelligence and rehabilitation training integration, the application of embodied intelligence technology in the health and wellness sector began to garner wider attention.

"In the rehab sector, I think that the game changing thing will come when we are able to embody intelligence in the robotics system," said Professor Jose Luis Pons, who leads a research team at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab to apply the most advanced methods for measuring and restoring lower-limb function in diverse patient populations.

He indicated that it doesn't mean building an autonomous intelligent entity or agent to interact with patients or with clinicians. Instead, it requires understanding basic principles of rehabilitation, and then to synthesize those principles by using AI techniques in robotics, so they become more intelligent but have collaborative technologies with a human expert.

"Our robots are often evaluated as a 'warm-hearted' robot. In terms of application and interaction with patients, we are better attached to the needs of both patients and therapists," Teoh said.

He further explained that, for example, when it comes to human-robot interaction, traditional robots tend to rely heavily on repetitive movements, but Fourier's game design and user experience are tailored more closely to actual needs. Additionally, featuring the company's force feedback technologies, the robot can sense the patient's muscle strength and provide corresponding assistance. This is perceived as a more human-like interaction, making it easier for them to use.

"China is among the world's leaders in robotics and its intelligent applications possess a technological foresight that other countries and regions lack ... In addition to hospitals and communities, we hope our robotics can reach households in need, to help improve their quality of life," Teoh added.



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CHINA

Growth: Nation's regional cooperation highlighted

From page 1

In January and February this year, the total trade value between China and ASEAN reached 1.24 trillion yuan, growing 20.3 percent year-on-year. This robust growth was driven primarily by an increase in Chinese exports to ASEAN.

This strong momentum was sustained throughout the first quarter. From January to March, bilateral trade expanded to 1.97 trillion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 15.4 percent and representing 16.6 percent of China's total foreign trade. The key top trading partners among ASEAN members in the first quarter were Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia.

Record GDP and export growth in Malaysia and successful initiatives such as the China-Indonesia implementation of QR cross-border payments, and connectivity enhancement with Vietnam, Thailand, Laos and Cambodia, are, in large part, due to the stability of China-ASEAN relations.

Health diplomacy, energy integration, the digital economy, institutional partnerships and climate finance initiatives are transforming the region.

Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Industry Cooperation Committee Chairperson Xu Ningning has projected that total China-ASEAN bilateral trade for 2026 is expected to surpass 8 trillion yuan, representing a year-on-year growth of 5 percent to 8 percent. The steady growth in early 2026 underscores the deepening trade ties and high complementarity between China and RCEP countries.

China's resilience as the world's largest oil importer has been tested, and validated, by the spillover from Middle East conflicts.

In 2025, about 42.3 percent of China's crude oil imports were from the Middle East. However, China's deep strategic ties with Central Asian and Russian partners have created a crucial buffer. By increasing overland pipeline imports, tapping into massive State oil stockpiles, and prioritizing domestic supply over exports, China has successfully absorbed the external shock, proving that its regional cooperation is a genuine pillar of energy and supply chain security.

Moreover, on May 1, new opening-up policies such as zero tariffs on goods from African countries that have diplomatic ties with China and a loosening of export limits on refined oil products such as jet fuel came into force.

Other examples of China's stabilizing role include growing investment inflows from the Persian Gulf states. Reports also indicate the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region's increasing attraction for international capital seeking market stability and sound institutional arrangements. Growth in the European Union's bilateral trade with China also continued to expand. China's deep, institutionalized cooperation with its Asian neighbors has also created new opportunities, achieving a strong first quarter in 2026 with early data pointing to sustained momentum for China and the region.

China is signaling to its global trade partners that ... economic development can best be delivered through deep cooperation and discussion, not extra-regional political coercion or economic and military threats.

Amid global turbulence and uncertainty, China has maintained strong diplomatic influence, consistent with its high ranking in the Lowy Institute's global diplomacy index. China's ability to withstand trade frictions and geopolitical conflicts is a direct result of a deliberate strategy to forge deep and mutually beneficial supply chains with Asian partners.

This economic architecture transforms regional cooperation from a simple trade zone into a powerful platform for shared growth and collective stability.

As the world transitions toward multipolarity, China has continued opening its economy, ensured a stable currency and financial markets, and green investments in global infrastructure. As such, China is signaling to its global trade partners that local, regional and global economic development can best be delivered through deep cooperation and discussion, not extra-regional political coercion or economic and military threats.

The author is the chair of the Belt and Road Capital Partners (BRCP) Geopolitical Risk Advisors, and a visiting professor at ICES - Institut Catholique de Vendee in France. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Loquat: Fruit made into wine, flowers into pastes

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"Some mornings, the trees looked as though they had been dusted with snow," Song said.

In Dongshan, farmers understand what it means to rely on the weather. During droughts, water from Taihu Lake is pumped uphill to irrigate the orchards. Hailstorms and heavy rain can scar the fruit or knock it from the trees altogether.

But after a long winter of frost, this year's loquats have grown especially plump and juicy — nature's quiet reward for patience.

Among China's many varieties of loquats, Dongshan's white jade loquat remains one of the most prized. Behind its reputation lies decades of painstaking cultivation.

Huang Jichuan, 70, from Dongshan, has worked in the orchards since he was a teenager. His family has grown loquats for generations. According to Huang, today's celebrated white jade variety can be traced back to a single exceptional tree discovered decades ago by his father, Huang Jiyu. Through years of cultivation, the variety gradually spread across Dongshan.

Producing premium loquats requires meticulous care. In spring, farmers thin fruit clusters by hand, cutting away young fruits, so that the remaining can absorb more nutrients to grow large and sweet.

The fruit may last only seconds on the palate, but the work behind it stretches across an entire year.

Around *xiao man*, Dongshan enters its busiest season. Before dawn breaks, farmers climb steep orchard slopes to begin harvesting. After hours of picking, the fruit is sorted, packed into foam trays by hand and prepared for overnight shipment across the country.

Yet despite the exhausting labor, the farmers speak about their trees with unmistakable affection.

"It's like raising children," Song said. "If the trees get sick, you treat them. If the leaves turn yellow, you nourish them. Only careful tending can bring out the best."

Beyond fresh consumption, loquats have long been woven into daily life in Dongshan. Excess fruit is preserved as syrup or transformed into loquat wine, while flowers and leaves are traditionally simmered into herbal pastes to soothe coughs.

Today, that seasonal sweetness is also inspiring chefs far beyond Jiangnan. As seasonal Chinese ingredients gain renewed attention among urban diners, loquats are also making their way onto contemporary restaurant menus.

At the Waldorf Astoria Beijing, chef Wang Chunzeng recently introduced a chilled *qingbuliang* sweet soup with fresh loquat, combining the fruit with traditional Cantonese ingredients such as Job's tears, glehnia root and red dates.

"Hot and humid summer days call for something light, gentle and refreshing," Wang said. "Fresh loquat brings natural sweetness and a soft floral note that perfectly captures the feeling of early summer."

Mass weddings



Couples dressed in traditional Chinese wedding attire take part in a mass wedding ceremony at Luogang Park in Hefei city, Anhui province, on Wednesday. The event, held simultaneously in four cities across the province, promotes traditional marriage customs while encouraging modern, simplified wedding practices. WU FANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mainland slams Lai for hostile remarks

Continued separatist stance blamed for escalating cross-Strait tensions

By LI SHANGYI
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The Chinese mainland, on Wednesday, condemned Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te's speech marking his second anniversary in office as deceptive and confrontational, blaming his "Taiwan independence" separatist stance for escalating tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said Lai's remarks were "filled with falsehoods and deception, hostility and confrontation". He criticized Lai for stubbornly adhering to the erroneous "Taiwan independence" stance, promoting the fallacies of so-called "sovereign independence" and "mutual non-subordination", and hyping the "mainland threat" narrative.

Chen said Lai's comments have further escalated cross-Strait tensions and confrontation, reflecting an attempt to pursue "Taiwan independence" through military means and external support, and thereby undermining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

He said the remarks once again confirmed Lai's role as a "peace destroyer" and "crisis creator" in the Taiwan Strait.

In his speech on Wednesday morning, Lai said Taiwan's future could not be determined by "foreign forces" and should be decided solely by its 23 million people. He also claimed to promote dialogue and exchanges with the Chinese mainland under the principle of "equal dignity", while rejecting what he called "united front tactics" aimed at achieving "reunification under the guise of peace".

Chen dismissed such statements as "hypocritical", saying Lai continues to advocate "Taiwan independence" separatism and stir up anti-mainland sentiment. He accused Lai of attempting to mislead the public in Taiwan and deceive international opinion.

"These familiar tactics have been increasingly seen through by people in Taiwan," Chen said, adding that Lai's deceptive and provocative actions will inevitably face firm opposition from compatriots on both sides of the Strait and from the international community, and are destined to fail.

Chen added that the Taiwan question is a legacy issue of the Chinese civil war in the 1940s.

"No matter what form of elections have been held in Taiwan or who has been elected there since 1949, this cannot change Taiwan's status as part of China," he said, stressing that Taiwan's future can only be jointly decided by all Chinese people, including Taiwan compatriots.

He reaffirmed the unwavering resolve of all Chinese people to defend national sovereignty and territorial integrity. "We will never allow anyone or any force, under any pretext, to pursue separatist schemes for 'Taiwan independence'," Chen said.

In response to a media question on Lai's speech, Guo Jiakun, spokesman for the Foreign Ministry, said the true status quo across the Taiwan Strait is that both sides belong to one China.

Guo said moves by "Taiwan independence" separatist forces cannot change the fundamental nature of the Taiwan question as purely China's internal affair or undermine the international community's firm commitment to the one-China principle. He stressed that the historical trend toward China's national reunification is unstoppable.

Although Lai did not directly mention "Taiwan independence" in his speech, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said during a regular news briefing on Wednesday that the Democratic Progressive Party authorities have been playing word games to deceive people in Taiwan and the international community while refusing to recognize that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China.

She said only by completely abandoning the "Taiwan independence" stance, ceasing provocations aimed at seeking "independence", and returning to the political foundation of the 1992 Consensus can the DPP authorities truly safeguard peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait as well as improve and develop cross-Strait relations.



Evacuation in progress

Firefighters help evacuate flood-affected residents in Shimen county of Changde city, Hunan province, on Wednesday, after days of heavy rainfall triggered widespread flooding across the region. Authorities said 23 townships have been affected, with rescue, recovery and resettlement efforts continuing.
CHEN ZIDE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Talks: Agricultural trade to expand

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The two sides also agreed to expand two-way agricultural trade and resolve nontariff barriers and market access issues involving some agricultural products. For instance, the US pledged to address Chinese concerns including automatic detention measures targeting dairy and aquatic products, while China will advance solutions to US concerns regarding beef facility registration and poultry exports from certain US states to China, according to the ministry.

Noting that China is the world's most important agricultural market, the ministry official said that expanded US agricultural exports to China could help meet structural demand in the Chinese market, while China's vast consumer base could provide stable demand and income prospects for farmers in the US.

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the outcomes could play a positive role in improving market expectations. Such progress will allow both sides to better leverage their strengths in agricultural trade, bringing tangible benefits to companies and the broader market, Zhou said.

The outcomes also included aviation, a sector that has long been part of China-US commercial ties. Based on its air transport development needs, China will purchase 200 Boeing aircraft in accordance with commercial principles, while the US will ensure sufficient supplies of engines and related parts to China, the ministry said.

Zhang Yansheng, a senior economist, said: "China and the US are both too important to the world. When their relationship is good, the world benefits; when it is not, the world feels the shock."

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Consensus on tackling maritime challenges

By ZHANG YI in Quanzhou, Fujian
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Amid increasingly diverse regional maritime challenges, delegates from Asian coast guard agencies reached a broad consensus on strengthening multilateral law enforcement cooperation to safeguard maritime security.

The consensus was reached at the conclusion of the 22nd Heads of Asian Coast Guard Agencies Meeting Working Level Meeting on Wednesday in Quanzhou, Fujian province.

Hosted by the China Coast Guard, the four-day event brought together more than 50 foreign delegates from 18 countries and regions, as well as representatives from the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the ReCAAP Information Sharing Centre, to discuss ways to address maritime security threats.

Summarizing the meeting's achievements, Zhang Jianzhong, head of the Chinese delegation and director-general of the China Coast Guard's law enforcement department, said discussions focused on maritime security trends, search and rescue operations, and environmental protection.

All parties expressed willingness to deepen communication, enhance joint law enforcement capabilities, expand blue partnerships, and promote universal security, Zhang said.

Liu Zhixu, head of the China Coast Guard's international cooperation division, said the meeting remains the most influential multilateral maritime law enforcement cooperation mechanism in the pan-Asia-Pacific region and serves as an important platform for the China Coast Guard to participate in global and regional ocean governance.

As an active practitioner of the Global Security Initiative, the China Coast Guard advocates practical cooperation to turn regional law enforcement visions into reality, Liu said.

By hosting the event, China shared its experience in combating maritime crimes and advancing law enforcement related to marine carbon sinks, offering Chinese solutions for sustainable maritime development, he added.

Fu Yanxiao, deputy head of the China Coast Guard's criminal investigation division, said participants focused on transnational maritime risks and explored ways to establish an expert consultation mechanism.

The meeting also introduced maritime counterterrorism cooperation arrangements and invited member agencies to explore pathways for preventing and combating maritime terrorist activities, he said.

In addition to working group sessions on maritime search and rescue, environmental protection, information sharing and joint exercises, the event also facilitated a series of bilateral talks among member agencies.

Pongsak Somboon, deputy secretary-general of the Thai Maritime Enforcement Command Center, said the Thai delegation held bilateral talks with the China Coast Guard to enhance cooperation in training and law enforcement. "We share the same goal, and we want to help each other improve maritime capabilities," he said.

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WORLD

Shift in Japan's military policy raises concern

Moves reveal offensive orientation and undermine peace, experts say

By **LIU JIANQIAO**
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Although many of Japan's recent military initiatives have been framed as keeping pace with developments in defense equipment and technology, they, in fact, reveal a growing offensive orientation in the country's security strategy, which points to a significant shift in Japan's defense policy that could undermine regional peace and stability, experts said.

Thousands of demonstrators gathered outside Japan's National Diet Building on Tuesday evening to protest against the government's efforts to weaken the country's pacifist constitution through constitutional revision and military expansion policies.

Japanese media reported on Monday that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party had drafted proposals to revise the country's three key national security documents.

The proposals reportedly call for strengthening Japan's air defense systems and sustained combat capabilities, as well as accelerating the deployment of submarines equipped with advanced propulsion systems and capable of carrying long-range missiles to enhance Japan's so-called "counterstrike capabilities".

On April 21, the Japanese government officially revised the "Three Principles on Transfer of Defense Equipment and Technology" and related implementation guidelines to allow the export of weapons, including those with lethal capabilities, despite waves of large-scale protests, local media reported.

The revision scraps rules that limit Japan's military equipment exports to five noncombat categories, namely rescue, transport, warning, surveillance, and minesweeping.

Instead, military equipment will be divided into "weapons" and "non-weapons" categories, based on whether they have lethal or destructive capabilities, Kyodo News reported.

The revision maintains unrestricted exports of non-weapon equipment, such as warning and control radar systems, while also permitting the export of previously banned weapons, including destroyers and missiles, to countries that have signed agreements with Japan on the protection of classified defense equipment and technological information.

Under the revision, export of weapons will not require prior parliamentary approval. Instead, the National Security Council will make the decisions, with the Diet informed only after approval.

Consequently, a poll released by Kyodo News on Sunday showed that 57.2 percent of respondents opposed allowing exports of lethal weapons, while 37.1 percent supported the move.

In a similar poll conducted by NHK on May 11, 32 percent of the respondents said they were in favor of the move, 53 percent said they were against it, and 15 percent said they were undecided or gave no response.



People protest against the Japanese government's attempts to undermine the pacifist constitution through constitutional revision and military expansion policies in Tokyo, on Tuesday. ZHU CHENXI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

CROSS CURRENTS

"These measures are seen as concrete manifestations of the Japanese government's ongoing efforts to accelerate the country's remilitarization process," said Liu Shuliang, an associate researcher at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences.

Major step

Japan is actively advancing the development of unmanned systems and automated military infrastructure. From a technical perspective, these efforts are in line with trends in modern warfare and are intended to enhance precision-strike and long-range combat capabilities. Strategically, however, they represent another major step in Japan's accelerated "remilitarization", he said.

"This has long since gone beyond the self-imposed constraints of its pacifist constitution and the framework of an 'exclusively defense-oriented policy'," Liu said.

In essence, they reflect an attempt to use technological innovation as a vehicle to accelerate the expansion of offensive military capabilities, marking a serious departure from Japan's self-proclaimed identity as a "peace-loving nation" and the defense principles it has long emphasized, he added.

Chen Hong, director of the Asia-Pacific Studies Centre at East China Normal University in Shanghai, said the Japanese government's decision to press ahead with its "remilitarization" process despite significant domestic controversy reflects a fundamental shift in the country's security strategy.

Previous poll results have shown that a majority of the Japanese public supports a pacifist approach. However, despite public opposition, the Japanese government appears determined to continue expanding its military capabilities, a move that could push Japanese society further toward the dangers of war and conflict, he said.

Experts noted that Japan continues to actively foster "exclusive cliques" and promote bloc confrontation in the region, with arms exports serving as a key instrument in this process.

"The country is trying to make the development of unmanned combat systems a key new pillar in strengthening defense cooperation with countries such as Australia and the Philippines," Chen said.

Japan aims to deepen coordination with these partners, gain greater influence in regional security cooperation, and enhance its own operational capabilities in the Asia-Pacific region, he added.

"This move could have significant implications for the security landscape in the region," Liu said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Online
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Californian farmers eye stronger China ties

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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Representatives from California's agriculture and food industries are calling for greater trade stability and stronger bilateral cooperation between China and the United States, saying demand in China for high-quality agricultural and food products remains strong despite trade tensions and shifting global supply chains, with many companies continuing to view the Chinese market as a long-term strategic priority.

Lindsay Tello, senior advisor for trade policy at the Almond Board of California, said California almond exports to China have been affected by tariffs introduced during the trade dispute between the two countries, but Chinese demand for California almonds has remained "important".

"China remains an extremely important market, and we're really proud of our long partnership," Tello told China Daily.

According to Tello, the Almond Board of California has operated in China for more than 30 years and invested over $75 million in market development and research. She said California almond exports to China previously reached between $200 million and $300 million annually before the trade tensions, when China was among the industry's top export markets. By 2025, however, China had fallen from the top-five spot due to rising tariffs and shifting trade flows.

At the same time, Tello noted, overall almond consumption in China has continued to rise, reaching a record 160,000 metric tons last year.

Tello said that California's almond farming community is largely made up of multigenerational family farms that remain committed to long-term cooperation with Chinese partners.

Remaining steadfast

"We continue to remain invested and steadfast in our China engagement," she said, adding that maintaining positive relations with Chinese government agencies, importers, manufacturers and consumers remains a key priority for the industry.

Tello also said tariffs and policy certainty are essential for agricultural trade.

Despite this, Tello said California almonds continue to maintain strong competitiveness because of their quality and reputation in the Chinese market.

California's dairy industry also expressed strong interest in expanding cooperation with China.

Matt Henderson, director of international sales at California Dairies, said the company represents around 300 family-owned dairy farms and produces approximately 7.7 million tons of milk annually, exporting dairy products to more than 50 countries, including China.

Henderson, who lived in Shanghai between 2012 and 2015 and traveled extensively across China, said California Dairies had completed the certifications necessary to begin exporting milk and cream products to China.

"That is going to be an emphasis and an objective of ours here this year and moving forward," he said.

According to Henderson, growing middle-class demand in China for nutrition-focused and value-added products such as butter, cheese and cream presents major opportunities for California exporters. He said Asian markets are increasingly focused on food security, supply chain resilience, sustainability and nutrition.

"We're attempting to export nutrition," Henderson said. "In Asia, that's something they are demanding, and something that we can supply here in California."

Liu Chunxi, senior executive president of Chinese dairy producer Yili Group, said stable and predictable trade policies are essential for sustaining long-term cooperation between Chinese and US dairy companies.

Cool shower


A zoo worker gives an elephant a refreshing shower to help it cool off on a harsh sunny afternoon at the National Zoological Park in New Delhi on Tuesday. The capital and much of North India are currently witnessing an intense heat wave with temperatures having already crossed 44 C in New Delhi. SANJEEV VERMA VIA GETTY IMAGES

Samsung faces strike after pay talks with union fall apart

SEOUL — The management and union leaders at Samsung Electronics failed to reach a last-minute deal on wages on Wednesday, raising the prospect of a strike at the South Korean electronics giant that could rattle global semiconductor supplies and the country's trade-dependent economy.

Government officials have threatened to invoke rarely used emergency powers to force a settlement at Samsung, where the union representing more than 70,000 workers says the company has failed to offer adequate compensation despite its soaring profits fueled by the global boom in artificial intelligence.

After the latest round of talks ended without a breakthrough on Wednesday, union leader Choi Seung-ho told reporters that unionized workers are set to begin an 18-day strike on Thursday.

Both the union and the management held each other responsible for a failure to reach a deal. Choi accused management of refusing to accept a government-mediated proposal, the details of which he refused to disclose. The management accused the union of calling for excessive compensation packages for workers at loss-making units.

The two sides said they will continue efforts to reach a deal. The two sides met again on Wednesday afternoon at the arrangement of Labor Minister Kim Young-hoon, according to Kim's ministry.

Samsung and its crosstown rival, SK Hynix, together produce about two-thirds of the world's memory chips, which are seeing surging demand driven by AI. Samsung said its operating profit for the January-March quarter jumped eightfold to a record 57.2 trillion won ($38 billion).

Union leaders have demanded a compensation structure in which Samsung would commit to spending 15 percent of its annual operating profit on employee bonuses and scrap bonus caps, which are currently set at 50 percent of annual salaries. The company says the demands are excessive, citing the highly cyclical nature of the semiconductor business. The strike is expected to hurt operations of Samsung's production of smartphones and other consumer electronics as well, observers say.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

EU avoids tariff threats as it reaches consensus on trade deal with US

By **EARLE GALE** in London
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The European Union is finally ready to implement the trade deal it struck with the United States almost a year ago, heading off a slew of new tariffs that Washington had threatened to introduce on July 4.

The breakthrough came early on Wednesday, after five hours of talks, when EU lawmakers and member states struck a compromise among factions in the bloc that dislike the deal and factions that feel they can agree on a way forward.

The EU-US trade deal, which was agreed upon by US President Donald Trump and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen in Scotland on July 27, calls for 15 percent import taxes to be levied on most imports into the US from the 27-nation bloc, while a zero percent tariff will be applied to US exports to the EU.

The deal, which many EU lawmakers saw as lopsided, has since sat in the EU Parliament awaiting implementation, while lawmakers haggled over possibly amending it. It was also held up by EU lawmakers protesting against US plans to take control of Greenland.

> "Maintaining a stable, predictable, and balanced trans-Atlantic partnership is in the interest of both sides."
>
> **Michael Damianos,** minister of energy, commerce and industry in Cyprus

Michael Damianos, minister of energy, commerce and industry in Cyprus, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, said the compromise reached on Wednesday shows the bloc "delivers on its commitments".

"Maintaining a stable, predictable, and balanced trans-Atlantic partnership is in the interest of both sides," he added.

Trump had earlier said that if the trade deal was not ratified by July 4, he would increase tariffs on EU vehicles from 15 percent to 25 percent and also bring in other "much higher" tariffs.

His introduction of tariffs, both real and threatened, especially on aluminum, steel, and auto parts, has pushed the EU to find new trading partners elsewhere. But the bloc has also been careful not to jeopardize bilateral trade with the US, its largest trading partner, which amounts to around 1.6 trillion euros ($1.9 trillion) a year.

Bernd Lange, the chair of the parliament's trade committee, helped bridge the gap between the disparate EU factions on Wednesday and said that while the EU will abandon some proposed amendments, "parliament has prevailed with its demands for a comprehensive safety net".

"There is a suspension mechanism if the US does not abide by the deal, a monitoring mechanism for (measuring) the impact on our economy, provisions for unjustified tariffs on certain products, an expiration date for the legislation, and strong involvement of the European Parliament," he said, summarizing the compromise.

Von der Leyen said it means "we will soon deliver on our part", with the EU-US trade deal set to be formally implemented soon.

"Together, we can ensure stable, predictable, balanced, and mutually beneficial trans-Atlantic trade," she added.



Moment of silence

Community members mourn victims killed a day earlier in a shooting at the Islamic Center of San Diego, California, on Tuesday. Police said a pair of gunmen, aged 17 and 18, are suspected of killing three people outside the mosque on Monday and were later found dead in a car from apparent self-inflicted gunshot wounds. Authorities said they are investigating the attack as a possible hate crime.
ZOE MEYERS / AFP

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WORLD

Tankers pass strait as truce hopes revive

US and Iran exchange warnings over possible return to war amid fragile calm

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

Two Chinese tankers laden with oil passed through the Strait of Hormuz on Wednesday, shipping data showed, brightening hopes that the regional conflict may soon be resolved despite the warring sides continuing to trade threats.

US President Donald Trump said on Tuesday the war would be over "very quickly" while Vice-President JD Vance talked up progress in negotiations with Iran about an agreement to end hostilities.

However, Israel's Kan TV reported that the United States and Israel have completed joint preparations for a possible resumption of military operations against Iran, citing a US security official.

"We're in a pretty good spot here," Vance told reporters, hours after Trump said he had come within an hour of ordering fresh strikes and gave Tehran "two or three days" to reach an agreement.

Vance, who negotiated with Iran in failed talks in Pakistan, added that Washington was "locked and loaded" to restart military strikes if no deal is reached.

In response, Iran's army spokesman Mohammad Akraminia warned that the Islamic republic would "open new fronts against" the US if the White House resumes its attacks. Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said the US leadership was "calling a 'threat' a 'chance for peace'".

Iran's Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said early on Wednesday that Iranian forces had been confirmed as the first to down a US F-35 fighter jet, citing a US official report on aircraft combat losses.

"With lessons learned and knowledge we gained, a return to war will feature many more surprises," he said on social media.

The conflict, which began on Feb 28, has caused the worst disruptions to global energy supplies, blocking hundreds of tankers from leaving the Persian Gulf.

The two Chinese ships — among a handful of supertankers carrying Iraqi crude that have exited the gulf this month — passed through the narrow strait carrying around 4 million barrels of crude, according to data from London Stock Exchange Group and Kpler.

South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Hyun said on Wednesday that a South Korean-operated vessel carrying 2 million barrels of crude oil is also passing through the strait in coordination with Iranian authorities.

Oil prices eased on the positive signals, with the benchmark Brent crude falling to as low as $110.16 a barrel, before regaining much of its losses.

Trump had indefinitely extended the truce and made clear he wants to exit the war, which has proved to be a political liability with US people paying more at the pump and growing frustrated with the war.

> "Targeting an active educational institution during school hours constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law and is a clear war crime."
>
> **Esmaeil Baghaei,** spokesman for Iran's Foreign Ministry

The US Senate on Tuesday advanced a war powers resolution to halt the campaign unless Trump obtains congressional authorization. The move represented a distinct challenge to the Republican leader's executive authority, marking the first time the chamber voted in favor of the measure.

Despite the political significance of the vote, the resolution still needs a majority in the House of Representatives — after which it faces Trump's presidential veto — to take effect.

School attack update

Meanwhile, the US military again avoided taking responsibility for an attack on a school in Iran that killed about 170 people, mostly schoolchildren, on the first day of the war.

Brad Cooper, commander of US Central Command, told a congressional panel that the probe was "complex", claiming the school was located on an Iranian cruise missile base.

Hours after, Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei described the claim as a "baseless fabrication".

"Targeting an active educational institution during school hours constitutes a grave violation of international humanitarian law and is a clear war crime," he said on X.

In another development, Russia joined other United Nations Security Council members on Tuesday to condemn an unclaimed drone strike on the United Arab Emirates' Barakah Nuclear Power Plant, which Abu Dhabi said originated from Iraq.

The drone struck a generator on Sunday near the Arab world's first nuclear power plant, triggering a fire but causing no injuries or radiation leaks. The UAE Defense Ministry said on Tuesday its air defense systems had detected six drones from Iraq over the past 48 hours.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Serbian president to visit China to deepen relations

By **ZHOU JIN**
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Serbia's President Aleksandar Vucic will pay his first state visit to China starting Sunday, a five-day trip expected to deliver more tangible outcomes in building a community with a shared future for the new era between the two countries.

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang will meet Vucic separately to exchange views on bilateral relations and regional and international issues of mutual interest, Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun said on Wednesday.

Beijing stands ready to work with Belgrade to take the visit as an opportunity to consolidate ironclad friendship, expand mutually beneficial cooperation, enrich people-to-people and cultural exchanges, and strengthen coordination on multilateral affairs, he said.

In an address to the nation on Saturday, Vucic highlighted "the exceptional honor of paying an official state visit to China", saying that "we expect a great deal from it", as reported by Russia's Tass News Agency.

Serbia, the first European country to agree with China on building a community with a shared future for the new era, is an important partner for China in Southeast Europe, Guo said.

The two presidents have maintained close interactions, he said. Xi paid a state visit to Serbia in May 2024. In September last year, Vucic attended the commemoration of the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War in Beijing.

Under the leaders' strategic guidance, China-Serbia relations have been moving forward at a high level in recent years, Guo said.

Earlier this month, a $1.5 billion contract to build a highway in Serbia was signed by the Serbian government and Shandong Hi-Speed Group.

In 2025, their bilateral trade reached $6.49 billion, marking a 13 percent year-on-year increase, according to the Foreign Ministry.



Palestinian children prepare to fly kites inscribed with their hopes and dreams in Khan Younis, southern Gaza, on Tuesday, during an event titled "My Sky, My Kite" organized by a local charity. ABED RAHIM KHATIB VIA GETTY IMAGES

Israel intercepts Gaza-bound flotilla, detains over 400

JERUSALEM — Israel said on Tuesday it had intercepted all boats in a Gaza-bound aid flotilla, detaining hundreds of activists and transporting them to Israel.

Organizers of the Global Sumud Flotilla said all boats in their humanitarian convoy were intercepted after Israeli naval vessels surrounded them in international waters, about 250 nautical miles from the coast of Gaza.

Israel began intercepting the ships on Monday morning.

Around midnight on Tuesday, the Israeli Foreign Ministry said all 430 activists "have been transferred to Israeli vessels and are making their way to Israel", adding that they would be allowed to meet their consular representatives.

Video from the flotilla's livestream showed Israeli soldiers firing shots at two of the boats. The type of ammunition fired was not clear.

"At no point was live ammunition fired," the Israeli Foreign Ministry said. "Following multiple warnings, nonlethal means were employed toward the vessels — not toward protesters — as a warning."

The ministry said Israel would not allow any breach of what it called the "lawful" naval blockade of Gaza. It described the flotilla as "a PR stunt at the service of Hamas".

Israeli rights group Adalah said on Wednesday that the activists had been "detained at Ashdod port" and "taken into Israel against their will as Adalah attorneys enter for legal consultations".

The flotilla's organizers said the activists would be taken to Ketziot prison in Israel's southern Negev desert.

On Wednesday, Israel's National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir posted a video on X showing detained activists kneeling with their hands tied behind their backs and foreheads on the ground. The post was captioned "Welcome to Israel".

Italy's Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni slammed the treatment of activists as "unacceptable".

"It is intolerable that these protesters, among whom there are many Italian citizens, are subjected to this treatment, which violates human dignity," Meloni said, calling for the immediate release of any detained Italian citizens and demanding an apology from Israel.

The flotilla set sail from Turkiye's Marmaris coast on May 14 in a third attempt to break the blockade and deliver aid to Palestinians in the war-devastated enclave.

Turkiye and Spain have condemned the interception.

A previous flotilla, comprising about 20 boats and 175 activists, was intercepted by Israeli forces on April 30 near the southern Greek island of Crete.

Two of the activists were detained for days before being released. Dozens of activists said they were mistreated, abused and beaten by Israeli forces.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Dialogue only right path forward in Mideast: Envoy

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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China's ambassador to the United Nations briefed the Security Council on Tuesday to voice concerns over the situation in the Middle East and called for joint efforts to restore stability in the region at an early date.

Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, made the remarks while commenting on a Sunday drone attack on facilities at the Barakah Nuclear Power Plant in the United Arab Emirates. Although the incident did not cause any casualties or affect radiation safety levels, this "dangerous and irresponsible act" has sounded the alarm for the international community, he said.

China expresses great concern over the incident, opposes armed attacks on nuclear facilities for peaceful purposes, and calls on all parties to abide by international law, including the Convention on Nuclear Safety, and to effectively safeguard the safety and security of nuclear power plants, Fu said.

The sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of countries in the Middle East and the Gulf must be fully respected, and civilians and nonmilitary objects should be protected, he said.

As long as the armed conflict continues, the safety risks it poses to regional nuclear facilities will persist, he said.

The war originated from the illegal military attacks by the United States and Israel against Iran, Fu said. Since its outbreak, the conflict has inflicted severe losses on the people across the region, severely disrupted global economic development and harmed the shared interests of the international community.

"This war should never have happened in the first place. To find an early way to resolve the situation is in the interest of not only the US and Iran, but also regional countries and the rest of the world," Fu said.

"I wish to make three points," he said. First, there is a strong call for cessation of hostilities, and any resumption of fighting must be avoided. For some time now, the US and Iran have, on the whole, maintained a ceasefire, but the risk of escalation remains.

"At this critical stage between war and peace, all parties must exercise maximum restraint, uphold the ceasefire arrangements, refrain from irresponsible threatening rhetoric and military adventurism, and make efforts to prevent a relapse into conflict and further escalation of tensions," he said.

Second, military means offer no way out, and dialogue and negotiation are the only right path forward. The recent US-Iran truce and efforts to explore resolving issues through negotiation are welcomed by regional countries and the international community.



The Barakah Nuclear Power Plant sits in the western desert of the Emirate of Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates. ARUN GIRIJA VIA AP

Political solution

"China encourages both sides to stay committed to a political solution and to continue settling their differences and disputes through negotiation, including on the nuclear issue, with a view to reaching a solution that accommodates the concerns of all parties," Fu said.

China commends Pakistan for its mediation efforts and supports all parties in reaching a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire as soon as possible, he added.

Third, priority should be given to solving pressing issues and preventing the spread of negative effects. "The situation in the Strait of Hormuz is a demonstration of the spillover of the conflict," Fu said.

"Disruptions to this vital shipping lane have severely affected global supply chains, international trade order and energy security, with countries of the Global South bearing significant livelihood costs," he said.

China calls for reopening the strait as soon as possible on the basis of a continued ceasefire, Fu said.

Since the outbreak of the conflict, China has been actively working to end hostilities and promote peace, he said. China will continue to work with the international community to play a constructive role in bringing an early end to hostilities and restoring peace and development in the Middle East, he added.

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LIFE



Mountains teeming with tea

A county in Southwest China is boosting economy and the beverage's industry, leading to innovation and tourism opportunities, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Mabian, Sichuan.

The drive from Southwest China's Sichuan province's Mabian county seat to Baixiang village is a test of one's limit for car sickness, full of sharp turns that wind upward for 11 kilometers. But roll the car windows down and everything is worth it: the sweet air permeated by the terraced tea bushes following the mountain's contours like the whorls of a giant fingerprint.

Before you lies 1,600 *mu* (107 hectares) of contiguous tea gardens, cascading down from 1,100 to 1,400 meters. Tea pickers dot the hillside, bamboo baskets on their backs, hands fluttering across the leafy surface to pinch off the most prized early spring buds in late March.

"Our tea garden sits at a high altitude, so the tea is just starting to sprout," says He Yingjun, who presides over the sprawling plantation.

"With the big temperature swing between day and night, the tea accumulates more beneficial compounds. The secret to good Mabian tea is right here," he says as he pinches a plump bud.

Four decades ago, this was a barren hillside without so much as a path. Then his father began planting. Today, it has become a calling card for the tea industry in the Mabian Yi autonomous county, and a lifeline for the people who live here.

His father did not start from nothing. Historical accounts show tea has been grown on these mountains for almost 2,000 years, since the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220). Nestled in the Xiaoliangshan Mountains, home to the Yi ethnic group, Mabian was a key node on the ancient tea-horse route, where people of the Yi and Han ethnic groups lived side by side, trading tea for horses.

In the early 1980s, as China's reform and opening-up gained momentum and market demand for tea outweighed supply, He's father contracted a 70-*mu* collective tea garden in his hometown. He spent more than a decade learning from local tea masters.

They traveled far and wide together, even going to the provincial capital Chengdu to meet clients from abroad, He says.

"His mentor treated him well and took him everywhere," He adds. When the tea master passed away in the 1990s, his father inherited both his mentor's business connections and approach to tea cultivation.

The family's full commitment to tea came in 2006, when He's father set his sights on the barren hillside in Baixiang village.

"There was nothing — no road, no electricity, just wasteland," He recalls. The choice was simple, because it was only 11 km from the county seat, meeting the "half-hour rule" for tea processing. Fresh leaves must reach the factory within 30 minutes after picking. If they sit longer, they begin to heat up and ferment in unwanted ways, turning the bright green leaves dull and muddying the flavor, He explains.

"You then lose the freshness. Once that happens, no amount of skill or processing in the factory can bring it back," he adds.

When He was discharged from military service in 2008, he returned to Mabian. "My father was getting older, and someone had to carry on," he says.

He now manages the tea plantation and production. His father, with a knack for distinguishing Mabian tea from any other, oversees quality. Over the years, the family has witnessed the transformation of Mabian tea from backyard production to modern plantations.

Today, their family business employs 30 to 40 people year-round. During peak harvest, they have 400 to 500 pickers, and pay over 2 million yuan ($294,286) in wages annually.

In 2020, Mabian was designated "the home of Yi tea" by the China International Tea Culture Institute, and the Yi tea brand was formally established.

Five incomes, one leaf

In Mabian, growing tea pays dividends in more ways than one.

Li Min, a local official with rural affairs, points out that a farming family can earn five separate incomes from working on a tea plantation — renting land, selling fresh leaves, wages from labor-intensive work, collective village dividends, and tourism spillover from neighborhood homestays, where tourists buy directly from farmers and some villagers find work.



Top: A tea-picking celebration is staged at a tea plantation in Baixiang village of Sichuan province's Mabian county in late March. **Above:** Tea workers pick off fresh tea leaves at Xiangyang tea garden in Mabian. **Below:** The tiered tea plantation landscape and neighboring spring flowers form a picture at Mabian, attracting visitors from far and wide. PHOTOS BY HE WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

"A family of four, including grandparents in their 60s and 70s, can pick tea and earn 800 or 900 yuan a day," He says. "That's better than leaving town to work, and they can look after the children and pick them up from school."

Across the county, about 80,000 people are directly or indirectly employed in the tea industry, with per capita fresh-leaf income of about 6,000 yuan, according to local authorities.

"One leaf enriches one people," says Like Haomao, deputy head of Mabian, adding that the tea industry truly plays a leading role in increasing farmers' income.

However, the major bottleneck constraining local tea development is the lack of market recognition.



"Our tea output in Sichuan is very high, but our brands are not much," He says bluntly, adding that a large part of Mabian tea is sold as raw material or processed leaves to brand owners in other provinces.

Additionally, the underutilization of summer-autumn tea has traditionally been the county's weak spot. After the spring harvest, many gardens are left fallow.

Summer heat speeds up the tea plant's growth, producing leaves that are larger, tougher and higher in bitter compounds, He explains.

The resulting tea is more astringent and fetches lower prices, making it hardly worth the labor to pick, he adds.

Breaking new ground

Local officials say the county is now tackling the problem head-on and has been exploring new avenues in recent years.

"We've brought in a company from Hubei province to produce matcha, and we're collaborating with Anhui Agricultural University to develop mellow yellow tea, constantly innovating summer-autumn tea processing," Like Haomao says.

He Yingjun is also experimenting. On part of his plantation, shade nets have been installed to produce the raw material for matcha.

"We signed a contract with a major tea company, producing tea to their standards. If summer-autumn tea is done right, it could account for half our income," he anticipates.

He has already seen summer-autumn tea prices rising. New processing techniques have opened new markets hungry for the raw material to make novel tea drinks or functional extracts.

Beyond the product innovation conducted by tea planters like He, Mabian is also pushing tea tourism.

Kashasha Homestay is the flagship project, consisting of 10 Yi-style courtyards scattered across the tea hills of Fulai village, about an hour's drive from He's tea plantation.

Open the window, and you look out over a sea of clouds and tea fields. The only sounds are the wind and the birds. Rooms are not cheap, but during peak season, they are hard to come by.

"Kashasha Homestay relies entirely on the tea gardens. Without the tea gardens, that place would be barren. There wouldn't be much to see," Like Haomao says.

In 2025, the county's tea-tourism integration project attracted about 45,000 visitors and generated 32 million yuan in revenue, according to local authorities.

Standing in the Baixiang village tea garden, He Yingjun points to a construction site in the distance.

"That's our new factory. Once it's completed, we won't sell any fresh leaves. We'll process everything ourselves and pay taxes here," he says.

The new factory will give him control over the entire process, from fresh leaf to finished product. It will also allow him to experiment with new processing methods without relying on outside facilities. Whether that solves the brand problem, he does not know.

"You do it because you're in it, and you can't just stop," he says.

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Chinese humanoid robots ready to work in Central, Eastern Europe





Left: A drone photo taken on May 2 shows robots performing at a park during the May Day holiday in Wuzhou city, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. **Right:** An intelligent traffic management robot makes a "heart" gesture for pedestrians at an intersection in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on May 11. PHOTOS BY HE HUAWEN AND HUANG ZONGZHI / XINHUA

WARSAW — The steady hum of robotic arms filled the exhibition hall as automated welding machines from FAIRINO operated with precise movements. Nearby, visitors gathered around a humanoid robot made by Unitree Robotics, taking photos as it greeted them with animated gestures.

Many of the robots attracting visitors are made by these Chinese firms and others participating in the International Trade Fair for Industrial Automation and Robotics held in Warsaw in mid-May.

At the booth of Polish company Positive Machines, logistics robots moved smoothly between simulated warehouse shelves, demonstrating cargo handling and transport functions. Product manager Michal Zdrada says his company primarily purchases logistics and transportation robots from China and has sold more than 500 units to date.

According to him, Chinese-made robots stand out for their cost-effectiveness, with comparable products from Poland or Germany often priced three to four times higher.

Also opting for Chinese-made robotics products, Polish company ELTRON showcased industrial robotic arms produced by FAIRINO. The machines are used for tasks such as welding, laser marking, and industrial safety inspection.

ELTRON's regional sales manager, Jacek Slusarek, says the company chose the Chinese brand for its competitive pricing and reliable quality. He says the robotic arms have already received positive feedback after entering the market, prompting continued cooperation.

A large share of exhibitors at the fair are using Chinese robotic products. Among them, the Polish company Tech4Business showcased China-made floor-cleaning, food-delivery and humanoid robots, attracting crowds of visitors. Project manager Piotr Kozynacki says the company's founding team has spent nearly 15 years working in cleaning services before establishing Tech4Business last year.

After extensive market research and supplier screening, the company selected Chinese brands including AgiBot, KEENON Robotics and Lens Technology. "These were simply the best solutions we found," Kozynacki says.

He notes Chinese manufacturers often adopt suggestions and customize products based on local customers' feedback. "That is something we are very satisfied with when working with Chinese companies," he says.

According to Tech4Business, given China's rapid development in the robotics industry, the company is seeking cooperation with more Chinese robotics suppliers, while European firms are competing to become distributors of Chinese robotics brands.

The appeal of and faith in Chinese automation technology has extended beyond Poland.

Czech-headquartered ITS-AIM discusses its cooperation with Jiangsu Bozhiwang Automation Equipment Co in the trade of industrial automation and wire-processing equipment in Central and Eastern Europe. Co-founder Szymon Kohut says Chinese firms possess clear manufacturing and cost advantages in the wire-harness automation sector, which enables them to focus on Asia-Europe trade.

Dariusz Plewik, regional sales manager of the German company Beckhoff Automation, describes Chinese robotics manufacturers as increasingly influential players in the global market.

Noting that he has observed Chinese robotics companies' significant presence at the recent Hannover Messe, Plewik says China is one of Beckhoff Automation's key markets, accounting for nearly 10 percent of its total sales, with sales in China rising by about 10 percent from 2024 to 2025.

"China's industrial and robotics industries are developing at a pace that cannot be ignored," he says.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

A FINAL COUNTDOWN

China sets up title showdown with Japan at the AFC U17 Asian Cup, while securing its spot at November's World Cup in Qatar



China defeated Australia 2-0 in the semifinals of the 2026 AFC U17 Asian Cup in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, on Tuesday, reaching the final for the first time in 22 years. **Below left:** Substitute Xie Jin celebrates scoring China's second goal in stoppage time on Tuesday. XINHUA

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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China's youth soccer revival has netted another morale boost, with its men's under-17 squad's unexpected Asian Cup final run relieving fans, at least for now, from the disappointment of having no home side to root for at the upcoming FIFA World Cup.

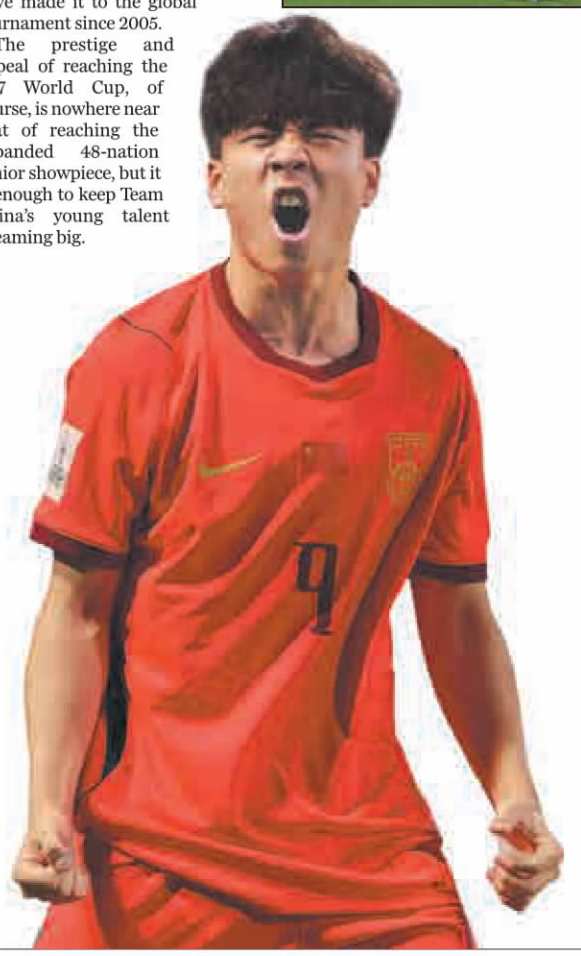
As the whole world prepares to tune in the marquee tournament next month, Chinese fans will have to watch on as bystanders again, but not before enjoying a Cup final relevant to their team's future ambitions, thanks to China's recent breakout performance at the AFC U17 Asian Cup in Saudi Arabia.

They will also have a World Cup of their own to look forward to at the end of the year.

The Chinese U17 squad, arriving in Jeddah only eyeing the knockout stage as a marker of success, has pulled off one of the most inspiring turnarounds on the continental stage in recent years after stunning Australia 2-0 on Tuesday to reach the tournament final for the first time in 22 years — all the way from the brink of elimination in the group stage.

The team's deeper-than-expected run, which culminates with a title showdown against powerhouse Japan on Friday, has also helped secure its berth at the FIFA U17 World Cup, to be held in Qatar from Nov 20-Dec 14, marking the first time the Chinese men's U17s have made it to the global tournament since 2005.

The prestige and appeal of reaching the U17 World Cup, of course, is nowhere near that of reaching the expanded 48-nation senior showpiece, but it is enough to keep Team China's young talent dreaming big.



"My dream is to play in the FIFA World Cup. I want to keep improving every day, work hard and continue challenging myself against the best players in the world," forward Shuai Weihao, who scored the critical opening goal against Australia, said after the semifinal at the King Abdullah Sports City Stadium.

"I don't think there was a big difference between the two teams. Maybe, we just showed a bit more fight and determination than our opponents," the 17-year-old Sichuan province native said of the result, which came as a shock to many.

"We've proved that we can compete with the best in Asia at this level, so why not keep going and see what we can do in the final."

In a fine example of the team's high-pressing, quick counterattacking style of play, China's captain Zhou Yunuo dispossessed Aussie midfielder Oliver O'Carroll and threaded the ball to Shuai, who completed his bursting run down the middle with an easy finish that broke the deadlock five minutes into the second half.

Chinese substitute Xie Jin put the result beyond any doubt in the first minute of stoppage time, when he pounced on a loose ball inside the box, sealing the deserved win with a close-range strike and sending the vocal Chinese supporters into raptures in the stands.



China's Shuai Weihao (second from left) slots the ball past diving Australian keeper Charlie Wilson-Papps to score the opening goal of the AFC U17 Asian Cup semifinal on Tuesday. XINHUA

"We didn't expect that we would be here before the tournament, to be honest," said Zhou. "We will allow ourselves to celebrate tonight, and then we will move on to prepare for the final with our utmost focus."

It's the second time in just four months that a Chinese squad has fought its way into a continental youth final, following the men's U23 team's final-match appearance, also against Japan, at its respective Asian Cup in the same Saudi city.

China's U23 squad was thrashed 4-0 by Japan in that final, played at the same stadium on Jan 24, signing off its Saudi campaign with a sobering reminder of the task that lies ahead.

The U17 unit, however, has a bigger advantage this time around, with Japanese coach Bin Ukishima barking instructions from the Chinese dugout.

Ukishima, who took over the reins of the Chinese junior program in 2024, attributed his team's breakthrough to its collective focus and resilience.

"Soccer is always about the team. Whether we score or defend, everyone is involved. I don't see it as an individual performance above the group," the 58-year-old former J-League player and coach said.

After opening its tournament with two straight round-robin losses to Indonesia (0-1) and Japan (1-2) in Group B, Team China stayed mentally strong and dug itself out of the mire with a crucial 2-0 win against Qatar in its final group fixture to edge out the Gulf nation and advance into the knockout phase.

A solid 3-1 effort over the host Saudis in the quarterfinals boosted Team China's confidence, while rekindling long-suffering Chinese fans' hopes for their national program's future.

The young squad is drawing huge attention from the nation's soccer community, where long-term commitment to youth cultivation is the consensus when it comes to figuring out how to turn around the fortunes of the underachieving senior side.

"Having twice reached a continental youth final in the first half of 2026, and to challenge Japan again, good job Team China! It's time, perhaps, for a turn of fortunes," veteran soccer journalist Ma Dexing with Titan Sports posted on Weibo.

Ukishima agrees. "We have done our research on this Japanese team after losing to them in the group, and we understand their weakness and strengths," he said. "I have my notes prepared to give our players when facing them again.

"Although I am Japanese, I am Team China's coach now. I will fight on my team's side with my best effort (to ensure the win)."

Cherries bomb City's title bid, handing Arsenal first Premiership crown in 22 years

Arsenal's decades-long wait is over.

Mikel Arteta's team was crowned Premier League champion for the first time since 2004 on Tuesday after Manchester City drew 1-1 with Bournemouth.

"I told you all. it's done," Arsenal midfielder Declan Rice posted on social media with a photo of him and his teammates celebrating.

The result put an end to what might be Pep Guardiola's final title challenge with City, after the decorated manager didn't dismiss reports he was set to leave the club at the end of the season.

City needed to win at Bournemouth to take it down to the final game of the campaign on Sunday, but the draw left Arsenal with an unassailable four-point lead at the top, ending its 22-year wait for the title.

Arsenal fans celebrated wildly outside the Emirates Stadium, setting off flares and partying in the street. There were celebrations at the club's training ground, too, where the players had gathered to watch the match.

City threatened another twist in an engrossing title race when Erling Haaland scored in stoppage time to equalize, neutralizing Junior Kroupi's first-half strike, but it was too late to find a winner.

Arteta's players can now stand alongside club icons Thierry Henry, Dennis Bergkamp and Ian Wright, who previously reached the summit of English soccer. And Arsenal's current class could yet break new ground by winning the Champions League for the first time in its history later this month.

Thoughts of the May 30 final against defending champion Paris Saint-Germain can be put on the back burner for now.

Now is a time for celebration and relief for Arteta, after finishing runner-up in the league three years in a row.

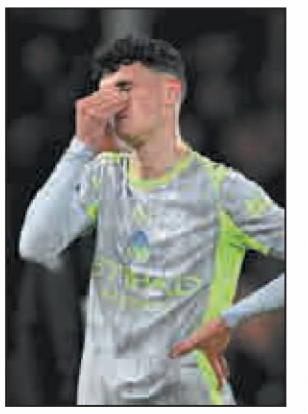
In back-to-back seasons in 2023 and '24, he watched as Guardiola's City chased down Arsenal's lead to be crowned champion.

Another chance was missed last year, when the Gunners finished second to Liverpool.

Once again, Arsenal has led the way for most of this campaign and, despite seeing its points advantage ebb away during a gripping run-in, it has finally managed to get over the line.

Arsenal's last championship-winning side was the so-called "Invincibles" team of 2004, which went an entire campaign without losing in the league.





Arsenal fans celebrate winning the league title for the first time in 22 years, while a dejected Phil Foden rues Manchester City's missed title opportunity after Tuesday's draw with Bournemouth. AP / REUTERS

Since then, it has seen Chelsea, Manchester United, City, Leicester and Liverpool all take the title. This is the first time since 2017 that a team other than City or Liverpool has been crowned champion.

It is Arsenal's 14th title, and Arteta will hope it is the beginning of a new era of dominance.

He has finally got the better of Guardiola, to whom he was once an assistant at City.

The Spaniard took over at Arsenal in December 2019 — his first role as a manager. After winning the FA Cup in that first season, it has been a frustrating wait for more honors. Even still, at 44 he is the second-youngest coach after Jose Mourinho to win the Premier League.

While his team has not maintained the attractive playing style of former manager Arsene Wenger, it has powered its way to the title with the best defense in the league and earned a reputation as a specialist for set-piece goals.

Time will tell if Arteta adopts a more expansive style in the future, more in-keeping with Guardiola's City.

How City will look going forward is a bigger question, with Enzo Maresca widely considered the front-runner to replace Guardiola.

The future of City's greatest manager overshadowed the buildup to the game. "I should talk with my chairman first," Guardiola said.

"After that, when I talk with my chairman, we will decide. We will talk in the coming days."

He was aiming to win a seventh English title and a second domestic treble after winning the League Cup and FA Cup this term, but Kroupi's curling shot in the 39th minute left City with a mountain to climb.

Bournemouth wasted further chances to extend its lead, and Haaland ensured a tense finish for Arsenal fans when he leveled in the fifth minute of added time.

Ultimately, it wasn't enough and Guardiola has gone two years without winning a league title for the first time in his coaching career.

Relegation battle

The title fight might be done, but the relegation battle will go down to the final day, after Chelsea beat Tottenham 2-1. Spurs are two points ahead of West Ham, which is in the final relegation spot.

West Ham needs to beat Leeds on Sunday to have any chance of leapfrogging Tottenham and escaping the drop zone.

Tottenham hosts Everton, and a win would guarantee safety, though a draw would likely be enough thanks to its superior goal difference.

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 MONDAY, JUNE 1, 2026



Students interact with a bionic robotic hand at the second Shandong Provincial Science and Innovation Education Conference for Primary and Secondary Schools in Jinan, Shandong province, on Saturday, ahead of International Children's Day on Monday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

XI'S VISION | CARE FOR CHILDREN

Children's growth a priority for Xi

President has consistently emphasized that they represent hope of the Chinese nation

By **JI HAISHENG**
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President Xi Jinping has called on student docents at the memorials of the birthplaces of the Communist Party of China in Shanghai and Zhejiang province to carry the baton of history forward on the new journey, as he extended festive greetings to children nationwide.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, made the remarks in a reply letter, dated Saturday, two days ahead of International Children's Day, which falls on Monday.

The Young Pioneers recently penned a letter to Xi, sharing what they had learned and gained while volunteering as guides at the Memorial Hall of the First National Congress of the CPC in Shanghai, and the Nanhu Revolutionary Memorial Museum in Jiaxing, Zhejiang.

In the reply, Xi said he was pleased to learn that the students had fostered a deep affection for the Party, the country and socialism by recounting the Party's history, revolutionary stories and heroic deeds.

Noting that this year marks the 105th anniversary of the CPC and the Party's cause calls for unremitting efforts across generations, Xi encouraged the students to follow the Party's lead, carry forward the revolutionary legacy, enhance their knowledge and skills, and build their will and character.

The reply letter once again showed that the growth of children is always a priority for Xi, who has consistently emphasized that children represent the future of the country and the hope of the Chinese nation.

Despite his tight schedule, Xi has always made time for children. This commitment was evident as early as on Children's Day in 2013, when he first extended festive greetings to youngsters across the nation "as an older friend".

Since then, he has engaged with children in various ways, such as presenting plush toys to children at a welfare home in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region and accepting candy from youngsters in Liaoning province, wishing that their lives be as sweet as the treats.

Through such genuine interactions, Xi has become not only a caring friend to children, but also the kind and approachable one they warmly call "Grandpa Xi".

For 14 consecutive years, Xi has participated in voluntary tree-planting activities with students in Beijing. To him, these events are not only an occasion to work alongside children — digging pits and watering saplings — but also an opportunity to communicate with them and express hope that the children will grow big and strong, just like the young trees they plant together.

"President Xi has often used the metaphor of 'saplings' to describe children and referred to adolescence as a 'jointing and booting period', drawing a clear parallel between the growth cycle of trees and plants and the cultivation of talent," said Liu Jia, an associate professor at Beihang University's School of Marxism in Beijing.

See ***Children,*** *page 3*

Moderating PMI reinforces calls to shore up demand

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China's factory activity moderated slightly in May, with the official purchasing managers' index holding at the determining point between contraction and expansion after two straight months of growth, reinforcing analysts' calls for more targeted policy support to shore up domestic demand and sustain growth momentum.

With some countercyclical measures already in place and ample policy space still available, the world's second-largest economy remains well-positioned to consolidate the recovery as midyear approaches, analysts said.

The assessment came as data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed on Sunday that China's PMI for the manufacturing sector in May stood at 50.0 — the threshold between expansion and contraction — despite edging down 0.3 percentage point from April.

According to Wang Qing, chief macroeconomic analyst at Orient Golden Credit Rating International, the marginal pullback was mainly driven by softer market demand during the month.

The subindex for production stood at 51.2 in May, easing 0.3 percentage point from April but remaining above the 50-point mark, while the new orders gauge edged down 0.7 percentage point to 49.9, suggesting some moderation in market demand, the NBS said.

Wang said the gap between production and new orders remained notable in May, as earlier export resilience helped to support factory output while domestic demand remained in recovery mode. "This points to a continued imbalance between external and domestic demand," he added.

Beneath the headline moderation, new growth drivers continued to gather strength. High-tech manufacturing, for instance, posted a PMI reading of 52.9 in May, while equipment manufacturing recorded a PMI of 52.1, both outperforming the overall manufacturing sector, the NBS reported.

Huo Lihui, a statistician with the bureau, said the PMI for high-tech manufacturing, in particular, had remained above the threshold line for 16 consecutive months, highlighting the increasingly prominent role of new growth drivers as related industries maintained sound growth momentum.

Wen Tao, an analyst at the China Logistics Information Center, said the strength of such sectors was partly supported by resilient external demand, as the rapid development of artificial intelligence continued to inject momentum.

However, Wang from Orient Golden Credit Rating International warned that export resilience could face more tests in the coming months, as the prolonged conflict in the Middle East weighs on global growth and adds to external uncertainties.

To better cushion such headwinds in the second half of the year, Wang said that macro policies may introduce additional support in due course to boost household consumption, accelerate infrastructure investment and stabilize the real estate market. "There is still ample policy room in these areas," he said.

Looking ahead, manufacturing activity is likely to improve modestly in June, with the sector expected to remain in mild expansion, said Wen from the China Logistics Information Center.

Analysts said the latest data suggested that some structural divergence remained. New growth drivers continued to support factory output while domestic demand required further strengthening, underscoring the need to unlock consumption potential as a key growth driver.

Mao Zhenhua, chief economist at China Chengxin International Credit Rating Co, said that pressure remains on small and medium-sized enterprises and household consumption. "Policymakers should make stronger efforts to expand domestic demand, and further unleash the potential of private investment and household consumption," Mao added.

Zhang Bin, deputy director of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of World Economics and Politics, called for "stronger countercyclical policy support".

He said that fiscal policy should ensure that public spending grows faster than nominal gross domestic product, while monetary policy should focus on lowering real interest rates to send stronger signals for investment and home purchases, thereby activating endogenous growth momentum.



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Global prosperity matters more than ever today

WORLD WATCH
By Dominic Lee

Walking into the third edition of the Global Prosperity Summit, which was held from May 19 to 21 in China's Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, I was struck not by the grandeur of the setting or the caliber of the names on the speaker list, but by something quieter: the sound of conversation.

Diplomats from China were exchanging cards with European executives. Shanghai think-tank scholars were debating Malaysian strategists. United States investors were leaning in to hear a Hong Kong banker explain the offshore renminbi market.

In an age when the world's great capitals increasingly seem to be talking past one another, here was a room in which they were, at last, talking to one another. That, more than any communique, is the measure of what Hong Kong is and what it can yet become.

The event, jointly convened by the Savantas Policy Institute, the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies and the European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong, has matured remarkably since its inception in 2024. This year's gathering opened with a keynote speech from Han Zhiqiang, vice-president of the China Public Diplomacy Association, who offered forward-looking insights into the China-proposed Global Governance Initiative. He noted that the international landscape is beset by mounting instability and uncertainty, unilateralism and protectionism are on the rise, geopolitical conflicts continue to flare up, and development gaps are widening. These developments, he said, have made reform of global governance an urgent task for all peoples.

Few would disagree with the diagnosis. The harder question is where the work of repair can credibly begin. And here, Hong Kong's case is not merely rhetorical but structural.

Consider the substance. Under the "one country, two systems" principle, with the staunch support of the central government, Hong Kong's role as an international financial center has continued to develop, its status steadily reinforced and elevated — which is why the country chose this city to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Finance Ministers' Meeting in October. This is not a ceremonial honor. Heads of finance departments of APEC member economies and representatives of international organizations will gather in Hong Kong, experiencing firsthand the city's advantages of enjoying the strong support of the motherland while being closely connected to the world. Furthermore, in November, leaders themselves will convene in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, for the 33rd APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting. Together, these two events will form the most significant diplomatic moment of the year in Asia.

That sequencing — Hong Kong before Shenzhen, finance before leaders — is not an accident of the calendar. It reflects a sophisticated thinking that, in a fractured world, China's southern coast can serve as the most credible meeting ground available.

See ***HK,*** *page 3*



People watch the launch of a Long March 12 carrier rocket at the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site in Hainan province on Jan 19. LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

ROCKET CHASING: FROM RARE SPECTACLE TO LIFESTYLE PASSION

Space tourism blends tech, travel and leisure at Wenchang launch site in Hainan

By **CHEN BOWEN**
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It was close to midnight on Tuesday when British travel blogger John Michael Chapman, 48, scanned the Wenchang Yaoguang rocket launch observation deck in Wenchang, Hainan province, scouting for the perfect spot. He took selfies and videos with his phone and sent them to his son back home while waiting for "the moment".

Minutes later, at 12:16 am on Wednesday, a modified Long March 7 carrier rocket, carrying a new communication technology test satellite, blasted off from the Wenchang Spacecraft Launch Site and tore through the night sky, its tail flame turning darkness into daylight. The ground shook. The crowd erupted in cheers.

For most people, the idea of a perfect tropical getaway conjures up images of sandy beaches and swaying palms. But for Chapman and thousands of others like him, Wenchang's seaside offers a different thrill: watching a rocket take to the sky with an earsplitting roar.

"I am a 48-year-old man, and I feel like a little boy at the moment," Chapman said after watching the rocket launch. "My son, everyone's sons and daughters, we all dream of space travel. It's this magical thing."

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INDEPTH



Changsha rappers (from left) "D-Shine" Sheng Yu, "Key. L" Liu Cong and "Kungfu-Pen" Shi Yifan form C-Block, one of the most popular rap groups in China. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





Left: Rapper Xia Zhiyu(left) from Sichuan province and musician Jin Yuhan, or Dizkar, from Yunnan province, perform on stage during the *Everybody loves hip-hop* tour. **Right:** Shi Yifan stands at the railway station in Changsha, Hunan province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Above: Liu Liangji (center), or Mr. weezy, and other rappers from the Wu dialect region in the Yangtze River Delta, shoot a music video in Shanghai in 2019. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Right: Ye Runze, or Ranzer, blends diverse Hunan cultures with international elements in his music. His hit *Hometown, Wind* impressed millions of people on TV shows in 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Nation's fading tongues find voice in rap revival

Dialects featured in hip-hop promote understanding of cultures, customs

By WANG XIN in Shanghai
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At the recent Space Romance music festival in Chengdu, Sichuan province, thousands of fans enthusiastically rapped along in the Changsha dialect to one act, even though most cannot understand the language.

On stage, C-Block from Changsha, Hunan province, was rocking the audience with their distinctive dialect rap during the festival, which took place on May 2-3.

But C-Block are far from alone in remapping rap's language boundaries. In recent years, dialect rap has become increasingly popular in China's booming hip-hop scene, driving a growing number of rappers to dive deep into their cultural roots and explore their identities, in the process connecting with fans nationwide and across the world.

According to a list compiled by the popular online music critic, New Music Industry Observer, seven out of the 10 most acclaimed rap albums in China last year used local dialects, emanating from Sichuan, Shandong, Henan and Hubei provinces, as well as cities such as Chongqing and Changsha.

The story of rap in China, and how it tapped into local voices and culture, dates back to its earliest days and a belief it could help revive local languages.

Liu Liangji, or Mr. weezy, a 41-year-old rapper from Shanghai, is clear about his cultural mission.

He insists on making rap songs not for money or fame, but to save and promote local dialects and cultures.

Liu started performing in the Shanghai dialect in 2014. At that time, he noticed that many young Shanghai residents could barely speak the local dialect, which he believed was one of the city's main cultural pillars.

He also discovered the problem of disappearing local dialects was not confined to Shanghai. In many cities across the Yangtze River Delta region, a growing number of people were unable to speak the predominant Wu dialect.



Cantonese rapper Chen Zhuoheng, or SoulHan, is a native of Guangzhou, and presents almost all of his rap songs in Cantonese.

To make a difference, Liu gathered rappers from four other cities across the region in 2018, and formed the group JZH League. With the shared goal of promoting local dialects, they released six songs that integrated their respective dialects, attracting extensive attention online.

"I love hip-hop, love our country and cultures. These songs stand for not only hip-hop, but also showcase our cultural roots and its diversity. I want them to be well kept, better understood and widely shared," said Liu.

The positive early feedback motivated Liu to broaden his goals. In October 2019, he initiated the Chinese Languages project to celebrate the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, inviting 20 rappers from across the nation to rap their messages in 20 dialects.

Two years later, in July 2021, Liu spent four months organizing 32 rappers from 28 provinces and cities nationwide, co-creating the *Rap A Song for the Party*. All rappers joined in with their own dialects to mark the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Communist Party of China.

Listen to the fans

By 2017, rap music had burst onto the cultural scene in China, as the viral reality TV show *The Rap of China* thrust the musical genre into the nation's mainstream pop culture. Clips from the show attracted a staggering 3 billion online views.

Its sequel and similar rap shows have kept the scene flourishing, producing a growing number of rap stars, enthusiasts and fans.

The New Music Industry Observer placed the album *Everybody loves hip-hop*, released under the label Mintone Records, in second place on its all-time chart.

Mainly performed in Sichuan and Yunnan dialects, the album was co-created by rapper Xia Zhiyu and musician Jin Yuhan, or Dizkar. Other rap parts in the dialects of Beijing, Cantonese, Guizhou and Tibetan language are featured on the recording.

Xia, 37, said he used to lack confidence in speaking the dialect of his birthplace — Baolun town, Guangyuan, Sichuan province. Now living in Sichuan's Chengdu, Xia often reflects his life experiences in his works.

His previous album *Young Fresh Chin II*, released in 2023, is highly acclaimed for stories based on his past, that reflect challenging times and a youth's personal growth.

"My hometown is located at the junction of three provinces, with gold and coal mines. There is a large floating population and many hard life stories amid the chaos. They gave me inspiration to create, and I hope to shed light on them," said Xia.



The cover photo of *My Family Picture*, the fifth solo album of Shi released in February. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For 32-year-old Jin, Kunming's pleasant weather, slow pace of life and locals' philosophy of "going with the flow of nature" are reflected in his free and inclusive music.

"If it were 15 or 10 years ago, I might be worried if dialect rap songs can connect with others. But now, we can hear fans rap with us in shows across the nation. We are creating our own hip-hop," said Jin.

Southern exposure

Last year, Cantonese rapper Lan Lao's hits from his second album *Ba Fang Lai Cai* went viral globally online. Combining Cantonese rap with accented Mandarin, other dialects, and culturally specific references, his vibrant local images captivated listeners around the world.

Veteran Cantonese rapper Chen Zhuoheng, or SoulHan, sees this spreading popularity as solid evidence of Chinese rappers' and hip-hop fans' growing cultural confidence and identity.

The 30-year-old from Guangzhou, Guangdong province, performs almost all of his rap songs in Cantonese.

"Although hip-hop is an imported culture, we Chinese have our own cultural background, a safe society, and different music preferences. Cantonese culture has a long and evolving history, including the internationally brilliant Hong Kong culture. The infusion of these diverse cultures can spark tremendous creativity," said Chen.

Cantonese is undoubtedly a force to be reckoned with among China's huge number of dialects and local cultures, boasting a history of more than 2,000 years, he said.

Featuring unique tones and cultural richness, Chen describes the Cantonese hip-hop scene, which started in the 1980s, as a vibrant "melting pot of cultures".

"Hip-hop is inclusive. It gave me knowledge, new perspectives on the world and shaped my values," he said.

"It's good to see more rappers, hip-hop fans and market opportunities in China. But I, like many other rappers, would still prioritize doing hip-hop for self expression and fun, before money and fame," he said.

Feeling like a hero

Consisting of "Kungfu-Pen" Shi Yifan, "D-Shine" Sheng Yu and "Key. L" Liu Cong, C-Block is one of the most popular rap groups in China and this year celebrates its 20th anniversary. Drawing inspiration from traditional culture and urban life, the trio focuses on a mixture of Hunan culture and street narratives to craft a bold and unique rap style under the Sup Music label.

Shi, 34, said it was the movie *8 Mile* — that follows the exploits of a young rapper in Detroit — that changed the life of a "soulless boy" when a music teacher played it to him in middle school.

"I completely knew what I would like to do after that day," said Shi. "What attracted me most about rap and hip-hop music was that it made me believe that anyone can be a hero. And I want to be a hero too," he said.

Shi started writing his own rap songs. The Changsha dialect he uses in everyday life naturally became part of his rap creations, helping him develop a distinctive style with local cultural roots.

It was shortly after C-Block began writing rap music in the local dialect that they made the hit song *Talk About Changsha*. With the whole track performed in the Changsha dialect, it presents the diverse local culture and lively everyday scenes of the city, such as landmarks, food delicacies, social conventions, traditional operas, nursery rhymes and more. "The dialect words just came together so intuitively and smoothly, without deliberate efforts to think about them," said Shi.

With lyrics that resonate and catchy rhythms, the song went viral after being released online in 2007. It also became the theme song of a popular TV show, reaching a wider national audience.

The musical trajectory of Shi and his group has taken off since then. In addition to local dialect songs, he also uses Mandarin to delve into universal topics, which has helped him gain wider popularity nationwide.

Despite his success, he refuses to label himself as a "dialect rapper" only.

"Dialects will still be there in the right place, but hip-hop itself is free with no boundaries. I come from Changsha, and the city has so much to offer. I love here, belong here. But I'm not confined here," Shi added.

He added that "revolution" is deeply carved in the city's history and the people's blood, which echoes with the spirit of hip-hop culture. As rappers, they stay true to themselves, oppose values that they see as incorrect, shoulder social responsibility, and speak up for the unseen in the hope of making a difference.

In November 2020, Shi held a free show in Wuhan, Hubei province. It was a special time for the city — where Shi spent four years at college — as it slowly began recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic. The performance, one of the city's first indoor live shows after the virus outbreak, attracted thousands of enthusiastic fans. Its exuberance cleared clouds of doubt and fear hanging over the city.

"I could hardly sleep the night after the show. That was the exact moment I felt like a hero," said Shi, who is currently on a national tour for his new album.

Rice-noodle superstar

Shi's friend "Ranzer" Ye Runze, 34, is also striving to blend Changsha dialect, life experiences, personal stories and local culture with hip-hop music.

According to his fans, Ye's music flows easily like the city's Xiangjiang River. Cleverly combining Changsha dialect, Mandarin, rap and folk ballads, Ye's songs are more melodic and accessible to a broader audience.

Last year, his hit *Hometown, Wind* impressed millions of people and introduced his hometown and its melodies in a refreshing way.

Learning the Chinese *zhudi* (bamboo flute) from age 8, he has been motivated by American rapper Kanye West through the years. Ye said folk songs, which he has listened to since he was a kid, have also become a source of inspiration and added a unique color to his sound.

For example, *A Bamboo Pole* from his first solo album in 2020, was adapted from a Hunan folk song. It conveys the message of "unity", as one single bamboo pole might be easy to bend, but when three or more of them are bound together, they can drive a big boat and ride the waves. The idea, in Ye's eyes, aligns with the concept of crew, squad and community in United States hip-hop culture.

"We may speak different languages and live different lives from rappers on the other side of the world, but essentially, we share similarities in culture, spirit and human nature," said Ye.

He refers to his music offerings as bowls of "rice noodles" by the roadside, a Changsha specialty popular with almost everyone. They are simple, pure, and warm, and a conduit for lively local stories.

"Hip-hop is free. It's about breaking down boundaries and exploring new possibilities. I want to be a 'superstar' in my way, which is to take my personal style to the extreme — maybe like a Chinese version of 'Post Malone'," said Ye.

Abler Liu contributed to this story.

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TOP NEWS

Key Sino-US consensus highlighted

Stable and sustainable military-to-military relationship stressed by scholars at forum

By JIANG CHENGLONG
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China and the United States should implement the important consensus reached by the two countries' leaders and work toward a stable and sustainable military-to-military relationship, Chinese scholars said at a high-level security forum in Singapore, as global security faces rising risks from hegemonism, disorder of global governance and emerging technologies.

Major General Meng Xiangqing, a professor at China's National Defense University, made the remarks on Saturday during a parallel session of the three-day Shangri-La Dialogue, which concluded on Sunday.

His remarks came after US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth referred to the recent China-US top leaders' meeting in Beijing and their consensus, during a plenary speech earlier on Saturday.

Meng said the level of attention the two leaders' meeting received at the forum showed that stability in China-US relations serves not only the interests of the two peoples, but also regional stability and world peace.

The most important political consensus reached by the two sides is to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability between China and the US, Meng said.

"We expect China and the US to meet each other halfway, translate the consensus into concrete actions, and push military-to-military relations toward healthy, stable and sustainable development," he said.

Responding to a question from a member of the Chinese delegation after his speech, Hegseth said the new vision of building a constructive US-China relationship of strategic stability is "real, substantive and meaningful for the history of peace in the region and the world".

Hegseth said he was present when the leaders discussed constructive strategic stability. "I think that was a great framing from both leaders about what they want from that relationship," he said, adding that there is "a mutual respect, a recognition of capabilities and power and how that could be most usefully leveraged in the world today".

Wang Dong, a professor at Peking University's School of International Studies, said that Hegseth's speech this year contained far fewer negative references to China compared with speeches by US defense chiefs in previous years, and did not mention Taiwan or the South China Sea, two hot topics that had often been cited in the past.

Wang, who participated in the security summit, said the change in Hegseth's tone reflected a more cautious approach by the US in handling relations with China after the two countries agreed to build a constructive relationship of strategic stability.

"Over the past year or so, China, through engagement and struggle, has made the US realize that it cannot gain an advantage in a trade war with China, and may even face countermeasures from China," he said. "The US is working with China to build a new paradigm, which is very important for the two countries to find the right way to get along."

In his speech, Meng, the PLA professor, also warned that global strategic stability faces unprecedented challenges, including the impact of hegemonism on regional security, rising risks of global nuclear conflict, serious erosion of international arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation systems, and disorder in global governance.

Some countries are engaging in power politics, seeking absolute strategic superiority and provoking bloc confrontation, he said, adding that such moves have intensified arms races and regional conflicts.

"These risks are intertwined and mutually reinforcing, making current strategic stability highly fragile," Meng said, noting that countries, especially major powers, should shoulder their due responsibilities in safeguarding strategic stability.

He called for firmly defending the postwar international order, saying that it is essential to building the political foundation for strategic stability.

"As the world again stands at a crossroads, countries must stay alert to any revival of militarist thinking and firmly safeguard the outcomes of World War II and the postwar international order," Meng said, criticizing recent actions by the Japanese side in the security and military fields.

On emerging technologies, the scholar warned against a "rules vacuum" in their military use.

"Allowing algorithms to control matters of life and death could very likely lead to technological loss of control," he said. "At all times, control over war and related weapon systems must be firmly kept in human hands."



Major General Meng Xiangqing (center) attends a meeting with the British delegation on the sidelines of the Shangri-La Dialogue 2026, Asia's premier defense and security summit, on Friday in Singapore. EDGAR SU / REUTERS

Hong Kong and Macao hail milestone yacht policy

By LU WANQING in Hong Kong
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The Hong Kong and Macao special administrative region governments and tourism industry leaders on Sunday welcomed a new policy that allows private yachts from both regions to enter or exit nine Chinese mainland cities in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area with ease.

The policy, rolled out on Saturday, was hailed as a "milestone" for yacht economy and tourism. Stakeholders expressed hope that the next phase would open up the southern route for mainland yachts heading to the two special administrative regions, ease customs requirements and enable mutual recognition of credentials.

According to the State Council's announcement, it approved with immediate effect the exemption from the guarantee requirement and the implementation of temporary ship nationality registration for Hong Kong and Macao yachts, when they temporarily enter and exit the Chinese mainland through designated ports in the nine GBA cities and navigate only within those cities.

Yachts from Hong Kong and Macao can now enter and exit the mainland through designated ports in Guangdong province's Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Zhuhai, Foshan, Huizhou, Dongguan, Zhongshan, Jiangmen and Zhaoqing.

Hong Kong's Transport and Logistics Bureau and Macao's Marine and Water Bureau welcomed the move, saying the new guarantee-free and temporary registration measures will significantly reduce the financial burden of yacht owners from the two SARs. The temporary ship nationality registration allows Hong Kong and Macao yachts to obtain temporary ship nationality certificates issued by the mainland without affecting their original ship registration, enabling individual yacht travel within the waters of the nine mainland cities.

Previously, yacht owners from Hong Kong and Macao whose vessels entered mainland waters had to make a mandatory deposit and apply for a license, which would cost several hundred thousand yuan, while applications for a permit could take months.

In his 2025 Policy Address, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu highlighted major moves to expand the city's high-end yacht industry, including an individual travel system for yachts entering the GBA, as well as measures to facilitate Hong Kong yachts heading north and those from the mainland in the opposite direction.

Timothy Chui Ting-pong, executive director of the Hong Kong Tourism Association, called the latest policy a "full demonstration" of the central authorities' strong support for integrated tourism in the bay area and regional growth.

He hoped for a regional individual travel program for yachts, saying it's crucial for making the region a global destination for high-spending travelers, and turning Hong Kong into a hub for yacht leasing, trading and tourism.

Chui said the travel industry needs to implement more steps to encourage mainland yachts to enter Hong Kong, as having more high spenders is vital for the city's tourism expansion.

Legislator Priscilla Leung Mei-fun applauded the policy as a "milestone" that would spur marine recreation by leveraging each city's strengths — Hong Kong's marinas, maritime and high-end tourism services, and financial support, as well as Guangdong's coastlines, islands and coastal leisure facilities.

She said that faster cross-border yacht traffic is just the first step, envisioning deeper innovation, including mutual recognition of yacht licenses and smoother border inspections.

Lo Wai-kwok, chairman of the Business and Professionals Alliance for Hong Kong, urged the SAR to work with other cities in the region to simplify customs procedures for cruise vessels, yachts and tourists. He plans to meet with industry leaders to discuss how the new policy can drive tangible growth for the SAR's yacht economy.

Saying no to tobacco



Medical workers hold placards on Saturday to mark World No Tobacco Day at a private hospital in Kolkata, India. Observed annually on May 31, the day brings together governments, health organizations, civil society groups and youth worldwide to raise awareness about the dangers of tobacco use. NURPHOTO VIA GETTY IMAGES

HK: City stands out as oasis of stability

From page 1

Regina Ip Lau Suk-yee, convenor of the Hong Kong Executive Council, captured the logic precisely in her welcoming remarks. She observed that amid uncertainties, Hong Kong continues to stand out as an oasis of stability, connectivity and opportunity, and that the Global Prosperity Summit can serve as a platform for dialogue, exchange and pragmatic cooperation.

Yet platforms, however polished, are useless without traffic. And here is where Hong Kong's recent figures speak louder than any communique. The economy expanded 5.9 percent year-on-year in the first quarter of 2026, a meaningful acceleration from the 4 percent of the preceding quarter. Hong Kong has reclaimed its place as the world's fifth-largest merchandise trading entity. The International Monetary Fund has reaffirmed the city's role as an international financial center and super-connector. These are not the numbers of a city in retreat; they are the numbers of a city that has chosen its lane and is pulling ahead.

Equally important is what is being built behind the headlines. The San Tin Technopole and the Hetao Hong Kong Park sit at the heart of the Northern Metropolis, a HK$224 billion ($28.6 billion) infrastructure project that will develop roughly 30,000 hectares — about a third of Hong Kong's territory — along the Shenzhen border. Authorities have said the development will create 650,000 jobs and help ease the city's housing crisis by providing homes for 2.5 million people.

Roughly 80 technology companies and institutions have already established a presence in the Hong Kong Park of the Hetao Cooperation Zone, which officially began operations in December, and nearly 90 percent of the space in the park's two finished wet-lab buildings has been leased, with another five buildings due for completion this year.

Meanwhile, Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu has said the government plans to complete dedicated legislation for the Northern Metropolis this year to speed up the megaproject's development.

Pair this hardware with the soft infrastructure now taking shape — a third medical school, the Northern Metropolis University Town, the Greater Bay Area Clinical Trial Collaboration Platform, a forthcoming Hong Kong Centre for Medical Products Regulation — and the picture sharpens. We are not, as some foreign commentators continue to insist, merely a financial entrepot — a warehouse or distribution center for goods — clinging to past glories. We are becoming an innovation economy with Chinese characteristics and global reach.

One of the event's most compelling contributions was the institutional vision it placed on the table. Ip and Li Kaisheng, a professor at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, jointly proposed an "APEC Global Cities Network", an APEC Chinese Cities' network of cities that have hosted APEC meetings, and a council of APEC think tanks — networks designed to establish the foundation for building greater global regional cooperation and prosperity. This is precisely the kind of forward-looking architecture that multilateralism now requires. Leaders' meetings will continue to be photographed; but the deeper, enduring work of cooperation happens between them, at the level of cities, scholars and practitioners — and Hong Kong is positioning itself to anchor exactly that work.

Critics, of course, will argue that Hong Kong's pivot toward national strategy diminishes its international character. The evidence on the ground says the opposite. More than 40 countries from six continents have already signed the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation, which was inaugurated in Hong Kong as a new platform for advancing the rule of law in global governance. A city that hosts the world's mediators, the world's finance ministers, the world's Olympic federations and the world's police chiefs in a single calendar year is not a city turning inward.

The author is convener at China Retold, a member of the Legislative Council, and a member of the Central Committee of the New People's Party. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Children: All-around development seen as vital

From page 1

Over the years, Xi has emphasized the importance of children's all-around development, framed cultivating the younger generation as a strategic and fundamental task, and called for joint efforts to foster a healthy social environment for the growth of minors. "Those serve as the overarching guideline and fundamental principles for advancing the work on children in the new era," Liu said.

According to the latest estimates released by the National Bureau of Statistics in May, China's population of children, defined as those through age 14, stands at 214.36 million, accounting for 15.25 percent of the total population.

In an effort to safeguard the healthy growth of Chinese children, the nation has rolled out the Outline for Children's Development in China (2021-30), which sets out a comprehensive framework covering children's health, safety, education, welfare, family, environment and legal protection.

"It is the greatest wish of everyone that all children can grow up strong and healthy," Xi once said, calling on the Party and the government to ensure that they care about children and juveniles of all ethnic backgrounds and create better conditions for their study and development.

This care is woven into national strategies as well as Xi's personal gestures that transcend time and distance. In 2004, Xi, then secretary of the CPC Zhejiang Provincial Committee, attended the foundation-laying ceremony for the new campus of Zhijiang Primary School in Sichuan province. Originally located halfway up a mountain, with dilapidated buildings, the school was rebuilt with assistance from Zhejiang.

Two decades later, students of the school wrote to Xi, and ahead of Children's Day in 2024, they received a reply. In the letter, Xi said he was delighted to hear that the school was doing very well and the students were thriving.

Wang Fang, an associate researcher at the Institute of Sociology of the Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences, said that supporting children's growth has evolved from a traditional family matter to an issue of national importance, now integrated into the broader national development agenda.

"In recent years, China has continuously stepped up its efforts to safeguard and support children, leading to the steady expansion of a protective ecosystem for them," Wang noted.

This includes building a robust legal framework through measures such as amending the Law on the Protection of Minors and enacting the Family Education Promotion Law, she said.

Wenchang: Destination also offers immersive science experiences

From page 1

On social media, searches for "rocket" and "aerospace" have surged. In April alone, more than 3 million users engaged with such topics on Chinese lifestyle platform Xiaohongshu, or Red Note.

What was once a rare spectacle is more routine and accessible now, fueling a lifestyle passion.

People drive miles to the site even on weekdays, camp on beaches until midnight and aim telephoto lenses at the launch tower.

Wenchang, on Hainan's northeast coast, is China's only coastal space launch site and home to the nation's sole commercial space launch base. The site now hosts launches nearly every month.

French social media influencer Jean-Bernard Corazzi was awestruck after witnessing a rocket launch for the first time on Wednesday. "I think it's a good idea to link the two — space technology and tourism," he said.

The destination now offers more than just a momentary spectacle. Visitors can tour the Wenchang Aerospace Supercomputing Center to learn how satellites collect data and how that information is transmitted, processed and applied to sectors such as agriculture and transportation. The center and other venues aim to turn "launch watching" into a full-day science immersion experience.

For Celestino Guerra Ng, a freshman at the Academy of Public Security Forces of China's Macao Special Administrative Region, the view of both the operational and new launchpads left a deep impression. "Next time I will choose a daytime launch to enjoy the coconut groves in the foreground," he said, adding that he will share his experience back in Macao.

For British blogger Chapman, the moment was pure wonder. But like many of the new "rocket chasers", he also appreciated what came after the launch: quiet beaches, fresh coconut water and the easy rhythm of tropical Hainan.

The rocket is the adrenaline. The island is the calm. And in Wenchang, travelers no longer have to choose.

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GLOBAL LENS



People dance together at the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival in Beijing on May 23. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



African youths take a group photo at the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival in Beijing on May 23. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Rhythm *of* relations

Diplomats highlight growing importance of people-to-people exchanges in China-Africa ties

The African diplomatic community in Beijing launched the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival during an opening ceremony held at the Jintai Art Museum in Chaoyang Park on May 23 ahead of Africa Day on May 25.

Organized jointly by African embassies in China, the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival was opened to the public as a full-day cultural celebration aimed at promoting friendship, cultural exchange, and people-to-people connectivity between Africa and China.

The festival featured country pavilions representing different regions of Africa, showcasing the continent's rich cultural diversity, tourism potential, artistic traditions, creative industries, and contemporary dynamism through exhibitions, performances, and interactive experiences.

Throughout the day, visitors enjoyed cultural and artistic performances, including traditional music and dance presentations from across Africa, alongside exhibitions of arts, crafts, fashion, cultural heritage, tourism, and investment promotion.

A dedicated children's activity zone also offered interactive experiences introducing young visitors to African culture through traditional African games, painting activities, drumming sessions, storytelling, and hands-on cultural engagement.

In a recent diplomatic reception at the China World Hotel in Beijing to commemorate Africa Day 2026, Miao Deyu, vice-minister of foreign affairs of China, congratulated African countries on the successful commemoration of Africa Day in Beijing. He noted the special significance of 2026 as the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges and the 70th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and African nations.

Miao highlighted the long-standing friendship and solidarity between China and Africa and reaffirmed China's commitment to strengthening practical cooperation under the framework of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation.

He underlined cooperation in areas including development, education, healthcare, poverty reduction, connectivity, and cultural exchanges, noting that China and Africa have consistently supported one another throughout their respective development journeys.

Telesphore Irambona, Burundian ambassador to China, representing the Chair of the African Union, highlighted the importance of cultural exchanges in strengthening understanding and friendship between Africa and China.

Martin Mpana, dean of the African Diplomatic Corps in China, emphasized the enduring importance of people-to-people exchanges in China-Africa relations.

"Today's celebration reminds us that the strongest partnerships are ultimately built between people. Through culture, dialogue, and shared experiences, we deepen understanding and strengthen the bonds of friendship between Africa and China," he said.

Speaking on behalf of the cultural festival coordinating committee, Hodan Osman Abdi, Somali ambassador to China, emphasized the significance of this year's event.

"This year, given its significance as the year of people-to-people exchange, we wanted to celebrate Africa Day differently. We wished to move beyond simply commemorating a date on the calendar and instead create a space where people can genuinely encounter Africa ... through experience, interaction, and human connection".

CHINA DAILY



A Chinese girl learns to play an African drum at the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival in Beijing on May 23. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY





From left: Chinese attendees try African braided hairstyles at the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival in Beijing on May 23. A Chinese attendee tries Ethiopian coffee at the cultural festival on May 23. PHOTOS BY WU XIAOHUI / CHINA DAILY



People from Africa and China dance together at the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival in Beijing on May 23. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



People from Sierra Leone perform a traditional dance at the 2026 Africa Day Cultural Festival in Beijing on May 23. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

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WORLD

Victory marred by violence



A car burns as fireworks light the sky near the Eiffel Tower in Paris on Saturday as supporters of Paris Saint-Germain celebrate the soccer club's UEFA Champions League triumph over Arsenal. French authorities announced 780 people were arrested across the country after celebrations descended into violence, leaving dozens of police officers injured and businesses damaged. THOMAS PADILLA / AP

US seeks changes to Iran deal

Trump delays final approval as Tehran and Washington exchange warnings

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

US President Donald Trump has deferred making a final decision on a truce with Iran after a meeting with advisers on Friday amid reports he was requesting several amendments to a deal his envoys negotiated.

Trump wants the deal and expects to finalize it soon, but was keen to strengthen several points, particularly regarding Iran's nuclear program, according to a report by United States media outlet Axios. Trump also wants to edit wordings around the full opening of the Strait of Hormuz.

Citing two sources, Axios reported that Trump asked his team to make changes to the draft on clauses about Iran's nuclear program. Currently, the memorandum of understanding is said to include a commitment from Iran not to pursue a nuclear weapon, but no specific concessions beyond that.

It also states that there will be a 60-day window to negotiate on nuclear commitments from Iran and sanctions relief from the US, with the first issues on the docket being how to dispose of Iran's enriched uranium stockpile and limit further enrichment, the report said.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth said at a Singapore forum on Saturday that Trump was "patient" and wanted to make a "great deal" that ensures Iran does not get a nuclear weapon.

The US was ready to restart attacks on Iran if a deal could not be reached, he said, adding that US stockpiles were "in a very good place".

"We can do two things at one time. We're supercharging our defense industrial base so that we're building 2X, 3X, 4X the munitions very soon to ensure that all of our (operation) plans are properly funded throughout the world," he said.

On Sunday, Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps announced their interception and destruction of a US MQ-1 drone that entered Iranian territory early in the morning, the Mehr News Agency reported.

Following the interception, the IRGC Air Defense issued a direct warning: Iranian airspace over the country's territorial waters is under full control, and any incursion will be met with a decisive response.

The IRGC warned on Saturday that any US interference in the "management" of the Strait of Hormuz would be met with a "strict military response".

Situation in strait

According to recordings from a public maritime radio channel provided to Xinhua News Agency by crew members aboard vessels stranded near the strait, the IRGC Navy issued a warning to ships operating in the Persian Gulf and the Gulf of Oman.

The IRGC stated that the strait remains closed and that transit is permitted only with authorization from the IRGC Navy and through routes designated by Iran.

The warning added that any violations of the regulations would seriously jeopardize maritime security.

In a video broadcast on state television, Iran's chief negotiator, Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said on Sunday that Tehran will not agree to any deal with the United States that fails to secure the rights of the Iranian people.

On Friday, Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said reaching a final agreement hinges on the US abandoning its expansionist approach and its shifting, contradictory positions.

In a phone call with his Omani counterpart, Araghchi also stressed that Iran remains serious and steadfast in pursuing its rightful interests and legitimate rights.

Agencies and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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China Institute celebrates 100 years of bridging ties

By MINGMEI LI in New York
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The China Institute of America marked its centennial with a gala in New York on Thursday, bringing together prominent families, business leaders, international artists and academics with long-standing ties to US-China exchanges.

Founded in 1926, the institute is the oldest nonprofit organization in the United States focused on cultural and educational exchanges between China and the US.

Over the past century, it has supported a range of exchange programs and cultural initiatives, including sponsoring Mei Lanfang's 1930 North American tour and Broadway performances in New York, and helping secure scholarship aid for Chinese students studying in the US in 1938.

The institute now hosts public discussions on US-China education, art, innovation and business exchanges, organizes exhibitions of Chinese art, and offers Chinese language and cultural programs.

This year's gala honored individuals and families recognized for their contributions to US-China relations and cross-cultural exchanges, including the Nixon family, Bush family and Rockefeller family; former Hong Kong chief executive Tung Chee-hwa; entrepreneurs and philanthropists Ming Hsieh and Eva Hsieh; and professors Li Kai and Cui Yi.

"This centennial is not only a celebration of 100 years of history — it is a declaration of our commitment to the next 100," said Yue-Sai Kan, cochair of the institute. "We are honored to gather tonight with extraordinary individuals and families who have given so much to the cause of understanding between our two nations."

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng attended the gala. He said both the Chinese and US people have upheld the mission of bridging cultures despite the ups and downs in bilateral relations.

"These efforts added a profound and moving chapter to the friendship between our two peoples, a friendship tested through blood and fire," Xie said.

Under the new vision of building a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability, the two countries are once again at a "historic crossroads" and need greater efforts to expand common ground, move forward together and strengthen people-to-people exchanges, he said.

Peter Walker, a board trustee of the institute, a senior partner emeritus at McKinsey & Company, and a longtime China observer who has visited China more than 90 times, told China Daily why he has remained committed to the organization.

"We focus on the soft cultural things — education, arts, culinary exchange, travel, fashion, sports, the places where people connect," he said.

Walker emphasized youth exchanges as "a top priority".

"We have a whole effort around the next generation of people who we want to get involved," he said.

More than 50,000 young people from the US have visited China under China's "50,000 in Five Years" initiative, achieving the target two and a half years ahead of schedule.

Continuing the legacy

The next generations of families involved in US-China exchanges also highlighted a long-term commitment to continuing the legacy.

Christopher Nixon Cox, representing the Nixon family, said people from the two countries are able to bridge their differences.

"Tonight, our two countries face tensions, new questions, new uncertainty," he said in a speech. "The work of bridge-building has never been finished, and in some seasons it feels harder than ever."

Steven Rockefeller Jr, representing the Rockefeller family, told China Daily that the family's engagement in US-China relations reflects a long-standing tradition of supporting cross-cultural understanding and exchanges.

"There's so much opportunity for everyone to contribute in their own way," he said. "It's a vast landscape with such spectacular history, and so much art, culture and literature. Whatever you're interested in, there's so much to share."



An Israeli flag flies over the medieval Beaufort Castle as seen from the Marjayoun area of southern Lebanon on Sunday. AFP

Israel captures strategic castle in south Lebanon

BEIRUT — Israeli troops have captured a strategic mountain topped with a Crusader-built castle in southern Lebanon in the deepest incursion of the country in 26 years, the military said on Sunday.

The capture of Beaufort Castle, near the city of Nabatieh, came after days of airstrikes and intense fighting in nearby villages where Israeli troops fought Hezbollah militants in the rugged area.

Its capture marks a major development in the latest conflict, despite a ceasefire that has been in place since April 17.

The Israeli military's spokesman Avichay Adraee posted a photograph on X showing Israeli troops walking outside the castle, and Defense Minister Israel Katz wrote on X that they had raised an Israeli flag over the castle.

Israeli troops previously captured the castle in 1982 and held it until they withdrew from Lebanon in 2000.

The Beaufort fortress, perched high atop Lebanon's rolling green hills and overlooking the Litani River, has been a strategic military asset for many armies over almost 1,000 years.

Built as a Crusader castle around the 12th century on top of previous fortifications, it has been used by the Crusaders, Saladin's Jerusalem army, Mamluks, Ottomans, the French mandate, the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Israeli military until 2000, when it was partially restored and opened to visitors.

The Crusaders named it Beaufort, which is Old French for "beautiful fortress".

The Israeli military said in a statement that it launched an operation a few days ago in the Beaufort Ridge and the Suluki Valley farther south with the aim of dismantling Hezbollah infrastructure and removing direct threats to Israeli civilians.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in a videotaped statement on Sunday that he had instructed the military to deepen and expand its grip on Lebanese areas held by Hezbollah.

He described the seizure of the Beaufort as "a dramatic stage and a dramatic shift in the policy we are leading".

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Study finds racial bias in AI hiring

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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A new study has found that artificial intelligence tools used to screen job applicants in the United States exhibit significant racial bias against Black and Asian candidates, raising concerns about algorithmic discrimination at a moment when the US labor market is already under strain.

Researchers from Stanford University, Chapman University and Northeastern University tracked 3.4 million people who submitted 4 million job applications to 1,700 job postings across 150 employers and 11 industry sectors. Every application in the dataset was assessed by an AI hiring tool built by a single third-party vendor.

The authors describe their paper as the first to offer large-scale empirical evidence of racial disparities in high-stakes hiring decisions made by algorithmic systems.

"Our new paper offers a rare look inside the 'black box' of algorithmic hiring, showing that these tools increase racial bias and shut the same people out of jobs everywhere they apply," they wrote in an article published on the website of the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence.

The researchers explain the hiring AI pipeline as follows: job seekers submit applications, which are routed to a hiring AI vendor; the vendor's machine learning models generate predictions; and the resulting labels of "recommend" or "do not recommend" are sent back to the employer to guide decisions.

The study, titled Algorithmic Monocultures in Hiring, found that 26 percent of Black applicants and 15 percent of Asian applicants submitted applications to positions where the AI system discriminated against their racial group, as measured by US employment discrimination standards.

If Black and Asian candidates had been recommended at the same rate as the most-favored group, typically white applicants, 40,000 more of their applications would have advanced to the next round, according to the study.

Asian applicants experienced the largest shortfall. If Asian candidates had been selected at the same rate as the most-selected racial group for each position, 29,000 additional applications from Asian job seekers would have been forwarded to employers, the study found.

The researchers stressed that the method used to measure adverse impact matters, because broad averages can mask discrimination that is occurring at the level of individual job postings. For example, if an AI tool that frequently recommends Black applicants for warehouse positions but rarely recommends them for finance roles, it would seem like there is no discrimination on average, but it still produces discriminatory outcomes position by position.

The US labor market has seen hiring slow, while AI tools have made it easier than ever for applicants to submit large numbers of applications. The combination has driven the volume of applications for entry-level positions to nearly three times the levels seen in 2022, according to the paper.

The concentration of the AI hiring industry has caused another problem. They found that more than 60 percent of Fortune 100 companies rely on algorithms built by HireVue. When a significant share of employers across an industry use the same vendor's system, the researchers warned, a single algorithmic bias can ripple across the entire job market, creating what they call systemic rejection.

Among applicants who submitted four applications to positions screened by the same algorithmic vendor, 10 percent were rejected from every single one. As one vendor comes to dominate screening for an industry, the researchers said, candidates become increasingly likely to be shut out entirely rather than simply passed over for a particular role.

The study does not identify what caused the racial biases observed in the hiring algorithms. The researchers acknowledged that much of the technology's impact remains poorly understood by the public.

The researchers are calling on regulators and auditors to measure adverse impact at the individual job-posting level rather than in aggregate, and they are urging agencies to strengthen monitoring mechanisms to prevent systemic rejection in algorithmic hiring.

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COMMENT

Editorials

European Commission needs to handle China policy with prudence, rationality

The European Commission held an orientation debate on Friday to explore a range of policy tools aimed at addressing the European Union's trade "imbalance" with China, citing the country's so-called "overcapacity".

"The current state of the trade and investment relationship is not sustainable," reads a statement issued by the commission following the debate. "As economic and security interests become ever more intertwined, both dimensions will require a more robust and coherent response."

The statement indicates that the commission, misled by certain politicians, is attempting to make China a scapegoat. In doing so, it risks ignoring the EU's underlying diseases.

As a report on Europe's development (2025-26), released by the Institute of European Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences on Friday, said, Europe is experiencing its deepest transformation since the end of the Cold War. Strategic anxiety is replacing developmental confidence and security concerns increasingly dominate economic policymaking.

It is not the European Union's trade with China that is "not sustainable" but the EU's own policies and practices in related sectors. Over the past decade, European businesses have faced high energy costs, regulatory burdens have multiplied, compliance requirements have expanded, and new layers of environmental, digital and competition regulations have raised costs across sectors.

None of these challenges were created by China. The EU's trade deficit with China is largely attributable to Brussels' restrictive export policies on high-tech products, as well as the fact that goods produced by EU companies in China and exported to the European market are counted as exports by China. If trade surplus alone constitutes evidence of "overcapacity", then many of Europe's own globally successful industries would face the same accusation. European automobiles, pharmaceuticals, wine and luxury products have long generated substantial trade surpluses worldwide. Competitive exports are not, by themselves, proof of market distortion.

Evidence comes from the very issue that has dominated China-EU trade relations over the past two years: electric vehicles. After a lengthy political theater, escalating rhetoric and tariff threats, Brussels eventually returned to what should have been the starting point as Beijing urged from the beginning: negotiation. The ongoing efforts to reach a mutually acceptable settlement regarding Chinese-made EVs entering the European market demonstrate a reality: dialogue can produce practical solutions; trade weaponization cannot.

Had Brussels chosen consultation earlier, considerable political capital, business uncertainty and market disruption could have been avoided. The lesson should not be lost on European policymakers now contemplating new instruments targeting China.

Indeed, Brussels' recent actions suggest a growing tendency to substitute regulatory activism for genuine policies to promote industrial renewal. On Thursday, the European Commission launched an investigation under the Foreign Subsidies Regulation into JD.com's proposed acquisition of German retailer Ceconomy, while continuing an expanding series of investigations into Chinese companies operating in Europe.

The China Chamber of Commerce to the EU has rightly warned that such measures risk conflating legitimate market competitiveness with alleged distortions. Innovation, logistics efficiency, supply-chain integration and operational excellence are increasingly viewed through a geopolitical lens by the EU. What should be normal commercial competition is becoming a matter of suspicion.

Some EU policymakers appear increasingly determined to imitate Washington's trade playbook, ignoring the willingness many major EU economies have expressed to strengthen economic relations with China during their leaders' and business delegations' visits to Beijing.

The EU should not overlook the irony that many advocates of tougher measures against China remain relatively silent on the United States' unilateral practices targeting the bloc. For some of them, targeting China is a way to deflect pressure arising from their own perceived softness toward the US.

While remaining open to dialogue, China has made it clear that any discriminatory measure will trigger countermeasures.

The European Commission should examine the EU's own institutional constraints — bureaucratic inertia, excessive regulation, high energy costs, and declining industrial productivity — rather than mistaking China for a "threat".

The future of China-EU economic relations should be determined not by which side can devise the next trade weapon, but by whether the EU can show the wisdom to put aside its ideological bias and focus on cooperation and exchanges to expand the two sides' common interests.

Competitive economies become what they are by striving to become a better version of themselves through openness and competition, rather than by embracing protectionism and unilateralism.

Regional brakes on neo-militarism necessary

The extraordinary efforts made by Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi during the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore over the weekend — seeking "security assurances" from the United States — lay bare Tokyo's anxiety: as Japan's remilitarization becomes increasingly blatant, it risks facing growing opposition from the region.

During their talks on the sidelines of the security forum, Koizumi and his US counterpart reached a series of agreements, including accelerating the joint production of missiles. The Japanese side announced these outcomes in a high-profile manner, as if they were the latest testament to the "solidarity" of its military cooperation with the US.

If Japan truly sought peace, Koizumi would not have gone to such lengths to deliver his telling performance before the nations of the region — countries all too familiar with Japan's old trick of saying one thing while doing another.

Data from the Japanese government reveal that orders from the Japanese Ministry of Defense have tripled over the past five years, and now constitute half of the government's public procurement orders. Historically, this military-industrial complex played a significant role in Japan's militarist expansion. That machines are roaring once again in the system indicates the dangerous direction in which the Sanae Takaichi government is leading the country.

This year marks the 80th anniversary of the opening of the Tokyo Trials, which delivered historical justice after World War II. It serves as a reminder of the consequences of a Japan ruled by de facto militarists. Meng Xiangqing, head of the People's Liberation Army expert delegation at the Shangri-La Dialogue, rightly questioned Japan's qualification to speak about "defense" cooperation, warning against any resurgence of militarism and attempts to challenge the post-WWII international order.

Is a country that has not thoroughly reckoned with the legacy of militarism truly qualified to speak about "defense" cooperation on the international stage? Can it win the trust of the international community — especially the Asian countries that once suffered from its aggression? These questions, raised by Meng during a panel discussion at the dialogue, deserve the full attention of the entire region.

The worrisome actions of Japan extend well beyond its borders. In Singapore, Koizumi also met with Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr to finalize the transfer of decommissioned Japanese military vessels to Manila, aiming to better equip the Philippines for its provocative actions against China in the South China Sea.

On Thursday, the two countries announced they would hold talks on delimiting a so-called "exclusive economic zone" in the waters to the east of China's Taiwan island where China has an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf.

This constitutes a severe violation of China's maritime rights and interests, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and other international laws, and basic norms governing international relations, as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said.

There is no doubt that Japan stands at a crossroads again. The series of institutional constraints established in the postwar era — designed to prevent Japan from repeating the mistakes of its past — are now being systematically dismantled, step by step, by the right-wing forces in Japan. While the tactics employed by them are nothing new, for a nation that has never truly engaged in thorough self-reflection over its heinous wartime history, these methods serve to effectively reawaken the ambition, greed and hubris of a war machine that has long lain dormant beneath a veneer of peace.

During the war, Japanese society succumbed to a state of collective unconsciousness. Established moral compasses were arbitrarily altered, and the Japanese people could only toil diligently to facilitate the cruel objectives dictated by the militarists. Today, Japan seems once again ready to tread that same path.

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Li Min



Opinion Line

Ottawa should respect core concerns to ensure cooperation sustainable

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met respectively with Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney, Foreign Minister Anita Anand and former prime minister Jean Chretien in Ottawa on Friday. The discussions struck a pragmatic tone, focusing on cooperation, exchanges and the need to properly manage differences. This suggests that the atmosphere necessary for forging a new strategic partnership between the two countries is gradually improving.

Months after Carney's January visit to China, the results are becoming visible. Exchanges between some government departments have resumed, and trade and investment discussions have regained momentum.

The numbers tell a revealing story. According to Chinese statistics, total China-Canada goods trade in 2025 stood at $89.59 billion, down 3.7 percent year-on-year. Canadian exports to China fell by 10.5 percent to $41.66 billion, while imports from China declined by 3.7 percent to $47.93 billion. Yet even amid these declines caused by the previous Canadian government's ill-advised China policy, China remained Canada's second-largest trading partner, behind only the United States.

The numbers also demonstrate the resilience of underlying commercial ties. Despite years of diplomatic tensions caused by the Justin Trudeau government, neither side could simply replace the other with any other trading partner. This explains why the Carney government has moved with notable speed to recalibrate the relationship. During his visit to China, Carney spoke of building a strong and enduring new strategic partnership with China. In his meeting with Wang on Friday, Carney reiterated Canada's willingness to deepen cooperation in energy, finance, agriculture and fisheries. These sectors sit at the heart of Canada's comparative advantages.

Wang noted that the improvement in bilateral relations serves the interests of both countries and that there is no clash of fundamental interests between them.

It means that the China-Canada relationship should not be burdened by irreconcilable strategic rivalry.

Indeed, the convergence extends beyond economic and trade relations. Carney's support for China's hosting of this year's Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting is welcome. It aligns with his broader argument that countries should defend multilateral cooperation in an increasingly fragmented world.

In his much-discussed speech in Davos in January, Carney delivered perhaps one of the clearest diagnoses yet of the international environment confronting what he called "middle powers". He warned that a "world of fortresses" would become poorer, more fragile and less sustainable. "Middle powers", like Canada, needed strategic autonomy while continuing to support open trade, international law and practical cooperation, he argued.

Those views resonate with the world's needs for multilateralism and an open economy. While China and Canada may disagree on some issues, they share an interest in preventing global economic fragmentation and resisting the logic of bloc confrontation.

The restoration of strategic dialogue mechanisms announced during Wang's visit therefore reflects the recognition on both sides that sustained communication is indispensable in an era of uncertainty.

Yet one cautionary caveat remains.

If Ottawa wishes to preserve the positive momentum that is now emerging, it must handle the Taiwan question with due prudence and care. The timing of the recent transit of the Canadian frigate HMCS *Charlottetown* through the Taiwan Strait, shortly before Wang's visit, on May 22 and 23 as part of a so-called "routine operation", contradicts the Canadian side's stated willingness to improve ties. China has made clear that while it respects freedom of navigation under international law, it opposes actions that undermine its sovereignty and security under that banner.

A sustainable China-Canada relationship requires Ottawa to manage differences responsibly rather than allow its symbolic gestures to overshadow substantive cooperation.

Chretien, who initiated what many Canadians still regard as the "golden decade" of bilateral relations, understood this reality well. His enduring belief that the two economies are highly complementary remains as relevant today as it was two decades ago.

In an era of geopolitical volatility, Canada would do well to recognize that pragmatic cooperation with China serves its interests better than ideological distance. If Ottawa can reciprocate Beijing's approach while carefully managing their differences, this year's bilateral trade figures will show that such a course is worthwhile.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

New urban renewal plan prioritizes safety

Editor's note: *The Chinese government recently released an urban renewal plan, outlining key targets, major tasks and projects, as well as policy measures for the country's urban renewal efforts during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. China Central Television spoke to Zheng Degao, vice-president of the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design and Tang Daizhong, deputy head of the construction management and real estate department at Tongji University, to discuss the sustainable development aspects of this plan. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China's urban development is shifting from a model focused on expansion to a more intensive and quality-oriented approach. This new stage of development emphasizes the construction of modern cities that are innovative, desirable to live in, beautiful, resilient, culturally advanced and smart. These principles must translate into concrete actions, projects and real-life scenarios to deliver tangible results.

The urban renewal plan identifies six major tasks: fostering new drivers of urban development, creating high-quality urban living spaces, advancing the green and low-carbon transition, building safer and more resilient cities, promoting urban culture, and enhancing urban governance capabilities. It also stresses the need to optimize underutilized land, introduce full life-cycle safety management systems for housing, construct or renovate "quality homes" and upgrade urban municipal infrastructure.

Urban renewal is fundamentally a safety project. Risks are often concentrated in large cities, so it is essential to focus on safety. Aging infrastructure, deteriorating buildings and outdated public facilities pose risks, necessitating renewal and upgrades.

At the same time, managing urban safety requires a systematic approach. Cities are increasingly expected to leverage digital technologies and monitoring systems to detect risks early, issue timely warnings and respond before problems escalate.

A comprehensive urban assessment is the critical first step in the renewal process. By examining the condition of buildings and residential compounds, cities can identify existing problems and residents' needs. For example, there may be a shortage of parking facilities, structural risks in an aging building or insufficient public services for seniors and children.

However, identifying problems is only the beginning. The real challenge lies in addressing them through targeted renovation, upgrades and quality improvement. This is why the principle of "no renewal without assessment" has become a core component of the urban renewal framework. It creates a closed-loop process in which assessments uncover problems, and those findings guide the design and implementation of renewal projects.

According to the plan, future urban renewal projects are expected to draw on three major sources of funding: public finance, financial capital and private capital, with each serving a distinct function.

Public funding will provide the foundation and serve as a safeguard, particularly for projects with strong public-interest characteristics. Public finance can also act as seed capital to attract additional financing.

Financial capital is to play a leveraging role, addressing the mismatch between the long investment cycles of urban renewal projects and the slower pace of returns. Since many renewal projects require years to generate stable revenue, long-term financing is essential to bridge the gap and ensure that future cash flows cover the current investment costs.

The third crucial source of funding is private capital. Some private capital, such as real estate developers and professional operators can revitalize projects, improve efficiency and create sustainable business models where future operating revenues help offset the initial investment.

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VIEWS

Massoud Amin

Beyond megawatts, coordination is civilization



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

For 40 years, I have watched the world count megawatts and then act surprised when the lights begin to flicker. Power generation is easy to photograph. Grids are harder.

A new wind farm makes for a better picture than a new transformer, so national scorecards happily tally how much clean power a country has generated, and much less happily ask whether that power can actually reach a person, a factory, or a hospital when it is needed.

This is not a small oversight. It is the central misunderstanding of energy transition.

Electricity is the only product in modern times that has zero "shelf life".

It must be produced and consumed in the same instant — unless we have massive storage capacity. A cargo ship of grain can wait in a harbor. An electron cannot.

The moment a kilowatt leaves a turbine, it has less than a second to find a load, or the system destabilizes. That second — and the coordination that governs it — is the real infrastructure.

It also decides whether a terawatt-hour is a public good or a stranded asset.

The most important number in the energy transition is not installed capacity.

It is the grid's coordination capacity that carries it.

Consider the region that, on paper, should have the least energy problems on Earth.

The Inner Mongolia autonomous region holds roughly 57 percent of China's onshore wind resources and about a fifth of its solar resources.

In 2025, it added 35 gigawatts of new renewable energy capacity, bringing its total installed renewable capacity to over 170 GW.

Wind power capacity alone surpassed 100 GW for the first time, making it the first region in China to exceed that threshold. Ten-megawatt onshore turbines, unheard of a decade ago, are spinning at scale.

None of that works without the second sentence of the story.

As of Dec 28, 2025, Inner Mongolia had transmitted a cumulative 834.765 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity to 11 provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities via eight ultra-high-voltage power transmission corridors, ranking first in China.

Twelve more UHV projects are planned for the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, and the region's outbound electricity over those five years is expected to exceed a trillion kilowatt-hours.

The megawatts are the flag. The coordination is the country.

Inner Mongolia's renewable build is impressive because it is attached to long-haul transmission, coal-fired flexibility, growing storage capacity and dispatch logic that can balance a system whose primary fuel is weather.

A desert photovoltaic array with nowhere to send its output is an expensive curiosity.

The same array sitting behind a UHV corridor, digital substations, forecasting, storage, and a control room that coordinates across time zones is a national asset.

Compare that with places that built capacity but deferred the grid.

Germany raced ahead on wind and solar and paid for it in years of curtailment and redispatch charges.

Texas froze in February 2021 because capacity alone could not anticipate a storm.

California has prolonged blackouts during heat waves; its capacity charts insist it should not have relied so heavily on new energy sources.

In each case, the megawatts were there. The coordination was not.

What the 20th century built was an electro-mechanical grid: copper, iron, oil, and operators reading dials.

What we are now building is a cognitive grid — sensing at every node; forecasting at every substation; dispatching decisions, or resource planning at a power plant by the plant's operator, in milliseconds; and cyber defenses running alongside physical ones.

The hardware still matters. The intelligence layered on top decides whether a renewable-heavy system is resilient or fragile.

I have argued for four decades — created and led the Complex Interactive Networks/Systems Initiative (CIN/SI), a $30 million joint EPRI/US Department of Defense program from 1998 to 2002 — that a grid must be smart, secure, self-healing, and trusted, not just large.

"Trusted" is a technical word. It means the system must keep serving society irrespective of storms, attacks, component failures and ordinary human error.

Capacity without trust is a brittle machine. Trust without capacity is a slogan.

The playbook is now visible for any region aiming to do what Inner Mongolia is doing: Build generation and transmission as a single project; integrate storage and flexibility from day one; harden the cyber and physical layers together; and train operators for a grid that behaves nothing like the one they trained on.

Accept that the grid is no longer a passive delivery pipe.

It is an active participant in economic development. A nation that grasps this is not just decarbonizing. It is upgrading its civic infrastructure for the next century.

The most underappreciated object in the energy transition is the transmission line. It is also the most honest.

It records, in copper and steel, exactly how serious a region is about integrating its own ambitions.

Capacity targets are easy to write. Corridors are not. A region that has built both is telling you something about how it intends to grow.

So when another ranking of renewable capacity crosses my desk, I note the number and ask a different question: Where is the coordination?

Where is the grid that can actually carry it? That, more than any megawatt count, is the real competitive advantage of the twenty-first century.

Civilizations that master coordination — of electrons, of data, of capability, of trust — tend to do well.

Those that only master capacity tend to hear a lot of celebratory speeches, right up until the lights begin to flicker.

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

Henry Wai-chung Yeung

Asia's strategic shift from dominance to diversity

Imagine a world where your latest iPhone bears the inscription, "Designed by Apple in California, assembled in California".

Such a scenario would not only bypass the enormous growth of China as the key assembly hub for billions of iPhones since 2007, but also prevent the emergence of Chinese smartphone giants such as Huawei, Xiaomi, Oppo, Vivo and Honor among others.

What's more, without China's involvement, consumers in the United States and across the world would not be able to afford iPhones designed and made in California due to their prohibitive costs.

When I was growing up in Hong Kong during the 1980s, brands such as Motorola, Nokia, and Sony dominated the mobile phone market.

It was the time when Japanese electronic products and cars were conquering world markets, reinforcing the "Flying Geese" model of economic development propounded by Japanese economist Kaname Akamatsu. The model depicting Japan as the leading goose and other East Asian economies as its followers was popular in academic and policy circles.

But this "Flying Geese" model has now evolved into a more complex yet resilient economic landscape, where regional and national economies are steering their industrial transformation and economic development through strategic coupling with global production networks.

In today's interconnected world, no single national economy can control and dominate an entire value chain because production networks now stretch across many regions and continents.

Taking the iPhone as an example, its emergence as the smartphone that replaced Motorola from the United States, Nokia from Finland, and Sony (Ericsson) from Japan by the early 2010s was not merely because it was "designed in California", but also due to the incredible production efficiency and strong supply chain ecosystem developed by its main "assembler" Foxconn in Shenzhen and elsewhere in China.

These resilient supplier networks were strategically coupled with Apple to support its phenomenal rise.

In fact, the growth and development of the global smartphone industry, including key components such as advanced semiconductors, is largely due to the strategic coupling of Foxconn and other key suppliers with global leaders such as Apple, Huawei, and Xiaomi.

Their inter-firm networks, driven by economic efficiency and mutual interests, have spurred regional growth in Guangdong, Taiwan and other parts of China.

While Japan and Japanese firms (for example Sony and its sensors and lenses for smartphone cameras) continue to play a significant role in global smartphone production networks, the center of gravity in this industrial segment has clearly shifted from Japan to China and the Republic of Korea.

This supply-side story, however, masks an even more significant shift in the Asia-Pacific region — the rise of East Asia as a major market since the mid-2010s. This trend is evident across smartphones, personal computers, consumer electronics and electrical appliances.

Hong Kong, the place where I grew up, relied heavily on the US and Western Europe as key markets. But today, Northeast and Southeast Asia have become important consumers of global smartphones. It's not just Japan that has lost its lead goose status in technology. The US is also no longer the world's largest market.

What lessons can we draw for under standing the resilience of supply chains in an increasingly uncertain world?

First, the Asia-Pacific region will continue to play a pivotal role in building resilient supply chains, particularly in the electronics industry.

Instead of fragmenting and decoupling from global production networks, leading firms and their ecosystems will likely adopt a resilient symbiotic approach, shifting from a US-centric model to one more focused on the Asia-Pacific.

This shift will present more opportunities for East Asian businesses, particularly in China, to establish production networks that are less reliant on the US.

In the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, significant opportunities exist in the electronics industry along the technology corridor comprising Shenzhen, Dongguan-Foshan, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou.

Second, as Japan's technological dominance during the "Flying Geese" era has been eclipsed by China and other East Asian economies, geopolitical rivalries and techno-nationalism will create new opportunities for regions to engage in strategic coupling with Asia-based global production networks.

My earlier book *Strategic Coupling* highlighted how East Asian Tiger economies developed by aligning domestic firms with global leaders across industries.

In today's new era of geopolitical uncertainty, I foresee more regional economies in the Asia-Pacific aligning with Asia-based leading firms in their diversification and resilience strategies.

This flexible reorganization of Asia-based global production networks will unlock new development opportunities within the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. But unlike the 1980s, it will not be dominated by one leading goose.

Instead, it will be a new geographical mosaic of multi-nodal networks and development patterns that are more resilient and capable of absorbing risks.

This regional resilience and production network diversification will serve the world economy far better than one that champions "Designed in California, assembled in California". De-globalization and decoupling are outdated; the world should now engage with re-globalization and recoupling!

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

Yu Haiyan and Zhou Xinyu

Using AI to protect mental health

As the world marks International Children's Day on June 1, it's a time for joy and anticipation for children across the country.

While parents get ready to celebrate this occasion, they should also remember the significance of another day that just passed. May 25 was National Student Mental Wellness Day.

Beyond the gifts and the fun at amusement parks on International Children's Day, how can we lay a strong foundation for our children's mental health?

The solution extends beyond doctors and hospitals. It requires a collective effort to address a growing crisis in our schools and colleges.

A 2025 study of middle school students in Chongqing revealed troubling statistics: about 26.34 percent of the 12,367 children showed signs of depression.
Consider the case of "Qi Qi" (not her real name), a 14-year-old student from a middle school in Chongqing.

At school, Qi Qi always kept to herself and rarely communicated with her classmates.

Everyone thought she was just shy, but her sadness grew wildly inside her. One day, after a math test, Qi Qi broke down crying and said she didn't want to go to school anymore — she didn't want to exist in this world anymore.

Qi Qi's story is a wake-up call. We live in an age of artificial intelligence and digital footprints.

These tools should be used to protect our children. This is where "digital phenotyping" comes in.

The concept may sound complex, but it simply means using data from devices — such as phones and watches — to understand a child's behavior.

This is not science fiction, but a necessary measure.

AI can look for small changes that parents or teachers might miss. For example, a sudden drop in messages or calls, and more late-night screen time than usual. These can be early warning signs.

This is not about surveillance, but about stepping in early to help.

At the First Affiliated Hospital of Chongqing Medical University, a national regional medical center for mental health disorders, physicians are exploring how to combine data — such as facial expressions and voice tones — with AI to build models that can identify emotional issues early.

Such technological innovations alone are not enough. We must also look at the underlying causes that are troubling children.

The pressure to get good grades in academics and the erosion of close family support are genuine problems.

The Ministry of Education's "double reduction" policy was a good first step to ease school stress, but a broader shift in mindset is needed.

We must value emotional strength as much as we value academic achievements.

The family can become the "charging station" for a child's emotional well-being. Simple daily habits can make a big difference. Turn lectures into conversations.

Instead of asking, "Why did you fail?", try "You look upset. Want to talk about it?" Create "magic time" for the family by setting aside 15 minutes after dinner to disconnect from devices and engage in playful activities. Dance like silly people, play with Lego, or just laugh.

Let the stress melt away. Have "failure parties" to celebrate mistakes as learning moments.

When children see that a wrong answer or poor grades are not the end of the world, it reduces their fear of failure.

This is not empty talk. Real action is underway. As part of the "Sunshine Mind Regional Collaborative Alliance for Youth Development", we are launching six projects, including the "Sunshine Mind Volunteer Service Team", "Adolescent Sleep Health Promotion Project" and the "Care Plan for Children in Need".

These programs bring mental health services directly to schools, communities and families. They move us from random, disconnected efforts to a clear, organized system of care.

Qi Qi's story ends well. With counseling, her parents' loving support, and a school program that encouraged outdoor play, she slowly found joy again.

As we celebrate June 1, let us remember that the best gift we can give our children is not a toy, but the tools to understand and manage their inner world.

By using ethical AI, strong family bonds, and community support, we can help every child not just survive — but truly thrive.

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Answering shared needs

China and Brazil are working together to establish an AI ecosystem that can promote sustainable development and social progress



China is an excellent example of how to make science, technology and education a driving force for economic and social progress.

In 2025, China's research and development spending exceeded 3.9 trillion yuan ($576 billion), with the R&D spending intensity reaching 2.8 percent of GDP, according to the National Bureau of Statistics. The total number of R&D personnel in the country ranked first in the world in 2024. During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China achieved a series of significant breakthroughs in fields such as quantum technology, life sciences, material sciences and space sciences. According to China's Ministry of Science and Technology, in the field of artificial intelligence, China has developed several general-purpose models reaching international advanced levels, with some models achieving accuracy rates exceeding 95 percent, and it has created over 100 benchmark application scenarios. AI has empowered a wide range of industries, contributing to China's high-quality development. This progress is closely linked to the development of China's education sector during the 14th Five-Year Plan period. According to the Ministry of Education, over this period, China's higher education system produced 55 million graduates. Vocational education supplied over 70 percent of the new high-quality, highly skilled personnel for modern industries, supporting the cultivation and development of new productive capacities.

These achievements are the outcomes of the enormous investment that China has made in technology, science and education for the benefit of its society in the past several decades. What China has achieved in its economic and social development deserves attention and should be shared as best practices worldwide.

In the spirit of sharing best practices and collaborating for the common good, China has been an incredible partner for Brazil in domains such as health, industry, green energy, telecommunications and AI. In April, China and Brazil signed a memorandum of understanding on AI research and development, human capacity building programs and the technological infrastructure for AI. Among the planned activities are the development of AI solutions adapted for the Brazilian context such as language translator systems, cybersecurity solutions and the creation of an interoperable data platform in a cloud environment. Furthermore, the MoU aims to promote exchanges of researchers, technical visits and development of joint courses and programs.

Collaboration and cooperation are the best ways to move forward. No one can aspire to a better future without collaborating and cooperating with others, especially in the digital domain, where AI knows no borders.

Another remarkable collaboration was established in October 2025, between the National Institute of the Semi-Arid and China Agricultural University. This collaboration seeks to leverage the best competency and expertise of both countries in a complementary way for their mutual benefit. Brazil is one of the world's largest food producers, with vast experience in tropical agriculture and knowledge of diverse soils and biomes, while China has a huge capacity for innovation and high-tech manufacturing. Therefore, Brazil and China are natural and complementary partners to develop solutions for family farming based on high-end technology powered by AI and joint human capacity building programs.

China and Brazil have collaborated in this area for several years, producing meaningful results. For example, some rural producers who used to spend over 20 days harvesting a hectare of rice now complete the operation in one day using Chinese agricultural machinery. In 2025, an MoU was signed between the Institute for Digital Economy and Artificial Systems in Xiamen, China, and the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, focusing on AI policy development, joint research and talent cultivation to address common challenges faced by both countries such as the shortage of AI specialists in fields such as AI governance and safety, development of standardized protocols for data sharing, and certification programs for algorithmic transparency, among other things.

Beyond these examples, there are networks and laboratories involving Brazil and China, such as the China-BRICS AI Development and Cooperation Center, which includes representatives from BRICS countries and aims to leverage AI technologies to promote sustainable development, economic growth and social progress among the BRICS members. Furthermore, in 2025, China and Brazil inaugurated China-Brazil Belt and Road Joint Laboratory on Tropical Microbiology for the prevention and research of infectious diseases. This initiative aims to strengthen bilateral cooperation in the health field to combat existing and future infectious diseases through prevention, preparedness and response.

The aforementioned examples demonstrate the collaborative relationship between China and Brazil as well as their shared commitment to creating win-win solutions in a sustainable way. Although the projects currently focus on both countries, their results can be shared globally, since the issues addressed, such as the shortage of AI specialists and the lack of frameworks that allow the development of AI or the creation of an AI ecosystem, are pervasive among Global South countries. These countries are generally absent from debates regarding some regulations and frameworks for AI that are currently being created by the West and used as templates for the rest of the world. The problem is that these "global" frameworks do not correctly reflect the reality of some developing countries.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Some Global South countries face unequal realities, exhibiting different levels of maturity in AI, whether in terms of technical capacity, infrastructure or regulation. The cooperation between China and Brazil is very beneficial as it involves two major Global South countries working together to find ways to address their own problems that are also problems of other developing countries.

Collaboration and cooperation are the best ways to move forward. No one can aspire to a better future without collaborating and cooperating with others, especially in the digital domain, where AI knows no borders.

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TOMAS CHAMORRO-PREMUZIC

At the top of the game

The rapid adoption of AI is changing how leadership is defined, assessed and developed



Nearly four years after the mainstream arrival of generative artificial intelligence, most organizations are still struggling to understand what it actually means for work. The dominant narrative has focused on job displacement: which roles will disappear, which will survive, and which new ones will emerge. This framing is intuitive, but incomplete. The real impact of AI is not primarily about eliminating jobs. It is about redefining them.

AI is transforming work at the level of tasks, not roles. It is unbundling jobs into their component parts, automating some, augmenting others, and leaving a smaller but more critical subset firmly in human hands. In doing so, it is quietly reshaping the nature of human contribution at work. The implication is not that humans are becoming obsolete, but that the bar for what constitutes valuable human input is rising.

This shift has profound consequences for leadership, talent and the broader labor market.

Many organizations are confusing activity with progress. According to survey findings presented by Nicholas Bloom of Stanford University, most surveyed firms reported using some form of AI technology, with overall adoption at about 69 percent across the sample. Yet these impressive figures often mask a more sobering reality: there is little evidence of corresponding productivity gains. Employees are frequently doing the same work as before, only faster or with less effort. Crucially, the time saved is rarely reinvested in higher-value activities.

This is not a productivity revolution. It is, at best, a more efficient version of the status quo. At worst, it is what one might call performative productivity, where the appearance of progress substitutes for actual value creation.

The underlying issue is that most organizations have not redesigned work. They have layered AI onto existing processes rather than rethinking those processes from first principles. As Peter Drucker famously observed, there is nothing so useless as doing efficiently what should not be done at all. AI risks amplifying precisely this problem, enabling organizations to do more of the wrong things, faster.

This is where leadership becomes critical.

If AI is the defining technological challenge of our time, then leadership is the defining organizational challenge. Leaders must decide not only how to deploy AI, but what work should exist in the first place. They must move beyond adoption metrics and focus on value creation. This requires a level of judgment that no algorithm can substitute for.



WANG JUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Paradoxically, as AI becomes more capable, the importance of human judgment increases. One reason is that AI generates what might be called artificial certainty. Large language models produce answers that are coherent, confident and often persuasive, even when they are incorrect. The risk is not that people will distrust AI, but that they will trust it too much.

Distinguishing between high-quality insight and plausible nonsense is fast becoming a core professional skill. It is also a leadership skill.

This raises an uncomfortable question. If the value of human work is shifting toward judgment, decision-making and problem framing, how well equipped are today's leaders to meet that standard?

The evidence is not encouraging. For decades, leadership selection has been driven by flawed assumptions. Organizations tend to overvalue past performance, even though success is often context-specific and difficult to replicate. They place excessive emphasis on experience and technical expertise, despite strong evidence that personality and cognitive ability are more robust predictors of long-term potential. And they continue to reward confidence and charisma, traits that are easy to observe but only weakly related to effectiveness.

These biases help explain why so many organizations end up with leaders who look impressive but underperform. In an AI-enabled world, this problem is likely to become more visible, not less. When information and technical expertise are widely accessible, the marginal value of leadership shifts to areas where humans still have an advantage: setting direction, exercising judgment, building teams and influencing others.

This has important implications for how organizations identify and develop talent.

First, talent identification must become more data-driven. AI can play a useful role here, not as a replacement for human decision-making, but as a tool for improving it. By analyzing large datasets on leadership behavior and outcomes, organizations can identify patterns that are difficult to detect through intuition alone. This can help reduce bias and improve the accuracy of selection decisions.

However, data is only as useful as the framework used to interpret it. Without a clear understanding of what drives performance, more data can simply lead to more noise. This is where science matters. Decades of research in organizational psychology have identified a relatively small set of variables that reliably predict leadership effectiveness, including cognitive ability, personality traits and learning agility. Integrating these insights with AI-driven analytics offers a powerful way to improve talent decisions.

Second, leadership development needs to be rethought. Traditional approaches often focus on building strengths, under the assumption that maximizing what individuals are already good at will drive performance. In reality, many leadership failures are caused not by a lack of strengths, but by the presence of unaddressed weaknesses, particularly those linked to personality derailers. Traits such as overconfidence, volatility or excessive risk-taking can undermine effectiveness, especially under pressure.

In this context, the most effective development strategies are those that help leaders manage their risks, not just amplify their strengths. This is especially important in an AI-enabled environment, where the consequences of poor judgment can be magnified.

Third, organizations need to reconsider which capabilities are uniquely human and therefore worth investing in. As AI takes over routine cognitive tasks, the comparative advantage of humans lies in areas such as critical thinking, creativity, social influence and ethical reasoning. These are not new skills, but they are becoming more valuable.

Unfortunately, education systems and corporate training programs have been slow to adapt. They continue to emphasize knowledge over thinking skills, and technical proficiency over judgment. This mismatch risks producing a workforce that is not prepared for tomorrow's challenges.

Finally, there is a broader societal dimension to consider. The transformation of work driven by AI raises important questions about governance, inequality, and social stability. Policymakers face the difficult task of balancing innovation with regulation, ensuring that the benefits of AI are widely shared while mitigating its risks.

This will require a more nuanced approach than the binary debates that often dominate public discourse. Overregulation can stifle innovation, while underregulation can lead to unintended consequences and negative ethical and societal outcomes. The goal should not be to control AI, but to shape its application in ways that enhance human capability and societal well-being.

In this sense, the challenge is not technological, but institutional. It is about how organizations and societies adapt to a new distribution of human and machine capabilities. The same is true at the business level. AI will not replace leaders but will expose them. It will make it easier to see who adds value and who does not. It will reduce the returns to superficial competence and increase the premium on genuine expertise and sound judgment.

For organizations willing to rethink how they define, assess and develop leadership, this represents an opportunity. For those that are not, it represents a risk.

The future of work will not be determined by AI alone. It will be determined by how effectively humans choose to use it. This is why effective leaders will be an integral part of the future.

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Tokens are China's next goldmine

As service exports, they are seen offsetting traditional trade risks

By CHENG YU
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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

In a small apartment somewhere in Southeast Asia, a designer taps a phone screen and asks an artificial intelligence tool to sharpen a blurred product photo, soften the lighting and remove a messy background.

The request looks weightless. It travels as text and pixels, invisible and almost instant. But behind it is a new kind of Chinese export: not a toy, a solar panel, an electric vehicle or a container of electronics, but a string of AI "tokens" produced by servers running in China and sold as a digital service to overseas users.

In April, South China's port city of Shantou, Guangdong province, had completed China's first city-level closed-loop verification for token exports. It was a full process covering offshore data centers, token generation, overseas application programming interface requests and compliant cross-border data transmission and meant that overseas users in parts of Southeast Asia had begun calling AI services powered by tokens generated in Shantou.

The language is technical, but the ambition is straightforward: China wants to turn domestic electricity, data centers and large-language-model capability into a high-value export product.

Under this model, the power stays inside China. The servers stay inside China. The models run inside Chinese intelligent computing centers. What crosses borders is the AI service itself — inference results delivered through an API.

That makes "token exports" a new form of services trade. Traditional computing-power globalization often meant heavy investment abroad: building data centers, laying fiber, securing local energy supply and operating networks in foreign markets. Token exports promise something different: electricity does not leave the grid, computing power does not leave the country, but value flows globally.

Liu Xiaoge, deputy director of research at the development strategy and regional economy department of the Development Research Center of China's State Council, said: "Token exports have become the deep integration of artificial intelligence technology and digital trade in China. They have become a completely new form of digital services trade."

"At a time when China's traditional trade faces geopolitical and tariff challenges, token exports, with their purely digital and zero-logistics delivery model, provide a new way to offset the risks of traditional trade frictions and drive growth in services trade. They will reshape the position of China's digital services in the global value chain," Liu said.

The experiment also offers a glimpse of how China is trying to rewire its export economy for the AI age. For decades, the country's growth was powered by factories, ports and container ships. The next phase may depend as much on offshore cable landing stations, green electricity, GPUs, compliance zones and APIs.

For instance, Shantou's international submarine cable landing station gives it a direct route into Southeast Asia. Shantou carries a large share of China's international outbound bandwidth and provides a low-latency direct node to Singapore, making it one of the fastest Chinese gateways to the region.

The city also sits near large offshore wind resources, giving its token-export story a green-energy narrative that matters to global clients under pressure to meet environmental, social and governance standards.

That is why China's policymakers are paying attention. In the 2026 Government Work Report, Beijing called for new infrastructure projects involving large-scale smart computing clusters and the coordinated development of computing capacity and electricity supply. It also pledged integrated monitoring and distribution of computing capacity across the country and support for public cloud services.

The logic is already visible in China's northwestern regions. In Qingyang, Gansu province, white wind turbines turn slowly over ochre hills, and rows of blue-black photovoltaic panels catch the hard northwestern sun. Instead of being pushed entirely through ultra-high-voltage lines to distant factories and cities, part of that green electricity can be consumed nearby by data centers.

The current runs into racks of servers. GPUs turn electrons into matrix multiplication. The model produces tokens. A user thousands of miles away sees an edited image, a generated paragraph, a line of code or a customer-service answer.

From outside the China Energy Engineering Corp project area in Qingyang, data center buildings operated by Kingsoft Cloud, China Telecom and Chindata can be seen rising nearby. Qingyang has already built 11 data centers, created a domestic 10,000-card computing cluster and surpassed 140,000 petaflops of computing scale.

In the old export economy, a city needed factories. In the token economy, it needs power, fiber, servers, regulation and an ability to guarantee low-latency service.

Now, Shantou and Qingyang do not need to become the next great AI model laboratories. They can become AI trade infrastructure: the service desk for computing power, the customs broker for tokens, and the bonded zone for cross-border data flows.

Wang Peng, a researcher of Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "Token exports are a concentrated expression of China's combined competitive advantages in energy, data, infrastructure and engineering talent. In the context of a deeply reshaped global trade landscape, supporting token exports will help extend China's trade competitiveness into intelligent computing power and has major, far-reaching significance for shaping new drivers of foreign trade."

The timing is important. Global AI spending is surging, and the most expensive layer is infrastructure. Gartner forecast worldwide AI spending would reach $2.52 trillion in 2026, up 44 percent from 2025. It estimated AI infrastructure spending alone would rise from about $965 billion in 2025 to $1.37 trillion in 2026.

That scale creates a massive opportunity for countries that can provide cheap, reliable and increasingly green computing capacity. China sees a chance to sell not merely applications, but the underlying intelligent service.

The demand signal is already visible in developer behavior. OpenRouter, a global AI model API aggregation platform, reported that Chinese-developed open-source models rose from a tiny share of weekly token volume in late 2024 to nearly 30 percent in some weeks in 2025, with growth concentrated in the second half of the year. DeepSeek, Qwen, MiniMax and Moonshot AI were among the Chinese model families gaining traction in its dataset.

In early 2026, Chinese model token calls continued to climb with Chinese models overtaking US rivals in token usage for the first time.

For Chinese telecom operators and tech companies, that creates a new business line.

State-owned telecom carrier China Telecom announced in late April a series of trial token plans, offering consumers monthly AI usage packages starting at 9.9 yuan ($1.46) for 10 million tokens. Small businesses and developers can purchase enterprise packages with up to 150 million monthly tokens for 39.9 yuan.

Alibaba has announced a new Alibaba token hub business group, defining tokens as a strategic asset and setting out three missions: creating tokens, transmitting tokens and applying tokens.

It has said it will invest more than 380 billion yuan over three years to build a global cloud computing network, using full-chain capabilities in models, computing power and chips to support token exports.

Rao Shaoyang, director of the industry and enterprise strategy at China Telecom's research institute, said such efforts change the nature of Chinese digital globalization.

"In the past, China's digital industries went overseas through apps, software or complete systems. Token exports allow overseas customers to directly call the inference capability, interface capability and intelligent services of Chinese models," he said.

"The model could also alter the economics of China's renewable energy buildout. China has installed vast amounts of wind and solar power, especially in western and northern provinces," he added.

Wang Linwei, an engineer at China Energy Engineering Corp's Qingyang big data center, added that computing-power and electricity coordination has already formed several clear and feasible paths.

These include direct green-power purchases and direct green-power connections, integrated source-grid-load-storage dispatch, flexible peak-shifting of computing loads, and linked regulation between energy storage and computing power, he explained.

"Whether through one-way regulation or two-way interaction, computing-power and electricity coordination has a broad development space," he emphasized.

Wuxi giving AI something new: a factory address

REPORTER'S LOG

By Cheng Yu

A phrase that recently gave me pause is "token factory", as Wuxi, one of China's most seasoned manufacturing cities, is preparing to give artificial intelligence something it has rarely had before: a factory address.

Not a factory that stamps metal parts, assembles circuit boards or loads containers onto trucks, but one designed to produce the measurable units consumed by large AI models — tokens.

On May 15, Honflex signed an agreement with the local government to build Jiangsu province's first Huawei Ascend 384 super-node computing cluster. On top of that infrastructure, Hongxin Electronics plans to establish a large-scale token factory in the city.

The first phase will deploy four Huawei Ascend 384 super-node servers. Each server carries 384 AI accelerator cards, and the four will be connected into one super cluster. In China's emerging market-facing token factory sector, that scale is being described as among the largest.

At first, the phrase sounds almost theatrical. But the more I followed the logic, the more industrial it became. A token is the basic unit processed by an AI model. Every chatbot reply, AI coding request, image-editing command or automated report consumes tokens.

A token factory is an industrialized production facility dedicated to producing the basic units of AI generation — tokens. Inside the token factory are computing-power infrastructure, models and algorithms, scheduling and distribution systems, and a MaaS — model-as-a-service — platform.

This is where Wuxi's story becomes larger than one data-center project. China's AI debate has long revolved around who has the smartest model. Wuxi is asking a more industrial question: can intelligence be supplied continuously, reliably and at scale?

Shen Yang, a professor of Tsinghua University's School of Journalism and Communication, said: "A token factory is the most important factory of the intelligent age. It can turn electricity and data into cognitive productive capacity."

The value of the concept, Shen said, is that it shifts the AI industry's narrative from "how smart the model is" to "whether intelligence can be continuously supplied."

That line captures the real significance of the Wuxi project. The city is not merely adding another computing cluster. It is trying to insert itself into China's next industrial chain — one built around domestic chips, domestic models and domestic applications.

Honflex said the project marks a key step in its domestic AI computing-power layout and an important breakthrough for Wuxi in implementing China's East Data, West Computing strategy and building a domestic computing ecosystem.

Shen added one more condition: global delivery.

"The token factory means it faces not a single market, but global division of labor," he said. "In the future, a country that truly qualifies as a world factory will certainly not be one that keeps models only at home, but one that can export intelligent services to the world."

Standing before this idea, I saw the old Chinese factory model being rewritten. The assembly line has not disappeared. It has become invisible. Its output moves not by truck or ship, but through an application programming interface call. The customer may never see Wuxi. But if the city succeeds, a piece of machine intelligence somewhere on a screen may begin here — inside a token factory.

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

Stabilizing Asia-Pacific economic, trade foundation

EAGLE EYE
By Zhao Zhongxiu



CAI MENG / CHINA DAILY

The global economic and trade landscape is undergoing profound restructuring, with geopolitical tensions becoming increasingly complex and a new round of technological revolution and industrial transformation gathering pace.

As challenges such as climate change and demographic shifts become increasingly intertwined, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies face a shared imperative — to build a fair, rational and sound rule-based system, stabilize the Asia-Pacific's economic and trade fundamentals, and strengthen the resilience of industrial and supply chains.

Against such a backdrop, advancing the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, or FTAAP, represents a viable pathway and strategic choice to address development bottlenecks, consolidate the foundation for coordinated regional development and foster sustainable economic growth across the Asia-Pacific.

As the most inclusive regional cooperation mechanism in the Asia-Pacific, APEC has adopted flexible and diversified cooperation modalities and continued to focus on emerging areas such as the digital economy and green development.

Yet APEC is not a legally binding framework for a free trade agreement, and still faces constraints in rules enforcement, institutional enforceability and implementation effectiveness. This has limited its ability to serve as the anchor for deeper regional economic and trade integration.

It is against such a backdrop that APEC has identified building the FTAAP as a core strategic theme and has steadily advanced the process since 2004. Nevertheless, given its large membership, diverse development stages and divergent interests among members, it has been challenging to build consensus across all parties, and no major breakthrough has yet been achieved toward the realization of the FTAAP.

Fortunately, APEC economies share long-standing economic and trade ties and have maintained relatively stable bilateral and multilateral relations over the years. This has cemented a solid economic foundation and a sound basis for political mutual trust for FTAAP consultations and negotiations.

The key to advancing the FTAAP process lies in exploring innovative pathways and building a practical cooperation framework.

Its development should fully leverage and build on existing regional cooperation initiatives, and advance in a phased and iterative manner. The APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting has delivered a wealth of valuable, forward-looking cooperation themes, which should be systematically and effectively incorporated into the rule-based system of the FTAAP.

In terms of implementation, the FTAAP development process should combine bottom-up and top-down approaches, with the former serving as the mainstay and the latter as a complement.

The bottom-up approach — driven by voluntary and independent initiatives among member economies — can help accurately identify practical pain points and bottlenecks in Asia-Pacific economic and trade cooperation. The top-down approach, meanwhile, can provide overarching regional guidance, facilitate early breakthroughs in areas where consensus is strong and offer forward-looking insights on emerging themes, including digital trade and green trade.

Moreover, the development of the FTAAP should fully draw on the cooperative spirit embodied in APEC's Pathfinder Initiatives and further translate it into FTAAP pathfinder modules.

Under such an approach, interested member economies could conduct pilot thematic negotiations in selected sectors. Outcomes reached by consensus could then be incorporated into a future FTAAP legal framework, creating binding rule-based obligations for participating parties.

Participating parties may proceed with implementation and pilot application upon completing domestic legislative approval and relevant procedural reviews. Should the pilot achieve notable outcomes, relevant practices may be replicated and extended to other economies, paving the way for the gradual accession of new member economies.

For underperforming pilots, the participation scope may be appropriately scaled back, and relevant member economies may withdraw, so as to preserve institutional flexibility and maintain leeway for adjustment.

China's practical explorations in advancing institutional opening-up also tell us the importance of remaining process-oriented and advancing pragmatically for fostering FTAAP cooperation.

For instance, China has formally applied to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership and Digital Economy Partnership Agreement. Although accession is still under negotiation and consultation, China has already used its pilot free trade zones to proactively benchmark against the open, inclusive and high-standard rules embodied in the two agreements, while carrying out pilot programs and stress tests.

Through this process, China has worked to drive deeper reforms and deliver concrete results. Proven and effective measures have also been replicated beyond the pilot free trade zones.

FTAAP cooperation is, by nature, a long-term process involving a broad agenda and complex interests. In this context, a pragmatic approach — adopting useful rules first, implementing while negotiating and expanding successful pilots over time — may offer a more efficient and practical pathway for advancing FTAAP cooperation.

Looking ahead, efforts to build the FTAAP should take a forward-looking approach to strengthening institutional competitiveness.

First, institutional opening-up should serve as an anchor for improving rule-based systems that promote trade and investment liberalization and facilitation in traditional sectors.

In goods trade, efforts could start with reducing nontariff barriers and advancing mutual recognition of standards and rules. Services trade could then be further opened through a negative-list approach, supported by whole-chain rules covering fair market access, fair competition in business operations and orderly market exit.

On investment, economies could explore a communication and coordination mechanism for dispute settlement, with consultation, mediation and joint expert panels serving as priority channels.

Second, as new drivers of growth continue to take shape, the Asia-Pacific should develop more refined rules for the digital economy and green, low-carbon development.

In the digital economy, efforts could focus on building an Asia-Pacific digital trade framework that clearly defines data-related sovereignty, facilitates orderly cross-border data flows, lowers market barriers and helps narrow digital divides.

Third, greater emphasis should be placed on rules that strengthen the resilience and security of industrial and supply chains.

The region could work toward an Asia-Pacific supply chain community underpinned by stability, diversification, coordination and emergency response capacity. Such a framework should encourage APEC economies to avoid excessive concentration in key industrial chains, and enhance the overall stability of supply chains.

It could also explore a regional reserve-sharing and reallocation mechanism for key components, energy resources, food and medical supplies, so as to better cushion short-term shocks arising from supply shortages.

Finally, stronger rules are also needed to support small and medium-sized enterprises, with a view to fostering a more enabling institutional environment for business growth across the Asia-Pacific.

APEC economies could advance the development of a one-stop service platform for SMEs, providing end-to-end services such as policy information, market matching, cross-border settlement, legal consultation and credit-enhancement support for financing.

Exclusive incentives and simplified procedures for SMEs in the areas of tariff reductions, customs clearance facilitation, government procurement, digital transformation, and green certification could also be promoted.

To conclude, Asia-Pacific economies are deeply interconnected, with shared interests and a common future. The realization of the FTAAP will be a long-term and demanding task. All member economies should remain committed to openness, inclusiveness, mutual benefit and win-win cooperation, seek common ground while shelving differences, and take pragmatic steps forward.

The writer is president of the University of International Business and Economics.
The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Creating new jobs amid evolving tech key

MAIN STREET
By Cai Fang

The relationship between technological change and employment expansion is an old topic, yet one that has not lessened in importance over time. When disruptive technological revolutions occur, whether job creation can ultimately outweigh job destruction remains an unresolved puzzle in economic theory.

Fundamentally, the shock that technological change brings to employment is not that occupations, positions and jobs are only destroyed and never created. The real problem is that job creation and job destruction are often misaligned across space, uneven across time, unequal in scale, and mismatched in terms of skills supply and demand.

Looking back at economic history, these asymmetries have haunted generation after generation of workers like a recurring curse ever since the First Industrial Revolution. Therefore, in an era of rapid artificial intelligence development, the key to ensuring that job creation outpaces job destruction lies in achieving better alignment between the two in terms of timing, geography, scale and skills.

New ways of thinking

To better understand the creative and destructive forces that AI may unleash, we should first look at what is already happening in the labor market.

Many economists believe China's economy has crossed the so-called Lewis Turning Point and machines and robots accelerate the replacement of human labor. The pace of job destruction increases significantly and the number of lost positions rises sharply.

A Lewis Turning Point occurs when a country's surplus labor evaporates, pushing up wages, consumption and inflation rates.

Based on official data estimates, China's urban labor market created a cumulative 154 million new jobs between 2013 and 2024. But not all of them translated into net employment gains. During the same period, cumulative job losses reached 53.62 million.

On the one hand, the spread of AI is expected to amplify this destructive effect on employment. On the other hand, it may also create the possibility for job creation to surpass job destruction.

This places much higher demands on policymakers. In line with an employment first strategy, technological innovation and employment expansion must be made as compatible as possible. At the same time, gains in labor productivity must be transformed into new opportunities, strengthening both the scale and the momentum of job creation.

If we break free from traditional frameworks of understanding and conventional development models, technology aimed at raising labor productivity does not necessarily lead to a net decline in jobs. On the contrary, rising productivity can itself become the catalyst for entirely new employment space.

Create new jobs

In reality, many new occupations do not suddenly appear out of thin air overnight. They have often existed quietly, existing within economic activity for years. But because the market remained too small, the number of jobs they created was negligible.

Only when labor productivity rises dramatically, and when the benefits of that productivity are broadly shared across the society, do more people become consumers of the products and services tied to those occupations. At that point, new professions and new jobs begin to emerge on a meaningful scale.

For decades, neoliberal economics tried to convince people that productivity gains achieved by a handful of large corporations would naturally spill over into society and benefit broader populations — a variation of so-called trickle down economics. Yet the experiences of both developing and developed countries show that this phenomenon is not really effective or beneficial for the society at large.

The lesson here is clear: new occupations, new positions and new forms of employment do not emerge automatically.

Only through a fundamental shift in how we think about development can the immense power, scale, and potential of AI driven productivity gains be turned into broad employment growth. That means starting with a fairer distribution of productivity dividends and tackling structural contradictions in the labor market.

Only then can job creation grow faster and larger than job destruction, breaking what has long been the "century-long curse" of asymmetry between the two.

Breaking century-long asymmetry

Several areas should become central priorities for policy expansion and intervention.

First, while improving the social security system and labor market institutions, governments must significantly strengthen public employment services and make related systems more adaptable to the times and more targeted in their policy tools.

Under the growing penetration and disruption of AI, labor markets will inevitably become more uncertain and more volatile. This is the natural response to the creative destruction brought by disruptive technological change.

Yet one principle must remain clear: people themselves, as the agents of labor, must not become the casualties. Human well being must not be weakened in the slightest.

After all, allowing everyone to share the gains of rising labor productivity is not only an inherent part of technological progress, but increasingly its defining purpose.

This means social security systems must provide more universal and equal welfare protections. Labor market institutions must defend workers' rights to a higher degree. Public employment services must help workers transition into new roles with greater intensity and frequency.

The structural contradictions are already present in the labor market and likely to worsen under AI, meaning job vacancy rates and unemployment rates may rise at the same time.

As a result, public employment services centered around training cannot merely keep pace with changes. They must anticipate trends and changes, and stay one step ahead of them.

Judging from the share of urban workers currently receiving subsidized vocational training, investment still does not match the upward trend in urban unemployment. More public resources should be committed on a long term and normalized basis, making employment training one of the essential public services of the artificial intelligence era.

Second, on the basis of fairly redistributing gains from rising productivity, the society must redefine occupations, positions and work itself, while promoting social mobility and broader human development.

As labor productivity rises sharply and the constraints created by resource scarcity gradually weaken, social wealth will become far more abundant. Under such conditions, the creation of occupations and jobs will no longer be strictly limited by the size of consumer markets, and workers' incomes will no longer necessarily remain tightly linked to productivity alone.

From this perspective, the principles governing the distribution of economic output and social wealth may gradually shift away from a strict "payment according to work" model toward one increasingly shaped by the idea of "meeting people's needs".

Such a transformation is not only an inherent requirement of Chinese modernization. It is also a fundamental path toward addressing the employment shocks brought by AI.

Finally, when it comes to sharing productivity gains and responding to the impact of AI, the most effective institutional tool comes from both the lessons of economic history and the urgent demands of reality: significantly expanding redistribution, so that a growing share of people's livelihoods and well being comes from redistribution, especially through basic public services.

The writer is a member of the Academic Division of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
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CHINA

China renews efforts to assist migrant and left-behind minors

By LI LEI
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Central authorities have called for the better tracking of distressed migrant children — those who move from rural to urban areas with their parents — and stronger guarantees of equal access to public services, such as education and healthcare in cities, ahead of International Children's Day, observed annually on June 1.

The move comes as migrant children have surpassed left-behind children — minors who remain in rural hometowns while their parents work in cities — as the main group affected by China's internal migration. Official data from the 2020 national census showed that the number of migrant children age 17 and under stood at 71 million, nearly double the figure recorded in 2010, and exceeded the 66.9 million left-behind children nationwide.

The directives were outlined in a circular jointly released on Saturday by 27 central government departments, including the Ministry of Civil Affairs, the Supreme People's Court and the Ministry of Education.

The document described the renewed effort to identify and assist distressed migrant and left-behind children as part of broader measures to build a child-friendly society.

According to the circular, local authorities are required to carry out "precise screening, accurate filing and targeted services" for millions of vulnerable children.

By September, existing data must be cross-checked with records from education, health and public security authorities, the circular said. Any missing information will trigger door-to-door visits by village-level child welfare workers.

Local civil affairs departments must ensure that these workers dynamically register newly identified migrant and left-behind children through routine visits and public feedback mechanisms. Provinces with a large population of such children should prioritize registration during peak migration periods, such as the spring job-hunting season and school holidays, to avoid omissions.

Authorities are also required to establish key care files for children facing the greatest hardships, including those lacking access to education, healthcare or proper guardianship, and to update the records regularly based on home visits.

The directive mandates equal access to public services for migrant children, including school enrollment based on residency permits and improved cross-regional healthcare coordination.

For left-behind children, the focus will be on addressing guardianship gaps, preventing accidents and abuse, and providing mental health support.

In line with a new risk response mechanism, frontline workers such as teachers and doctors are required to report signs of neglect or abuse.

In cases involving violence or other emergencies, response protocols involving public security authorities, healthcare providers and local women's federations will be activated.

"Local authorities and relevant departments must strengthen supervision and guidance for work involving these two groups of children," the circular said, warning that localities and departments showing weak implementation will face closer oversight.

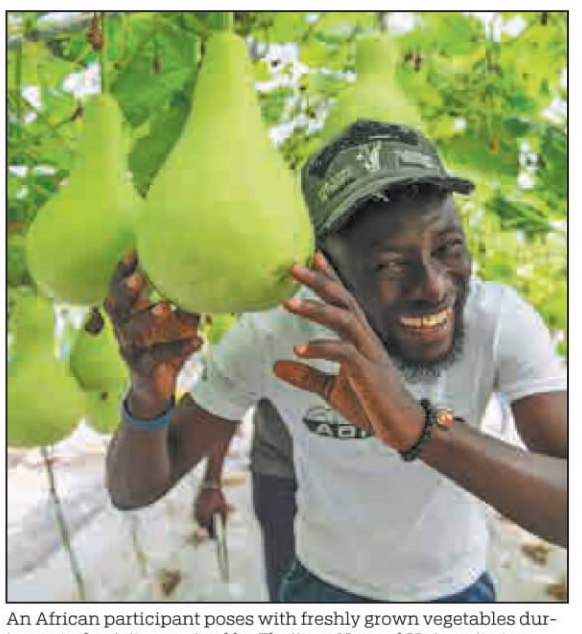
The Ministry of Civil Affairs will incorporate the dynamic case management system into future performance evaluations, the circular added.

Wedding day together



Couples take part in a mass wedding ceremony for doctoral students at Harbin Institute of Technology in Heilongjiang province on Sunday. A total of 187 couples participated in the event, which has become a university tradition since its launch in 2013. WANG SONG / XINHUA

Seeds of exchange



An African participant poses with freshly grown vegetables during a study visit organized by Zhejiang Normal University to a China-Africa agricultural innovation park in Jinhua, Zhejiang province, on Sunday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Universities target healthy weight loss

More institutions introduce courses to help students achieve fitness goals

By ZOU SHUO
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A growing number of universities are introducing weight management courses to help students achieve healthier body compositions and develop sustainable lifestyle habits.

The latest to join the trend is Jiangnan University in Jiangsu province. In early April, the university issued a student physique enhancement action plan, which includes mandatory weight management courses for students with a body mass index exceeding 28, as well as fitness courses for those with weaker physical fitness.

The university has also added a 2,000-meter run for female students and a 2,400-meter run for male students as part of its physical education assessment.

Meanwhile, China Agricultural University has been running a successful weight management program for three and a half years.

Launched in the autumn semester of 2022, the university's "fat reduction and health enhancement" series has attracted 707 student enrollments over eight semesters, according to Wu Min, deputy head of the university's physical education department.

The 16-week course begins with a health screening, followed by theoretical lessons on obesity classification, diagnostic criteria, causes and risks, as well as scientific dietary approaches to fat reduction, Wu said.

During the eight-week intensive intervention period, students attend classes three times a week, with each 90-minute session combining strength and aerobic training.

Outside class, students are required to complete aerobic exercise two to three times a week, with each session lasting at least 40 minutes, while managing their own dietary intake. After the intervention period, students continue with four weeks of self-directed exercise and nutrition management before a final assessment, she said.

The course has produced notable health benefits. In 2025, participants in the spring semester lost an average weight loss of 6.09 kilograms, including an average of 5.08 kg of fat, while reducing their body fat percentage by 3.08 percentage points. Their physical fitness test scores improved by an average of 12.70 points.

Results from the autumn semester were also impressive. Participants lost an average of 5.34 kg and 4.23 kg of fat, reduced their body fat percentage by 2.33 percentage points and improved their fitness test scores by an average of 7.76 points.

For many students, the most valuable outcome is not the weight they lose but the healthy habits they gain.

Li Jiajun, a first-year mechanical engineering student at China Agricultural University, said he enrolled in the course to improve his endurance for the university's fitness test and to address postural problems developed during years of sedentary study in high school.

"The biggest takeaway isn't how many kilograms I lost, but the regular exercise and healthy eating habits I've developed — and the healthier body composition I've achieved," Li said.

The weekly strength and aerobic training sessions have helped him overcome his reluctance to exercise. Li added that he has also learned how to plan balanced meals instead of resorting to blind dieting, while his energy levels and physical fitness have improved significantly.

Zhou Zehao, a third-year agricultural science student, weighed about 110 kg at his heaviest. Poor lifestyle habits — including staying up late and consuming high-fat, high-sodium meals — had taken a toll on both his immune system and self-esteem.

"The greatest gain is that I have regained confidence and resilience," Zhou said. "The biggest takeaway from losing weight has never been how many kilograms I shed, but the courage to challenge life's deepest desires for laziness and comfort."

Before joining the program, Zhou said, he would order takeout rather than leave his dormitory. He also felt "invisible" to female students because he lacked the confidence to communicate with them.

After enrolling, he adjusted his diet and began exercising daily for about 40 minutes in a small public workout area in his dormitory building.

"The biggest advantage of this course is that you have a group of friends who encourage each other and keep each other accountable — workout buddies who tease you when you slack off but lend a hand when you truly need it," Zhou said, adding that such genuine human connection is something no online program or fitness influencer's boot camp can replicate.

Parents urged to shun 'digital babysitting' trend

By ZOU SHUO
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The Ministry of Education has recently launched the 2026 National Preschool Education Publicity Month campaign, urging kindergartens nationwide to ensure that play remains the primary activity for young children and discourage an overreliance on digital devices.

The ministry has also called on parents to adopt child-rearing practices that emphasize companionship, play, sports and time in nature, while discouraging so-called digital babysitting.

It stressed that digital products — such as reading companions, chat-based tools and interactive games — must not replace physical picture books and toys.

Digital tools should also not be used to directly generate child observation records or assessments.

According to the ministry, there are persisting misunderstandings about the role of digital applications in early childhood education, alongside misleading marketing by some commercial entities and the improper or excessive use of digital products by some local authorities and kindergartens.

During the campaign period, a series of public awareness activities will be held nationwide, bringing together professional and social resources to focus on protecting the rights and interests of preschool children in the digital era.

Su Jing, director of Beijing Academy of Educational Sciences' early education research institute, said surveys show that it is common for parents to use electronic devices to keep children occupied.

"In many scenarios, we see young children swiping screens, rapidly switching content, or playing games on tablets and phones," she said.

> "Too much screen time is not good even for adults, let alone little children."
>
> **Shi Xu,** a father of a kindergarten student in Changsha, Hunan province

Addressing growing concerns over so-called digital babysitting — the practice of using digital devices, including artificial intelligence applications, to manage young children's behavior — Su said: "Children aged 3 to 6 are in a stage of concrete thinking and embodied cognition. Their learning relies on physical perception, hands-on activities and real-life social interaction — things that AI products cannot replace."

She also warned of the potential harm of excessive screen time to children's developing vision. Early exposure to blue light and electronic screens is a major contributor to myopia, she said.

"Beyond vision, it can also lead to attention disorders, physical health issues caused by a sedentary lifestyle and other health risks," she added.

Su warned that many parents still turn to digital devices as a quick fix to calm a fussy child, creating a vicious cycle.

"Children learn best through real-life play and hands-on experiences. When that happens, their eyes light up, they are fully engaged and they develop very well," she said.

To safeguard children's healthy development, Su recommended a cautious approach to the use of AI in early childhood settings.

Young children should not use AI products, she said, adding that their learning must be grounded in rich sensory experiences and real-world interactions. Relevant authorities should strictly control the introduction of AI into kindergartens, and AI should not replace the role of teachers.

"A teacher's warmth, care, eye contact and sensitivity to a child's emotions cannot be replaced by algorithms," she said.

Shi Xu, the father of a kindergarten student in Changsha, Hunan province, said he and his wife have established strict rules limiting their daughter's exposure to digital devices.

Although digital devices have become ubiquitous, he said she can learn to use them when she gets older.

"We try to take her out more and let her play with other children. Too much screen time is not good even for adults, let alone little children," he said.

Top court reinforces its strict stance on child abuse

By CAO YIN
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The Supreme People's Court has reinforced its "zero tolerance" policy toward the abuse and mistreatment of minors, underscoring the urgent need for severe penalties to fully safeguard children's health and safety.

The court said that severe punishment is necessary in cases of prolonged abuse, especially those involving cruel methods that result in a minor's death. It urged judges nationwide to take a firm stance against crimes targeting children.

In a landmark case released by the court last week, a woman surnamed Wen was sentenced to death for abusing and injuring a 2-year-old girl.

According to the court, Wen lived with a married man surnamed Tian and his biological daughter from February to December 2023. During that period, Wen and Tian repeatedly abused the child by tying her up, hanging her, forcing her to stand for long periods, and subjecting her to cold and hunger. They also beat her with their fists, slippers, spatulas, wooden sticks and other objects.

On Dec 21, 2023, after Tian left for work, Wen severely beat the girl with a phone charging cable and other objects for wetting the bed, causing her to convulse and collapse. Wen then called Tian, and they took the child to a hospital, where she died.

The lower court found that Wen, acting in collusion with Tian, had committed both abuse and intentional injury. Her long-term and repeated actions, coupled with the beating on the day of the incident directly caused the rupture of the victim's right atrium, leading to her death, the court ruled.

"The woman's behavior severely violated social morality and fundamental human principles," the court said.

Given the heinous nature of the crimes, the cruel methods used and the severe social impact, Wen was sentenced to death for intentional injury and abuse, with lifelong deprivation of political rights. Following review and approval by the court, Wen was executed.

The court added that Tian, as the victim's father, not only failed to stop Wen's abuse but also condoned and participated in it, making him a principal offender. For his role in the crimes, Tian was sentenced to life imprisonment for intentional injury and abuse.

In another case disclosed by the SPC, a teacher promptly reported suspected abuse to a local court after noticing wounds on a teenage girl's face and body. Subsequent investigations found that the girl had been abused by her mother, who was later sentenced to seven years in prison.

The SPC said that child abuse inflicts lasting damage to minors' physical and mental development, disrupts family bonds and erodes social morality. It stressed that such acts are "not merely domestic issues" but are "violations of the law and breaches of basic human ethics".

The court emphasized that the family should be a haven of love, the "first lesson" in a child's healthy development and the "first line of defense" in safeguarding children's rights.

However, some guardians neglect their responsibilities, mistakenly justifying abuse as being "for the child's own good", or even participating in harm following changes in family relationships, the SPC said.

"Such actions turn the family into a place of distress for minors, severely infringe upon their rights, and cross both legal and moral boundaries," it said.

The SPC called for a stronger crackdown on crimes against minors and stressed that guardians must fulfill their responsibilities in caring for, educating and supervising children.

It also urged various sectors of society, including civil affairs departments, women's federations, community committees and public security organs, to strengthen child protection efforts and provide more comprehensive safeguards.

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Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

Bird on a wire

Ecological engineering improves outcomes for wildlife as nation's electricity grid expands

By **HU YUMENG** and **MA JINGNA** in Lanzhou



A more than decadelong ecological engineering project by the nation's electricity supplier is mitigating the conflict between a rapidly expanding grid network and the habitats of wild birds.

At the Zhangye Heihe Wetland National Nature Reserve in Northwest China's Gansu province, transmission towers have been adapted to become a safe part of the ecosystem for birds such as storks, swans, egrets and herons, that call the wetland home for all or part of the year.

As Gansu lies at a key junction on the Central Asia–India migratory flyway, the province serves as a breeding and wintering ground for hundreds of thousands of migratory birds of more than 300 species.

Wetlands such as the Heihe River basin and forest–grassland zones like Ziwuling are critical ecological corridors.

Transmission networks have expanded across these landscapes in the city of Zhangye, now stretching over 16,000 kilometers in total.

As the grid expanded, a persistent conflict emerged. Birds nesting on towers or perching on conductors could trigger outages, while exposed wires posed lethal risks.

State Grid Gansu Electric Power Co has spent over 10 years adapting its equipment located in wildlife areas, using ecological engineering and smart technologies, so that the two can peacefully coexist.

"Bird nests on transmission towers used to give us headaches," said Liang Xingguang, a transmission line inspector in Zhangye. "Now, we take the initiative to build homes for them."

National electricity supplier State Grid launched the Life Nest project in 2016, with the aim of installing artificial nests and platforms so that wild birds would not be harmed by the grid's infrastructure.

Rolled out initially in the Sanjiangyuan region of Qinghai province, the project was later expanded across seven provinces including Gansu. By 2024, the program had completed nearly 6,600 km of field surveys, installed 5,314 artificial nests and 16 raptor platforms, and helped support the hatching of nearly 4,000 chicks.

In Zhangye, since 2022, engineers have deployed artificial nesting facilities across six high-risk transmission corridors. Around 140 artificial nests have been installed, with an occupancy rate of 26 percent, along with 12 relocated nests.

Developed with ornithologists, the artificial nests are tailored to species such as black storks, gray herons, kestrels and magpies. Built from natural rattan and lined with soft palm fiber, they are wind-resistant, insulated and positioned 20–30 meters above ground — close to natural nesting preferences, but safely away from live conductors.

"In the past, seeing a nest on a tower meant trouble," Liang said. "Now, we build them on purpose."

When nests appear in hazardous positions, crews conduct live-line "gentle relocation", carefully transferring entire nests while preserving their structure and minimizing disturbance.

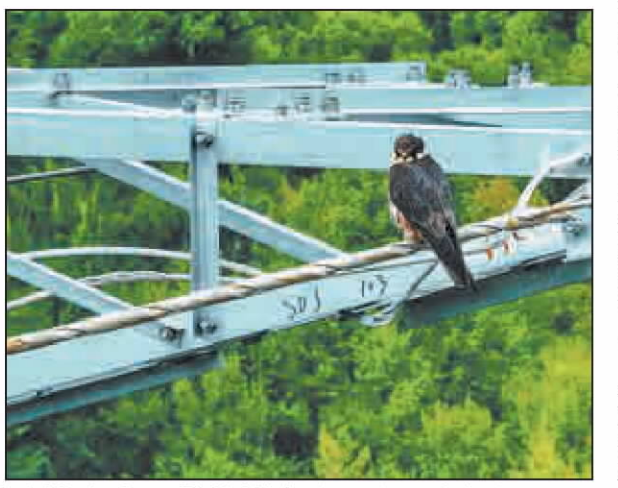
In cooperation with wildlife authorities in Zhangye's Ganzhou district, the program has also supported the release of 53 rehabilitated birds, reinforcing the shift from conflict mitigation to ecological facilitation.





Clockwise from top left: A gray heron, a bird species under second-class state protection, flies over Ziwuling Forest in Qingyang, Gansu province. A State Grid worker hangs an artificial nest in Baiyin, Gansu. Gray herons build a nest in Ziwuling. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





Left: A flock of ruddy shelducks takes flight over the reeds of Qingtu Lake in Minqin, Gansu. **Right:** A bird rests on a transmission tower cable in Linxia, Gansu.

Across key corridors, more than 30 km of transmission lines in the Heihe Wetland core zone have been wrapped in weather-resistant insulating sheaths — described by workers as "protective suits" for the grid.

"These materials withstand strong ultraviolet radiation and extreme temperature swings," said Shen Qi, a Zhangye transmission line inspector. "They fully cover exposed conductors and eliminate electrocution risks."

Since 2021, the State Grid has surveyed over 5,800 km of bird migration routes, organized nearly 1,300 joint patrols, and rescued more than 15,000 protected birds nationwide.

In Zhangye, these ecological standards have been embedded into grid planning, with transmission routes adjusted to avoid key migratory corridors through field investigations and wetland surveys.

Precision protection

On high-altitude lines above 3,000 meters in Gansu's Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, dual-radar ultrasonic devices are deployed to detect approaching birds within a 100-meter range. The system emits variable-frequency acoustic signals and soft light to gently guide birds away without harm.

A digital monitoring platform known as the "Silverline Sentinel" also provides continuous oversight of both grid conditions and bird activity.

Alongside the "Silverline Sentinel" platform, an upgraded monitoring system known as the "Silverline Scout" has further enhanced real-time ecological protection capabilities, State Grid said.

The system uses artificial intelligence, infrared sensing and nighttime projection technologies, enabling 24-hour continuous monitoring of both transmission line operations and bird activity. Its built-in algorithms can identify more than 200 common bird species, analyze nesting locations and behavioral patterns in real time, and issue early warnings of potential risks.

State Grid said that by combining visual, thermal and acoustic data streams, the system allows operators to detect approaching birds and infrastructure anomalies with greater precision, strengthening preventive maintenance across high-risk corridors.

"Previously, we relied on manual patrols and could only inspect all lines once a month," said a technician in Gannan. "Now we can monitor in real time and respond immediately."

Since deployment, maintenance efficiency across Gansu's grid has tripled, while ecological datasets collected by the system have become valuable inputs for migratory bird research.

In sensitive forested areas such as Ziwuling, patrol teams have adjusted cable routes to avoid nesting zones, while drones equipped with infrared imaging conduct inspections with minimal disturbance.

Across Gansu, more than 20,000 sets of bird-friendly devices — including flexible anti-perching structures, insulating covers and epoxy barriers — have been installed. Unlike earlier rigid designs, these prevent contact without harming birds and also reduce flashover risks caused by droppings.

In Zhangye's Heihe Wetland corridor, these combined measures have reduced bird-related outages by 13 percent, while enabling safer movement through previously high-risk zones.

Living with nature

Electricity infrastructure is increasingly becoming part of wider ecological governance.

In the Qilian Mountains, spanning Qinghai and Gansu, the rich yet fragile ecosystems are home to 48 nationally protected wildlife species, including snow leopards and golden eagles. The vast terrain and complex geography have long limited traditional monitoring.

In many core conservation zones, the absence of stable electricity has also constrained digital management tools, making continuous ecological observation difficult.

This gap led to the introduction of the Green Power Ark project, a national initiative launched in 2022 to integrate clean energy with biodiversity protection. By 2023, the project encompassed 13 ecological sites across China.

At the Gucheng conservation station in Tianzhu, a remote area of Gansu, the project installed a solar-powered microgrid system. The system, operating from 2024, integrates photovoltaic generation, battery storage, infrared cameras and 4G data transmission, forming a zero-carbon forest monitoring platform.

It enables continuous monitoring of wildlife activity, vegetation change and fire risks — shifting conservation from periodic patrols to permanent observation.

"In the past, monitoring depended largely on people," said a project engineer. "Now, technology allows continuous observation across vast and complex terrain."

State Grid Gansu said it is working closely with forestry departments, wetland authorities and local governments through joint patrols, data sharing and coordinated planning, to align grid operations with ecological priorities.

Conflict to coexistence

In Zhangye, up to a quarter of a million birds now stop over in the wetlands annually, including the black stork, a species with extremely strict habitat requirements. According to data from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration, a record 675 black storks were sighted in the wetlands in September 2024, followed by 455 in 2025.

In Jiuquan's Yanchiwan Wetland, also in Gansu, populations of rare species such as black-necked cranes continue to grow.

At the Hequ Horse Farm Wetland in Gannan Tibetan autonomous prefecture, dozens of brown-headed gulls, a nationally protected species, have been observed for the first time in recent years.

Across Gansu, bird-related outages have declined while biodiversity indicators improve steadily.

State Grid said that transmission towers still carry electricity across vast distances, but increasingly, they also function as ecological infrastructure, supporting migration, enabling monitoring and connecting fragmented conservation zones.

Contact the writers at huyumeng@chinadaily.com.cn

State Grid power line inspector carries teenage passion for nature into career

By **HU YUMENG** and **MA JINGNA**

At the Heihe Wetland in Zhangye, Northwest China's Gansu province, Shen Yang has walked the same transmission line patrol routes for 25 years.

The circuit stretches roughly 20 kilometers across reed beds, riverbanks and open wetlands. For most of his career, the job meant checking towers, inspecting conductors and ensuring the safe operation of the grid.

But over time, something else began to share that route with him.

"I've always liked birds since I was a teenager," said Shen, a 56-year-old transmission line inspector with State Grid Gansu Electric Power Co.

That early interest gradually merged with his daily work. Today, Shen is not only a line inspector but also an informal field observer of the wildlife living alongside the grid.

"On patrol, I often see kestrels, doves and magpies," he said. "If I'm lucky, I might also see peregrine falcons or golden eagles."

He keeps mental and sometimes written records of what he sees along the line corridor.

Zhangye's Heihe Wetland sits along a key migratory flyway, where more than 240 bird species have been recorded up to 2023, including black storks, golden eagles and swans. Transmission towers here are no longer seen only as infrastructure, but as part of a shared landscape.

The black stork has left a lasting impression on Shen. The nationally protected species is the "panda of birds", he said.

Shen is often seen observing the species through a high-powered telescope, recording its movements in detail in his field notes.

His connection to wildlife became more direct in November 2020, during a routine patrol near the wetland. Shen encountered an injured kestrel and contacted a wildlife rescue station in Zhangye, helping transport it for treatment.

He visited the bird repeatedly during its recovery, bringing food and monitoring its condition. Over time, the kestrel grew more comfortable, even resting briefly on his shoulder. "At that moment, I felt both excited and a strong sense of achievement," said Shen.

When it fully recovered, it was released back into the wild. He still remembers the moment clearly, not as an isolated incident, but as part of what his work had quietly become.

In recent years, Shen and his colleagues have helped rescue and raise 53 young birds, often in cooperation with local wildlife stations.

This change is also visible in field practice. In high-risk corridors, workers have installed artificial nests and bird-friendly facilities, transforming transmission towers into safer nesting spaces. In Zhangye alone, around 140 artificial nests have been installed, along with thousands of protective devices designed to reduce bird-related risks to the grid.

"For nests in particularly sensitive locations, we now use a combination of artificial relocation and 'migratory bird stations' to preserve birds' natural living environment as much as possible," said Shen.

The shift is not unique to Zhangye.

In the Ziwuling Forest of Qingyang in eastern Gansu, gray herons nest along forested riverbanks near transmission lines. Their presence is managed through coordination between forestry departments and power crews.

Young patrol workers are trained to identify protected species before entering work sites, while senior inspectors adjust patrol routes during breeding seasons to avoid disturbance.

"We used to focus on keeping birds away from the lines," Shen said. "Now we think about how to protect both."

Even when the wetlands fall silent in winter, Shen continues his rounds.

"Sometimes there are no birds," he said. "But I still go and look."

After 25 years on the same route, the transmission lines remain his responsibility. But so, increasingly, do the birds above them.

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CULTURE

Wayfarer of distant highlands

An exhibition revisits artist's lifelong journey across mountains and spiritual landscapes, **Lin Qi** reports.



1.

The Xizang autonomous region has entered one of its most pleasant, travel-friendly seasons of the year. If he were still alive, artist Li Xiaoke would likely be strolling beneath the sun near the Potala Palace in Lhasa and sipping traditional sweet tea at a corner shop in the bustling Barkhor Bazaar. Or, he would join groups of people trekking the sacred mountains and lakes.

Li regarded Xizang as his "second hometown" and a spiritual sanctuary, says his wife, Liu Ying.

In the late 1980s, Li developed a deep connection with the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. He traveled extensively in Xizang and highland areas in Qinghai and Gansu provinces, reaching the Bayan Har Mountains in Qinghai where the Yellow River originates, and the Tangula Mountains along the Qinghai-Xizang border, the source of the Yangtze River.



Li Xiaoke on a journey in 2016.

He journeyed to the highlands more than once a year. Yet, he often described it as a distant destination that remained just beyond reach, no matter how closely he attempted to approach it.

His effort to narrow that distance — which he believed represented change, loss and eternity — came to an end in April 2021, when he passed away at age 76.

Since then, his family has held a commemorative exhibition every spring at the Ke Space run by the Li Keran Art Foundation. Li hailed from a prominent family of artists. His father, Li Keran (1907-89), is considered one of the foremost reformers of classical Chinese painting in the 20th century while his mother, Zou Peizhu (1920-2015), was a sculptor and dedicated educator.

This year, the Li family is presenting *Far Horizons · The Wayfarer — In the Footsteps of Li Xiaoke*, running until June 21 at the Culture and Art Center of Fangzhuang, nestled in a quiet neighborhood in southern Beijing.

The exhibition features dozens of snapshots Li Xiaoke took in the highland areas over nearly three decades, alongside prints and ink paintings. His images portray blooming peach trees and vast green fields beneath snowcapped mountains, riverside salt wells, and white-walled Tibetan-style homes perched along mountain slopes.

Li Xiaoke said photography allowed him to express how profoundly the plateau moved him spiritually, and that it was, in some ways, "no less significant than painting".

According to Liu, Li Xiaoke visited the plateau 34 times after his first trip at the age of 44.

"Every time he went there, he felt exhilarated and refreshed as if it were his very first time," she says.

She says that to capture the sublime beauty of the highlands, Li Xiaoke trekked for 11 days to reach the uninhabited land near the source of the Yangtze River. On a journey to the source of the Yellow River, he used a bicycle pump to inflate a car tire at an altitude of over 4,000 meters.

Through his lens, viewers are taken to Mount Kailash, also known as Mount Gang Rinpoche, in Ngari prefecture of Xizang, the mysterious ruins of the ancient Guge kingdom, and Mount Qomolangma base camp, where silence and stillness define the world's highest peak.

Liu says he also built close friendships within local artistic and cultural circles during his stays in highland areas. He "worked tirelessly" to promote Tibetan art and culture by organizing exhibitions and training programs for local painters.

In the 1970s, Li Xiaoke spent much of his time accompanying his father on travels and public engagements. It was during an early expedition to the source of the Yangtze River with friends that he discovered his identity as an artist. His repeated journeys to the plateau also reflected his father's belief that "an artist should study two great books attentively — nature and tradition".

At the current exhibition, a large moving image is projected on a long wall, combining Li Xiaoke's paintings of snowy mountains and drifting clouds with footage of the artist walking alone along a snowy mountain trail, his back turned to the audience as he leaves footprints behind him.

"The snow-covered land is vast, boundless, and magnificently beautiful, yet stark and harsh. When one steps into it, one is inexplicably moved," Li Xiaoke once said.

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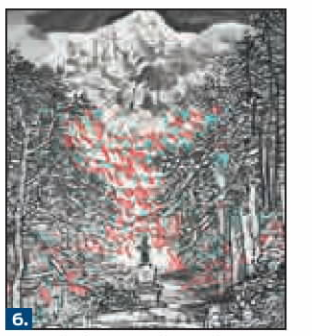

6.

1. An exhibition showcases Li Xiaoke's profound connection with highland areas in western China through art and photography at the Culture and Art Center of Fangzhuang in Beijing. **2.** Li's photo of Mount Gang Rinpoche in Ngari prefecture of the Xizang autonomous region. **3.** Li's photo of Lake Manasarovar in Ngari prefecture, Xizang. **4.** A snapshot of a Tibetan woman taken by Li. **5.** *Window*, a print by Li. **6.** *Faraway*, an ink painting by Li. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Merging Silk Road artifacts with contemporary art

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai
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A new exhibition at the Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum in Shanghai brings together cultural relics excavated along the ancient Silk Road and new creations by contemporary artists from China and abroad.

Running until Oct 31, the exhibition *How Long Is the Silk Road?* is organized by the Shanghai museum and the Gansu Jiandu Museum, with support from the Lanzhou City Museum, Dunhuang Museum, and China Daily Culture Channel.

It features 65 precious cultural relics dating from the late Warring States Period (475-221 BC) to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), alongside 26 newly created artworks produced by artists who participated in a residency program in Dunhuang, Gansu province, in northwestern China.

Du Chenyan, director of the Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum, stated at the opening on May 23 that the exhibition is not merely an inquiry into the length of a historical route, but a re-examination of the Silk Road's cultural exchanges through the lived experience of each artist. By juxtaposing ancient artifacts with contemporary art, the exhibition aims to immerse viewers in the historical context of the Silk Road and reflect on the continuous evolution of ancient civilizations in a modern context.



The exhibition *How Long Is the Silk Road?* at the Dunhuang Contemporary Art Museum in Shanghai blends ancient artifacts and contemporary works to trace cultural exchanges and historical journeys. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Dunhuang, a desert oasis, was an important trading town on the ancient Silk Road, where merchants traveling across Central Asia brought horses, glassware and spices eastward, and carried silk, porcelain and tea westward. The city is home to the renowned Mogao Caves, a network of ancient cave shrines built over centuries. Designated a UNESCO World Heritage site, the Mogao Caves are described by the UNESCO World Heritage Centre as "the largest, most richly endowed and longest-used treasure house of Buddhist art in the world".

During his residency in Dunhuang, artist Guo Hongwei followed in the footsteps of ancient painters into the mountains to learn how they made pigments from ground minerals.

He would spend an entire day at the mining pit, as if he were an ancient painter. But once he stepped out to where his mobile phone regained signal, "all of a sudden, you are overwhelmed by the flood of news and information, which pours over you like a wave of water but freezes, solidifying as it hits you … I want to capture that moment with my painting", he says of his inspiration.

The exhibition is arranged in five chapters. The first chapter presents the expanse of the Silk Road. Among the exhibits are *jiandu* — wooden and bamboo slips used in China for writing before paper was invented — excavated along the Silk Road.

On loan from the Gansu Jiandu Museum, which boasts the largest collection of Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) *jiandu*, these slips record the route and actual distance from one courier station to the next along the stretch of the Silk Road between Dunhuang and Chang'an (today's Xi'an, capital of Shaanxi province).

A hemp sandal dating to the same period is displayed beside a map and wooden documents. Xin Ran, one of the exhibition's curators, says, "We want to give a vivid impression of how people traveled before the transportation we know today came into existence."

The sandal is presented alongside a copy of an ancient painting depicting the Buddhist monk Xuanzang's pilgrimage to India. "You can clearly see that Xuanzang's sandals look very much the same as this one here," she says.

The second chapter explores the theme of journey, followed by three chapters that highlight the Silk Road's transcription, sounds and shadows. The exhibition uses *guan* (pass) as its spatial motif, transforming the ancient Silk Road's function as an interface for identity verification and information exchange into a physical installation that guides visitors to use their own bodily scale to perceive ancient interactions, according to curator Xu Huanzhi.

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LIFE



Province strives to strike a delicate balance

Zhejiang follows millennia-old standardization while maintaining creative, innovative and emotional tourism, **Yang Feiyue** reports in Hangzhou.

Zhang Yan still remembers the first time she picked up a tea whisk. Her hand trembled. The slender bamboo tool felt awkward in her fingers, and no matter how hard she tried, the tea refused to foam.

That was in 2022, shortly after she joined the Da Jingshan Tourist Information Center at the foot of Jingshan, a mountain in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, renowned for its thousand-year-old tea culture.

Before taking the job, Zhang had never worked in tourism, nor had she practiced the Song Dynasty (960-1279) method of whisked tea preparation known as *diancha*.

"They taught me everything from scratch — how to whisk, how the foam should look, even how to taste the tea properly," she says.

"The key is keeping your hand steady while maintaining speed and strength. If the force is uneven, the foam will collapse."

Today, Zhang demonstrates the technique to visitors from around the world, guiding them through a ritual once popular among Song Dynasty scholars and literati.

"At first, many guests can't get it," she says with a laugh. "But once they understand the rhythm, they can whisk a beautiful bowl themselves."

Her transformation reflects a broader shift underway in Zhejiang, where officials and tourism workers are trying to balance standardized services with deeply local cultural experiences.

At the Da Jingshan center, free shuttle buses run continuously up the mountain. Staff members provide multilingual assistance in Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean. Last year, the buses transported 2.6 million passengers.

The center's operations align with ISO 14785, the international standard for tourist information services.

Yet for Liu Yanli, the center's deputy manager, the goal is not simply efficiency.

"Standards should help visitors experience the culture better," Liu says. "They are not meant to make every destination the same."

That idea lies at the heart of Zhejiang's tourism development strategy.

"Tourism services need standardization, but they cannot be completely standardized," says Chen Guangsheng, director of the Zhejiang Provincial Department of Culture, Radio, Television, and Tourism.

"Otherwise, every city becomes identical. We need to find the balance between standards and individuality."

He points to rural homestays as an example. Zhejiang has established unified requirements for hygiene, safety and service quality, while encouraging villages to preserve their own architectural styles, customs and local traditions.

"That is the balance we are striving for," Chen says. He believes the province's emphasis on standards has deep historical roots.

The *Kaogongji*, a Chinese crafts manual compiled more than 2,000 years ago, documented precise specifications for the production of tools and vehicles. In Zhejiang, Tang Dynasty (618-907) celadon production followed strict technical systems, while the mortise-and-tenon structure of Ningbo's Baoguo Temple later became a reference point for traditional Chinese architecture.

"The genes of standardization have been here since ancient times," Chen says.

But Zhejiang's tourism officials also insist that modern standards should leave room for creativity and emotional connection.

That philosophy is on display at the Tourism College of Zhejiang in Hangzhou.

During a recent class, associate professor Zhang Chunli guided students as they arranged themed tea tables inspired by traditional aesthetics and modern lifestyles.

One design drew inspiration from *A Panorama of Rivers and Mountains*, the famed Song Dynasty landscape painting in blue-green tones. Silk fabrics in jade and turquoise tones surrounded a single celadon teacup.

Another installation, titled *Forest Time*, abandoned conventional tea settings altogether. Glass cups, white lace and soft green accents created a relaxed atmosphere that felt closer to a contemporary cafe than a traditional tea room.

"People today are under a lot of pressure," Zhang says. "Tea gives them a moment to slow down."

She explains that students must earn three national certifications before graduation, covering tea art, tea evaluation and tea beverage preparation.

"They first learn the standards," she says. "Then they learn how to innovate based on those."

A short drive away, Jingshan village has turned those ideas into a thriving rural tourism business. Visitors can pick tea leaves with local farmers, roast them in woks using traditional methods, and take the finished tea home.

"What tourists experience is exactly the same process we use," says Sheng Dong, the village's Party secretary.

When the village began promoting tourism in 2019, most villagers simply sold tea leaves.

"Tourists came, but they didn't know what to do," he recalls.

Now, nearly every household participates in tourism-related businesses. Children wearing bamboo hats carry tea baskets through the hillsides, while families gather around roasting stoves to teach visitors the craft.

The village has received tourists from more than 50 countries, with over 30,000 people participating in tea-related experiences last year alone.

"More visitors come through word of mouth," Sheng says. The province's efforts have also caught the attention of international tourism experts.

Alexandre Garrido, a Brazilian specialist in smart tourism, visited Hangzhou in May during an international tourism standards meeting. It was his first trip to China.

"The people here are incredibly welcoming," Garrido says. "And everything was very well organized, from transportation to cultural activities."

Persi Leonardo, another Brazilian expert focusing on adventure tourism, paid particular attention to accessibility facilities at the Da Jingshan center.

He noticed entrance ramps, multilingual signs and facilities designed for elderly travelers and families with young children.

"The spaces think about all kinds of visitors," Leonardo says.

What impressed him most, however, was how visitors were encouraged to participate rather than simply observe.

"It's not just showing tourists the tea-making process," he says. "It's letting them become part of it."

Maria Velasco Gonzalez, a tourism policy scholar from Spain, had a similar impression after trying her hand at making whisked tea.

"They guided us through every step," she says. "I could understand not only how to do it, but also why it mattered." For her, that combination of professionalism and cultural warmth left a lasting impression.

Authorities in Zhejiang say the province has built a system that trains students to meet national certification requirements, guides villages in turning tea leaves into tourism products, and runs information centers that serve millions of visitors each year.

Those working in tourism businesses also insist that what visitors remember most is something harder to quantify, such as a bowl of whisked tea, a village story, or the warmth of the people serving them.

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From top: An international visitor tries traditional tea whisking during a cultural experience session at the Tourism College of Zhejiang in Hangzhou in mid-May. International visitors tour an art center in Qingshan village, Zhejiang. A local artist teaches international visitors how to weave bamboo handicrafts in the province. An overseas visitor poses for a photo with staff members at a recreational park in Zhejiang. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Russian artist boosts ties using brush and ink

MOSCOW — As dusk fell, a soft, warm glow gently flooded a painting studio in the China Cultural Center in Moscow. Holding a Chinese writing brush dipped in ink, Russian artist Anna Donchenko subtly adjusted tonal gradations before letting the brush glide across the paper.

With her brushwork shifting from delicate touches to bold strokes, distant landscapes gradually took shape, breathing life into mountains and rivers on China's traditional Xuan paper, originally produced in Xuancheng, Anhui province.

"I hope I can keep painting for the rest of my life and inspire more people to take an interest in China," says Donchenko. "That would be the most meaningful to me."

For her, Chinese painting is far more than an artistic craft; it is an everlasting emotional and spiritual bond with China.

Donchenko began painting as a child and was originally trained in realism. In her middle school years, a visit to the State Museum of Oriental Art in Moscow opened the door to the realm of Chinese painting. "I was instantly captivated," she says.

In her adolescence, the scarcity of Chinese painting supplies in Russia only strengthened her resolve. "I would linger repeatedly before museum display windows just to closely study the paintings," she says.

Her first trip to China in 2007 marked a turning point in her life. The moment she set foot in China, she purchased calligraphy and painting books, brushes and mineral pigments. She filled her suitcase with these items and took them back to Russia.

In 2014, she enrolled at the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, to pursue systematic academic training in Chinese painting. During her stay, she traveled extensively across the country, immersing herself in local folk customs, natural landscapes and time-honored traditions. Over time, she gained a deeper insight into the philosophical wisdom and humanistic essence embedded in traditional Chinese fine arts.

"What moves me most about Chinese painting is its focus on sentiment, its rhythmic charm and the subtle spiritual resonance between humanity and nature," she notes, adding that Chinese ink painting prioritizes imagination, blank space aesthetics and the sincere expression of the artist's inner feelings, rather than rigidly pursuing lifelike likeness.

Known to the public by her Chinese name, Dong Qingguo, Donchenko works as a researcher at the Center for Chinese Culture Studies, part of the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia at the Russian Academy of Sciences.

"*Dong* stands for winter, a reminder of the long, cold winters in my homeland, Russia. *Qing* embodies youth and vitality, while *Guo* carries my sincere blessings for my motherland," she explains with a warm smile.

In her view, practicing ink wash painting has also reshaped her cognition of self and the world. "The philosophy of harmony between man and nature embodied in Chinese painting is not merely an artistic technique, but also a way to perceive and embrace life," Donchenko says.

"I have been studying Chinese painting for 20 years and teaching it for 12 years," she says. "The artistic conception conveyed by Chinese painting strikes a chord with people from all cultural backgrounds."

In her artistic creations, she depicts Russia's white stone castles, wooden cottages and onion-shaped church domes through fluid Chinese ink painting techniques, perfectly integrating Eastern aesthetic charm with distinctive Russian pastoral scenery.

Over the years, she has also observed a growing enthusiasm among Russians for Chinese ink painting.

The China Cultural Center hosts Chinese painting classes three evenings a week. In class, students learn to sketch plum blossoms, paint natural landscapes, and create paintings of the persimmon tree that symbolize good fortune.

> "What moves me most about Chinese painting is its focus on sentiment, its rhythmic charm and the subtle spiritual resonance between humanity and nature."
>
> **Anna Donchenko,** Russian artist

Under Donchenko's patient guidance, Anastasia Smirnova, one of her students, captured two hedgehogs carrying apples on their backs with just a few vivid brushstrokes. "Chinese painting can convey emotions in such an intuitive way," Smirnova says. "Learning this art has offered me a brand-new perspective on the world."

Beyond classroom teaching, Donchenko has spared no effort to popularize Chinese painting across Russia by holding exhibitions in museums, public libraries and local communities. Over the past two decades, she has participated in or curated more than 30 art exhibitions in China and Russia.

In April, she hosted a Chinese painting exhibition paired with on-site demonstrations at Moscow No 69 Library, drawing hundreds of visitors on its opening day.

Yulia Zharkova, the organization's director, said these paintings bring audiences inner peace and tranquil contemplation.

"Standing in front of these artworks, people feel their worldly worries drift away," she says. "This is the unique artistic charm and profound artistic conception of Chinese painting. We are deeply honored that Donchenko chose our library to hold this exhibition, which has greatly enlivened our cultural venue."

Against the backdrop of in-depth people-to-people cultural exchanges during the China-Russia Years of Education, Donchenko hopes more people will discover the sheer joy hidden in traditional Chinese arts.

"Art teaching is far more than imparting professional skills," Donchenko says. "It is about passing down the passion you truly cherish. I wish more people could embrace joy and perceive beauty through learning Chinese painting, just as I once did."

XINHUA



Visitors experience Chinese calligraphy at the China Cultural Center in Moscow on Jan 25, 2025. CAO YANG / XINHUA

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LIFE







From left: Twenty descendants of the *Lisbon Maru* POWs from the United Kingdom arrive at Dongji Island, Zhejiang province, where the British prisoners were rescued by local fishermen. They plant trees of friendship on the island as part of the commemorative event. A descendant lays a wreath at the Memorial for Dongji Fishermen's Rescue of British Prisoners of War on Dongji Island. PHOTOS BY XING WEN / CHINA DAILY

Bravery of fishermen remembered

Descendants of British POWs rescued by Chinese islanders gathered to commemorate the sinking of the *Lisbon Maru* and those who risked their lives trying to save them, **Xing Wen** reports in Zhoushan, Zhejiang.

Josephine Duff McIntosh Olsson searched intently for a man's name on the *Lisbon Maru* survivors' memorial wall at Zhoushan Marine Cultural and Art Center in Zhoushan, Zhejiang province — a man she had never met in person.

When she finally found it, she pointed to the name for those around her, tears streaming down her face.

"That's my great-uncle, Joseph Duff!"

In October 1942, Joseph Duff was among the 1,816 British prisoners of war being transported from Hong Kong to Japan aboard the Japanese cargo ship *Lisbon Maru*.

The vessel was not marked as carrying POWs, and it was torpedoed by a US submarine off the coast of Zhejiang province.

Japanese guards sealed the prisoners below deck, and those who managed to escape were met with gunfire. In all, 828 men died.

In the midst of the chaos, local fishermen from Dongji Island in Zhoushan risked everything to launch their small boats and rescue 384 survivors under Japanese gunfire.

On the island, they gave the starving prisoners their own meager supplies of fresh water and food.

Later, when Japanese troops landed to search for escapees, the fishermen hid three British POWs in a seaside cave, secretly bringing them food every day.

In time, they safely transferred the men all the way to Chongqing, where the survivors used a radio broadcast to reveal the truth about the sinking of the *Lisbon Maru* to the world.

Joseph Duff was among those rescued by the fishermen, but he was later recaptured by Japanese forces and taken to Japan.

It was not until November last year that his descendants, including Olsson, learned the truth: Joseph Duff had actually survived the sinking, only to die at the age of 28 in a Japanese POW camp in March 1945.





Top: Descendants of the *Lisbon Maru* POWs stand alongside the Memorial for Dongji Fishermen's Rescue of British Prisoners of War.
Above: Josephine Olsson (far right) and her older sister Pamela Allison search for the name of their great-uncle Joseph Duff on the *Lisbon Maru* survivors' wall. PHOTOS BY XING WEN / CHINA DAILY

"We didn't know what had happened to him except that we thought he had died on a ship," Olsson says.

While compiling her family tree, the 56-year-old Scottish woman conducted extensive research into her great-uncle.

But it was only at a screening of Chinese director Fang Li's documentary *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru* in Edinburgh last year that she finally came to understand the full story of this little-known chapter of World War II.

"He died before I was born, but I'm his namesake," she says emotionally.

"That means my name will carry forward his name and memory."

Recently, she and her sister Pamela Allison traveled to Zhoushan with 18 other descendants of the *Lisbon Maru* prisoners of war to visit the very island where her great-uncle was rescued.

"I really want to say thank you for giving him a bed, food and clothes. Thank you for giving him 24 hours of hope," she says.

She compiled the materials she had gathered during her research on Joseph Duff into a folder and donated it to the Lisbon Maru Rescue Memorial Hall on the island.

James Murphy, approaching 78, is also the namesake of his father.

His father served with the Hong Kong Company of the Royal Corps of Signals and was among the survivors rescued by Chinese fishermen. Murphy recalls that the few days his father spent on the island gave him a lifelong love of Chinese food.

As a child, he was often taken to Chinese restaurants by his father.

"None of us would be alive without the selfless courage and compassion of the fishermen and villagers who saved so many people," he says.

He traveled all the way from Plymouth to Zhoushan with his wife, Susan Murphy, to attend a series of commemorative events, including laying flowers at the memorial, planting trees, visiting the Lisbon Maru Rescue Memorial Hall on Dongji Island, and meeting with the descendants of those fishermen who took part in the rescue.

"It's been a real highlight of my life to come here, to meet all these wonderful people," he says.

"It's important that we hand that story and memory down, and it's pleasing to me, very touching, to hear that the Chinese generations, generation after generation, are similarly carrying the story on."

Christopher Borge, who made the trip with his sister Kirsteen Dugan, is the grandson of *Lisbon Maru* survivor John Borg.

He believes it is vital to share this story with a wider population.

"At school, they teach about the war in Europe and the UK, but not much about what happened in China and Japan," he says.

"We also need to focus on the details that reveal humanity, kindness, and cross-border friendship."

He is also the great-nephew of Duncan Edward Cameron, another *Lisbon Maru* survivor who was a friend of Borg.

After the rescue, the two were later taken by Japanese soldiers to Kobe House war camp in Japan, where they remained prisoners of war until the conflict finally ended.

As the two finally made their way back home, their families were anxiously waiting for their return at Edinburgh train station.

On that day, Borg fell in love at first sight with one of Cameron's sisters, Margaret.

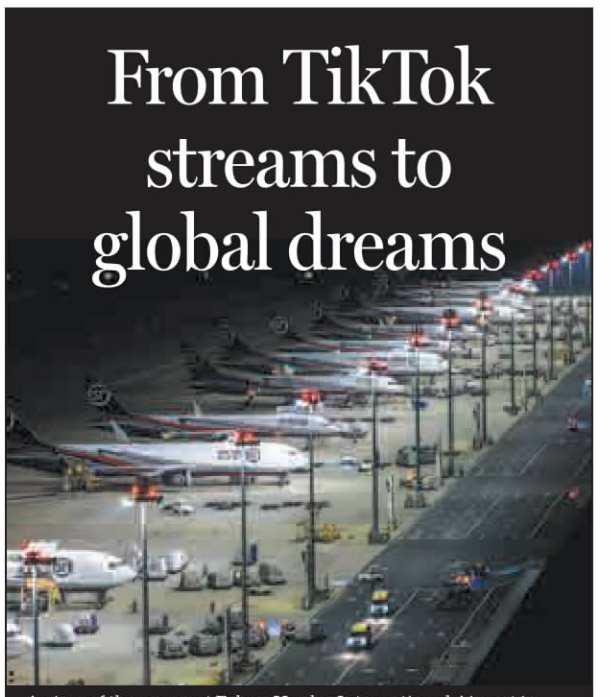
They later married and had four children among whom the youngest son is the father of Borge and Dugan.

"Those moments of friendship, courage, and love are the very reason my sister Kirsteen and I are able to stand here.

"So, we remember not only the suffering of war, but the bonds it has created. We must carry on this bond between us in the UK and our friends here in China," says Borge.

Contact the writer at xingwen@chinadaily.com.cn

From TikTok streams to global dreams



A view of the apron at Ezhou Huahu International Airport in Ezhou, Central China's Hubei province. One of China's largest cargo airports, it has ensured fast shipping services, a key factor in cross-border e-commerce business. XIAO YIJIU / XINHUA

Beneath bright studio lights, Mohamed Issa Omar speaks fluently to the camera, introducing a sleek pair of AI-powered glasses to viewers tuning in from across the globe.

Omar is in the cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zone in Ezhou, Central China's Hubei province. It is past midnight in the United States, but orders still pour in as the Somali influencer and CEO of Ezhou Shahai Business Bridge Trading Co breaks down the product's features, such as music playback, hands-free calls and one-click photography, tailored carefully to match overseas consumer habits.

"I shifted from engineering to e-commerce back in 2021," Omar recalls. He started building a social media presence and amassed over 1 million followers across Instagram, YouTube and TikTok. "That's when I saw the future: selling products online, and no place does it better than China."

What drew this foreign entrepreneur deep into China's inland province of Hubei is not just the allure of the world's most dynamic e-commerce ecosystem, but also its strategic logistics advantages.

"The Chinese e-commerce ecosystem is massive, robust and offers endless possibilities — far more than what you'd find abroad," Omar explains. "About 80 percent of the products in our warehouse originate from China. Being here, at the source, is the ultimate advantage."

His confidence is also rooted in Ezhou's unparalleled advantages in transportation. "We have Ezhou Huahu International Airport, one of China's largest cargo airports, on our doorstep," he says, noting that fast shipping serves as a key factor in today's cross-border e-commerce business landscape.

The speed of China's logistics evolution continues to impress him. "Three or four years ago, delivery times were longer. But now, China has mastered rapid manufacturing and lightning-fast shipping. Everything is accelerated."

A keen observer of global platforms, Omar notes an efficiency gap. "On Douyin, you get your order in three to four days. TikTok used to take a week, but now it's catching up to three days — driven by Chinese sellers pushing for speed."

For Omar, operating from China is not just about speed, but about forging ties between Chinese suppliers and global markets.

"The way Chinese merchants market and do business online is fundamentally different from that of their foreign counterparts. It must be a balanced fusion," he says. "Foreigners need to understand Chinese marketing strategies, and Chinese businesses must adapt their systems to global mindsets. That's the synergy we create."

This philosophy is why he insists on having Chinese partners to build a powerful e-commerce platform. "Success in this industry requires collaboration. Foreigners like me bring the international perspective, while our Chinese partners provide the local expertise and access to the supply chain."

His daily sales reflect this successful fusion. "It depends on livestreams. Right now, we get 40 to 50 orders per stream, and our prerecorded videos consistently drive sales — at least 100 units of our top-selling AI glasses every day."

Omar's success story is a microcosm of Hubei's booming cross-border e-commerce scene, anchored by Ezhou's strategic rise. Since the launch of the cross-border e-commerce comprehensive pilot zone in Ezhou in April 2025, the park has attracted 258 enterprises, including top sellers from TikTok and Amazon, driving total trade value to $310 million.

This inland opening-up miracle is further amplified by the Qipanzhou Comprehensive Bonded Zone in Huangshi, Hubei. Leveraging its proximity to Ezhou Huahu International Airport, it has built a multimodal transport system covering road, rail, water and air. By establishing "forward cargo stations", this region has revolutionized logistics, allowing goods to be declared locally and flown directly from the airport.

The results are transformative. The Qipanzhou Comprehensive Bonded Zone saw its foreign trade value soar to 10.74 billion yuan ($1.58 billion) in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 107 percent, jumping from zero to a 10-billion-level player in just two years, local data revealed.

For Omar, the future is limitless. "In the next five years, our business will boom beyond expectations. The scale is already growing faster than I imagined. After two to three years of testing and slow growth, we are poised for massive expansion."

With China's inland regions deepening their opening-up endeavors, foreign entrepreneurs like Omar are no longer outliers but pioneers. In the studios of Ezhou, with a world map of cargo routes overhead, they are turning Hubei's inland advantage into a global edge, proving that China's high-standard opening-up is no longer exclusive to coastal regions, but is flourishing steadily in inland areas.

XINHUA

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SPORTS

SOCCER





With no prior professional managerial experience, Lionel Scaloni took over the Argentina job on an interim basis in 2018 and ended up leading it to victory at the 2022 World Cup and to two Copa America titles. AP

A calming presence under pressure

Argentina boss Scaloni is unfazed by high expectations back home

After Gonzalo Montiel scored the decisive penalty in the final of the 2022 World Cup, giving Argentina its third star with a victory over France, coach Lionel Scaloni didn't celebrate, remaining still, silent, as if oblivious to the feat he himself had helped to accomplish. Several minutes later, he broke down when one of his players approached him, hugged him, and whispered: "We are world champions."

Scaloni almost never loses his cool. He didn't when he was bombarded with criticism for his lack of experience while leading Argentina. Nor did he when Kylian Mbappe's goals threatened the country's World Cup hopes four years ago. And he remains the same today, as he faces the challenge of trying to repeat as a World Cup champion.

Those who know him say Scaloni learned to control his temper thanks to a hobby outside of soccer. Since retiring as a player, he dedicates two to three hours a day to cycling through the mountains of Mallorca, the Spanish island where he lives, or along the trails of his hometown of Pujato in Argentina's northwest.

"On the bike, you can think about your team, your opponent, how to prepare for the match. It really clears my head. I use it as therapy," Scaloni said in several interviews.

In less than two weeks, Scaloni will become the third coach to lead Argentina into consecutive World Cups, following in the footsteps of Cesar Luis Menotti (1978 and 1982) and Carlos Bilardo (1986 and 1990), both also champions. But the youngest of the three doesn't believe he deserves comparisons to the others.

"I don't think we're on the same level. They have established careers, they defined an era," Scaloni has said repeatedly.

Earning his place

With no prior experience of managing professional teams, Scaloni took over the team on an interim basis in 2018 after Argentina's debacle in Russia, where the side was eliminated in the round of 16. Meanwhile, the Argentine Football Association (AFA) was considering Mauricio Pochettino or Diego Simeone as candidates for the senior national team.

"Scaloni? He can't even direct traffic," Diego Maradona, who was instrumental in Argentina winning the title in 1986, said at the time.

The inexperienced coach got the nod, and Argentina went on to win the 2021 Copa America and successfully navigated the qualifiers for the 2022 World Cup.

In Qatar, Scaloni weathered a storm of criticism after a disappointing opening match against Saudi Arabia, revamped the team mid-tournament with the addition of then-rookies Enzo Fernandez, Alexis Mac Allister, Julian Alvarez, and, most importantly, unleashed the best version of Lionel Messi.

"The criticism was normal, I hadn't coached anywhere. (Maradona) wasn't far off," Scaloni acknowledged shortly after lifting the cup.



Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni embraces team captain Lionel Messi following a quarterfinal victory over the Netherlands at the 2022 World Cup in Doha, Qatar. AP

Scaloni knows the demands will now be the same or even greater. He will have to defend the title with his star player nearing retirement at 38, while also dealing with turmoil within the Argentine soccer organization. Brazil was the last world champion to repeat in 1962.

"The World Cup is very, very difficult. To win a World Cup, a lot of things have to come together, not just playing well," Scaloni said in a recent interview with CONMEBOL. "It's very difficult, but not impossible."

Scaloni made it clear to his players that being world champions didn't guarantee them a place on the national team and demanded they never let their guard down.

"I don't dwell on past achievements; you always have to keep looking ahead," he said in late 2025. "With this jersey, you don't have time to relax and think your place is secure."

The Albiceleste again won the Copa America in 2024 and finished first in the South American qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup, overcoming the absence of Messi, who missed several matches due to physical problems.

All but six of the 2022 squad were included by Scaloni in his preliminary 55-player World Cup roster.

An attempt to resign

After the victory over Brazil in the World Cup qualifiers in November 2023, Scaloni shocked fans when he cast doubt on his future.

"It's not goodbye, but I need to think, because the bar is set very high and it's difficult to continue."

Scaloni, however, remained in his position, but rumors circulated of alleged discontent between him and some players due to their unprofessional behavior during the team's training camp before an earlier loss to Uruguay in the qualifiers.

Meanwhile, the AFA leadership faces accusations of corruption and growing internal discontent over changes to the league format and refereeing decisions.

World Cup preparations have also been questioned, with the AFA organizing friendlies against low-ranked teams like Indonesia, Puerto Rico, Angola, Mauritania and Zambia. Argentina's last two tests will be this week against Honduras and Iceland, neither of which qualified.

The coach, who is negotiating a contract extension, avoided complaining publicly. "Playing against the best doesn't guarantee anything, and neither does this. We have to face whatever comes and be positive," he said. "The results will show whether we made the right call or not."

Argentina will open in Kansas City against Algeria on June 16 in Group J. They will face Austria on June 22 and Jordan on June 27.

Scaloni remains calm, just as he did four years ago. He knows full well the expectation on him to defend the title.

"We're aware that our opponents will play us differently because we're the reigning champions. The important thing is that we'll be there. After that, it's football, and anything can happen."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Brazil pins hopes on Ancelotti to end long wait for World Cup glory

SAO PAULO — Brazil's biggest hope to end a 24-year World Cup title drought is not a clinical striker, a creative midfielder or a dribbling winger like at previous editions of the tournament. This time Brazilians are pinning their hopes on a 66-year-old Italian, who will be sitting on the bench.

Carlo Ancelotti, one of the most successful coaches of his generation, left Real Madrid to take over Brazil's national team last year, a rare example of a foreign coach in charge of the Selecao. Even though his results have been mixed — five wins, three losses and two draws — the country is optimistic he can elevate a squad that is seen as far less star-studded than Brazil's iconic teams of the past, despite high-profile players like Neymar and Vinicius Junior.

While Brazil has won the World Cup five times — more than any other team — it hasn't lifted the trophy since 2002, an eternity for a soccer-obsessed nation that produced some of the most brilliant players in history, such as Ronaldo, Ronaldinho and Pele.

Since 2002 it has only advanced beyond the quarterfinals once — as World Cup host in 2014 — and even that tournament ended in disappointment after an embarrassing 7-1 semifinal loss to eventual champion Germany.

Brazil's self-confidence hasn't been helped by the success of archrival Argentina, the defending World Cup champion and back-to-back Copa America winner.

"It is allowed to believe," Ancelotti says in a World Cup-themed advertising campaign, acknowledging the self-doubt that has crawled into Brazil's national soccer psyche.

The Neymar question

Brazil begins its World Cup campaign at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey on June 13 against Morocco, semifinalist at the 2022 World Cup and controversial AFCON winner. Other Group C opponents are Haiti and Scotland.

Surviving the group stage is taken for granted in Brazil — anything else would be disaster in a World Cup expanded from 32 to 48 teams. How deep Brazil can go against stronger opponents in the knockout phase is less obvious.

"I am aware and reliant that this team can compete against the best in the world. Can we win the World Cup and reach the final? Yes, we can reach the final. But I don't know if that is enough, it is best for us to get there and win the final," Ancelotti has said.

One of the biggest questions facing Ancelotti is what to do with 34-year-old Neymar, who was Brazil's brightest star until he moved to the big-spending Saudi league in 2023. He hardly played there due to a string of knee injuries, and last year returned to boyhood club Santos in Brazil, where he dealt with even more physical problems.

Ancelotti included Neymar in his World Cup squad despite concerns about his fitness, calling him an "important player" for the team. Barcelona winger Raphinha also sees Neymar as key to the squad, recently describing him as "the man of our sixth World Cup title".

If that happens it will be with a more structured approach than the free-flowing style of play that once made Brazil stand out in global soccer.

With a reputation as a master tactician, Ancelotti has made Brazil a team that is happy to sit back and wait for moments to attack rather than dominate ball possession. He often opts for a compact 4-4-2 formation that can quickly turn into an attacking 4-2-4.

'Best thing that happened'

Brazilians are generally satisfied with Ancelotti, even though his record so far is uneven. After he took over, Brazil won two World Cup qualifiers, drew one and lost one, finishing fifth in South American qualifying after Argentina, Ecuador, Colombia and Uruguay.

In recent friendlies, Brazil beat Croatia — which eliminated Brazil from the 2022 World Cup in a quarterfinal shootout — but lost to 2022 runner-up France.

Former Brazil left-back Filipe Luis, who has recently started a coaching career, in April called Ancelotti "the best thing that happened" to the national team.

"It is not a sure thing we will win anything," he said. "But we needed someone big, with enough support to make decisions. A man people respect, who knows Brazil has gone through many years not winning the World Cup."

Ancelotti took over after a tumultuous time for Brazil.

The team had struggled in qualifying for the 2026 World Cup, losing twice to Argentina, and was knocked out by Uruguay in the quarterfinals of the 2024 Copa America. Three coaches came and left — caretakers Ramon Menezes and Fernando Diniz and full-time coach Dorival Junior were all fired after poor results.

Meanwhile, Brazil pursued Ancelotti, whose second stint at Real Madrid appeared to heading toward an end, despite the team winning both the Champions League and La Liga in 2024.

So confident is the Brazilian soccer confederation that it has made the right choice that it has already extended Ancelotti's contract until the 2030 World Cup.

"We have a beast taking care of our national team, a man who is respected by everyone," Luis said.





As part of his bid to return Brazil to the World Cup winners' circle, coach Carlo Ancelotti (right) has included Neymar in his 26-man squad despite concerns about his fitness, calling him an "important player" for the team. AP

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Perfect vision

City's affordable eyewear attracts foreign tourists

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Nation taps ultra-deep shale gas reserves

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Chinese connections

US students find language learning aids understanding

AMERICA FOCUS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, MAY 22, 2026

China, Pakistan eye stronger cooperation

Xi and Zardari exchange congratulatory messages on 75th anniversary of ties

By **ZHAO JIA**
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President Xi Jinping called on Thursday for stronger strategic communication, continued traditional friendship and deeper all-around cooperation between China and Pakistan, as the two Asian neighbors marked the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties.

In a congratulatory message sent to Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari, Xi emphasized that he attaches great importance to the development of bilateral relations and stands ready to work with Zardari to accelerate the building of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era, so that bilateral ties bring greater benefits to the two peoples and contribute to regional peace and development.

Xi said that China and Pakistan are good friends and all-weather strategic cooperative partners, linked by mountains and rivers and sharing weal and woe.

Over the past 75 years, the friendship between the two countries has remained rock-solid and unbreakable despite changes in the international landscape, he said.

The two countries have long maintained a high level of political mutual trust, practical cooperation, security collaboration and international coordination, setting an example for state-to-state relations, Xi added.

In his congratulatory message to Xi, Zardari said the Pakistan-China all-weather strategic cooperative partnership has become a firm pillar of regional peace, stability and development. Pakistan highly appreciates the far-reaching global initiatives proposed by Xi and deeply values his firm commitment to deepening Pakistan-China relations, he added.

Zardari expressed Pakistan's sincere gratitude for China's firm support toward safeguarding his country's sovereignty and territorial integrity, and promoting its economic and social development.

Pakistan will continue to support China on issues concerning its core interests and further elevate the Pakistan-China friendship to new heights, he said.

To mark the occasion, Premier Li Qiang exchanged congratulatory messages on Thursday with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, saying that China is ready to work with Pakistan to actively build an upgraded version of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor.

Sharif said that Pakistan remains firmly committed to advancing high-quality CPEC development and opening up new areas of cooperation with China.

In a separate message released by the Pakistani prime minister's office to mark the anniversary, Sharif said that CPEC's next phase will place greater emphasis on "industrialization, agriculture, information technology, science and technology, green development, and stronger people-centered cooperation".

"It is encouraging to witness Pakistan-China cooperation expanding into new frontiers, including the digital economy, innovation, space cooperation, education and cultural exchanges," he added.

Sharif said that from the Karakoram Highway to cooperation in outer space, Pakistan-China friendship continues to demonstrate how enduring strategic trust can be translated into meaningful progress and shared prosperity for the two peoples.

The two countries are set for another round of high-level engagement, with Sharif set to pay an official visit to China starting Saturday, less than a month after Zardari visited China in April. In addition to Beijing, the four-day trip will also take Sharif to East China's Zhejiang province.

Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong said in a signed article published in the People's Daily on Thursday that frequent high-level exchanges have provided political guidance and strong momentum for the development of bilateral relations.

Beyond political engagement, he noted that high-level practical cooperation between the two countries has become a model that delivers broad benefits to the people.

China is Pakistan's largest trading partner and the second-largest destination for Pakistani exports.

According to Jiang, CPEC, a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has garnered over $25.9 billion in direct investment and created over 260,000 jobs.

The emphasis on shared development was echoed by Pakistani Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi, who said that China's development has created wider opportunities for other developing countries, especially those in the Global South.

Hashmi said that Pakistan-China relations carry significance beyond the bilateral level, particularly at a time of growing global uncertainty.

Pakistan and China have made valuable contributions to the global system, he said, noting that the two countries "closely coordinate, communicate and consult" at the United Nations, the World Trade Organization and many other multilateral platforms.

He described China's vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, together with the BRI and the four major global initiatives — the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative — as an action-oriented approach to addressing global challenges. These ideas, he said, reflect Chinese wisdom in a modern context and provide a comprehensive plan for a more peaceful, secure and prosperous world.

Inside

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Sino-Russian statements help shore up unity, stability

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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Russian President Vladimir Putin's two-day whirlwind state visit to China concluded on Wednesday night. Although brief, it was highly productive, with analysts impressed by the results, including two joint statements and a long list of outcomes.

In particular, the two statements — one about international relations and the other about bilateral cooperation — are constructive contributions to global peace and growth, as both nations strive to inject stability into a world plagued by turmoil, analysts said.

On Wednesday, following talks between Putin and President Xi Jinping in Beijing, the two heads of state signed and issued a joint statement on further strengthening comprehensive strategic coordination and deepening good-neighborliness and friendly cooperation.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the signing of the China-Russia Treaty of Good-Neighborliness and Friendly Cooperation.

In the statement, the two leaders agreed to further extend the treaty and pledged future joint efforts in various fields.

Wang Fan, a professor at China Foreign Affairs University, said that the statement and the extension of the treaty show that the two countries "have succeeded in developing a new approach for two major countries to get along with each other — no alliances, no conflicts and no confrontation".

"The treaty's extension is legally binding in securing the lasting friendship between China and Russia," he said.

Wang said that the ties have shown great strategic resilience and remained unaffected by shifting international circumstances, and interference and provocation by third parties.

"The two countries have consistently maintained the stability of their relationship, and their political mutual trust has grown ever deeper," he added.

Li Yongquan, academic committee director at the Euro-Asian Social Development Research Institute of the State Council's Development Research Center, said that the first joint statement provides clear guidance on how to continue to deepen the comprehensive strategic partnership between the two countries in the bilateral, regional and global contexts.

During the visit, the two leaders also issued a joint statement on advocating a multipolar world and a new type of international relations.

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Inside

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Creative carnival



Foreign envoys and expatriates visit the inaugural China New Cultural and Creative Market & Trendy Toy Carnival at Chaoyang Park in Beijing on Thursday. The event running from May 15 through Sunday brings together top-tier cultural products, toys, intangible cultural heritage items and digital technologies from across the country. ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

A win-win map for relations with US

WORLD WATCH
By Erik Solheim

Some of the most powerful business leaders of the United States came to Beijing last week. For years, many in Washington have talked about decoupling, about pulling the two economies apart. These corporate leaders gave their answer to that idea, and their answer was to come to Beijing. They came because they can read a balance sheet. And the balance sheet tells them that the future runs through China, not around it.

That is part of the real story of the head-of-state summit between China and the US. The gap exists between what Washington often says and what American business does. And that gap tells us something important.

All US attempts to contain China's development have failed to reach their objectives. Tariffs did not weaken Chinese industry. Export controls did not slow China down. The result has been the opposite. Denied the best US chips, Chinese engineers learned to do more with less, and the gap between the best US and Chinese systems closed from years to months. This is not a story of China winning and the US losing. The containment strategy did not work out because it was built on a false picture of what these two countries are to each other.

This false picture has a name. It is the zero-sum idea. It is the belief that whatever China gains, the US loses, and whatever the US gains, China loses. It often runs through Western newspapers and Western foreign policy unchallenged. It should be challenged, because it is wrong. In the early Cold War, it fit the world well enough. The US and the Soviet Union shared almost no real trade and no shared prosperity. In that world, one side's gain often was the other's loss. But that world is gone. The US and China are among each other's largest trading partners. Their factories, their universities and their capital are bound together at every level. To bring the zero-sum map into this relationship is to navigate a new century with an outdated zero-sum mindset.

Actually, China and the US have more common interests than differences.

The cost of the zero-sum habit is real. When every gain for the other side is marked as your defeat, cooperation starts to look like surrender. A sensible compromise looks like a betrayal. Problems that two serious governments could solve together are left to rot, because to solve them would be to let the other side win.

*See **Cooperation,** page 3*

SMART DEVICE SEEDS A GROWING PASSION FOR BIRDS

Livestreaming feeding stations fuel soaring interest in the lives of our feathered friends

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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It's peak bird season, and for many, bird-watching no longer requires expensive equipment and weekends camped out in the woods.

A recent video that went viral on social media shows an automated backyard feeder capturing images of everything from the first twig laid in a nest to fledglings taking their maiden flight.

"Every time I get a notification (from the feeder), I run to check who showed up," a user wrote online, marveling at the solar-powered, livestreaming feeder that has transformed their backyard into a miniature wildlife observatory.

At the heart of this surge in backyard birding are Netvue's bird-feeding devices. Best known for its smart video doorbells and home security systems, the company based in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, has repurposed its home-safety technologies for bird enthusiasts, launching its Birdfy brand in 2020.

While Europe and North America have long enjoyed a mature bird-watching culture, traditional outdoor birding and wildlife photography are expensive.

*See **Birding,** page 3*





Left: A bird looks at the camera of a Birdfy smart bird-feeding device. **Right:** The solar-powered AI feeder can monitor bird activity in real time and identify species. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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INDEPTH





Left: A primary school student undergoes an abdominal ultrasound screening for echinococcosis during government-funded free health checkups for residents in Chonggyai county, Xizang autonomous region, in March. **Right:** Primary school students in Chonggyai have free health checkups in March. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Xizang navigates road to better healthcare

Mobile services provide free checkups in variety of locations

Editor's note: May 23 marks the 75th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of the Xizang autonomous region. Over the decades, healthcare has continuously improved, with enhanced access and infrastructure significantly boosting health outcomes and quality of life for residents in the region.

By **PALDEN NYIMA** and **DAQIONG** in Lhasa

On a crisp spring morning, residents of a high-altitude village in the Xizang autonomous region were filled with anticipation as they waited for the arrival of a mobile medical team.

In Namling county, at an elevation of 4,100 meters, the April chill was still in the air. However, it didn't dampen the enthusiasm of local residents, including monks and nuns, who lined up outside the village activity center for their annual health checkups.

A mobile health bus had navigated the rugged village roads, bumping and jostling the medical professionals inside. Its arrival in the village heralded the start of health-themed activities for the day and was indicative of the region's commitment to healthcare equity, even in Xizang's remote corners.

The medics' cups of tea had long gone cold as they worked throughout the day, but they carried out each task with precision and care. The team worked quickly to measure people's blood pressure, monitor heart rhythms, perform abdominal ultrasounds and draw blood for testing.

More improvements

This year marks the 75th anniversary of the peaceful liberation of Xizang, and throughout the decades, healthcare in the region has undergone continuous improvement.

Between 2021 and 2025, Xizang's healthcare sector experienced notable expansion, Xinhua News Agency reported.

The number of healthcare institutions climbed from 6,938 to 7,231, while bed capacity saw an increase from 18,942 to 21,488. The total number of healthcare professionals rose from 40,899 to 50,766.

Total funding allocated to the health sector in the region reached 60.89 billion yuan in the 2021-2025 period, marking an increase of 64.19 percent over the previous five-year period.

Since 2013, Xizang's regional health committee has made steady efforts to promote health checkups for urban and rural residents. Around 22.4 million health checkups have been completed over the period — covering the entire population.

The government provides an annual subsidy for each resident, which was increased to 164 yuan ($24.12) this year, to cover the cost of the checkups. Residents over age 65 receive 200 yuan. Beyond that, many of the subsequent medical services, such as some medications to treat long-term illnesses, are free.

This year, further efforts will be made to expand access to medical services through the deployment of additional mobile health diagnostic vehicles. Upgrades to existing onboard equipment are also planned, along with the distribution of motorcycles and portable diagnostic kits to village clinics, enabling grassroots health workers to deliver faster and more efficient basic checkups.

These efforts have already shown positive results at the county level. In Chonggyai county, for example, 14,000 residents have had health checkups this year, with the participation rate exceeding 88 percent.

"Health checkups for rural residents are an important element of our livelihood project," said Pasang Phenthok, head of Chonggyai County Central Hospital.

The checkups cover liver and kidney function, test blood sugar levels, and include chest X-rays and ultrasounds.

This year, free prenatal health checkups were introduced, along with screenings for major infectious diseases such as hepatitis B, HIV and tuberculosis.

Illnesses common in Xizang are being monitored for early detection. They include hypertension and polycythemia, a blood disorder that farmers and herders can develop at high altitudes because of reduced oxygen. The condition results in the thickening of blood and increases the risk of blood clots, strokes and heart attacks.

Early detection is key

In Chonggyai, health professionals have developed a system to quickly deal with serious illnesses identified during the health checkups.

Emergency treatment is conducted on-site, while patients with long-term conditions, such as diabetes or hypertension, are enrolled in a management system for ongoing care.

"We are forming a closed-loop health management process that prioritizes early detection and intervention," said Pasang Phenthok, adding that routine health checkups can reveal common health problems such as high blood pressure, fatty liver, gallstones, and cardiovascular diseases.

High salt intake in the diets of rural residents, especially from butter tea, is one of the major causes of these conditions.

Efforts to strengthen the medical network span multiple administrative levels. Chonggyai boasts a robust three-tier system at county hospitals, township clinics and village facilities. Currently, 20 village clinics provide medical services that meet national standards.

The mobile health checkup vehicles have become a lifeline for residents in widely dispersed communities, reducing costs and alleviating challenges in obtaining services.

This year, vehicles will be dispatched to seven remote townships for free health checkups, according to the Namling county health commission. The mobile service aims to cover more than 71,800 people. About 23 percent of the checkups have already been completed.

"This program allows for the early detection of problems to prevent severe illnesses and reduce health-related poverty," said Tsetan Drolkar, deputy director of the commission. The goal is to shift from treatment to active prevention, with farmers and herders encouraged to adopt healthier lifestyles.

Screenings tailored for the elderly, women, children and patients with chronic conditions are also improving people's quality of life, and reducing maternal and infant mortality rates in Xizang.

Sogchen Township Branch Hospital in Namling bridges the gap between grassroots patients and more advanced hospitals. Residents of the Tibetan Plateau region often face high-altitude polycythemia, diabetes and echinococcosis, a parasitic infection often transmitted through dog feces.

The hospital maintains a strict diagnostic process for chronic conditions, providing affordable medication to patients and guiding lifestyle adjustments to reduce risks.

Phurbu, a monk at Namling's Dragkar Monastery, recounted how regular checkups helped him detect and manage hypertension and significantly improve his health.

"Around 2021, during a checkup, the doctor advised me to take antihypertensive medication long-term. Now, after years of medication, my blood pressure has returned to normal," Phurbu said.

Similarly, Phurbu Tsering, a monk from Chonggyai, praised the benefits of annual health screenings: "These checkups are effective tools that allow for timely treatment and prevention of more severe complications."

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Left: Monks receive an annual free health checkup at the Chonggyai County Central Hospital in April. **Right:** Phurbu Tsering(right), a Buddhist monk from the Thangpoche Monastery of Chonggyai, has his lymph nodes examined at the hospital in April. PHOTOS BY PALDEN NYIMA / CHINA DAILY

50,766 people
The total number of healthcare professionals in Xizang in 2025

22.4 m health checkups
The approximate number of health checkups completed in Xizang since 2013

60.89 billion yuan
Total funding allocated to the health sector in the region in the 2021-25 period

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Tibetan weaving: A new thread for rural prosperity

By **PALDEN NYIMA** in Lhasa

In Gangba village of Lhundrub county, Xizang autonomous region, a group of Tibetan women are weaving age-old traditions with modern commercial demands.

Their deft hands turn locally sourced fine wool into exquisite Tibetan rugs, scarves and other handcrafted textiles. Their craft has also brought fresh development opportunities to this rural community.

Once a hobby practiced mainly during farming off-seasons, Tibetan weaving has grown into a flourishing industry, becoming a driver of rural revitalization, according to local authorities.

Long reliant on animal husbandry, Gangba village boasts its own weaving tradition. For generations, women wove textiles for family members, handing down techniques between generations. Yet without standardized production or market access, these skills lay dormant, yielding little economic benefit for locals.

A turning point came in 2015 with the founding of the local weaving cooperative.

"We started with just 16,000 yuan ($2,350) and confronted numerous hurdles in the early days," said Basang Tsering, Party secretary of Gangba village.

"But we sank deep roots in the village to preserve this time-honored craft and pass on local culture. More importantly, we aimed to help rural women secure jobs and boost their income without traveling far from home," Basang Tsering said.

With professional support and village authorities' guidance, the cooperative has made good progress in recent years. It has overcome bottlenecks, expanded its sales, and developed modern designs, which include hats, embroidered pouches and decorative key chains.



Tashi Lhamo (left), the head of a women's federation and a weaving cooperative in Lhundrub county of Xizang, displays a Tibetan carpet produced by her staff in April. SAMTEN NGODRUB / FOR CHINA DAILY

These commercial efforts have empowered women through stable incomes while renewing cultural pride.

Tashi Lhamo, chairperson of the village women's federation, said the cooperative rolls out a wide range of products, from classic Tibetan rugs to colorful scarves.

Local herdsmen supply high-quality semi-fine wool, which the women refine into items that reflect traditional charm while fitting modern practical needs, said Tashi Lhamo.

Strategic cooperation has broadened the cooperative's market reach. Its debut exhibition at the annual Lhundrub county commodities fair drew wide attention, marking the first showcase of "Gangba Weaving" as a regional cultural brand.

The exposure resulted in bulk orders and strong demand, contributing an additional 20,000 yuan to the village's economy this year, according to local authorities.

Eight women work full-time at the cooperative, while many others work flexible hours at home, striking a balance between household duties, farming and their craft.

"Every piece we make embodies the essence of Tibetan culture," said Tashi Lhamo.

"This is not merely about heritage preservation. It is about building women's confidence and creating a platform for them to pursue better lives," she noted.

"The invaluable craftsmanship inherited from our ancestors should be well preserved rather than left stagnant; it needs to keep pace with the times and embrace modern aesthetics to resonate with wider audiences in the new era," she added.

Looking ahead, the cooperative plans to increase production by recruiting women from neighboring villages to weave.

"More professional training programs and product innovations will be launched to keep the time-honored Tibetan weaving tradition dynamic and well-adapted to modern market demands," she said.

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TOP NEWS

Birding: Users pay for 'thrill' of greeting new visitor

From page 1

According to the 2025 State of the Birds report, the United States now boasts nearly 100 million bird-watchers. Annual spending by these enthusiasts — including travel, equipment, apparel and photography gear — has reached $108 billion.

Birdfy offers a new perspective: the view from one's own backyard. The company describes the strategy as a leap from "home security" to "human-nature connection", and it's paying off.

Expanding into markets including the US and Europe, with products priced between $119.99 and $279.99, Birdfy has quickly become an Amazon best-seller in its category.

"It started when we noticed users were sharing unexpected bird footage captured by our security cameras," said Hu Youle, chief technology officer of Netvue. "Backyard birding with smart cameras wasn't just a novelty. It reflected a real human desire to reconnect with nature."

The company's philosophy is simple: Nature doesn't have to be distant. Unlike standard cameras for safety purposes, these smart feeders are engineered for wildlife with features including 4K imaging, dual-camera systems, lowlight adaptability and solar power.

To enable fast, dynamic recording under various lighting conditions, the company has trained vertical artificial intelligence models capable of identifying species, tracking movements, and even distinguishing males from females. Plans are underway to predict potentially sick birds, providing enthusiasts with a conservation tool alongside their hobbies. The product line continues to expand into smart birdhouses and birdbaths.

Documenting sightings is also part of Birdfy's business model. Birdfy has cultivated an international ecosystem where enthusiasts share rare captures, fueling ongoing engagement. "Users aren't paying for cloud storage," Hu said. "They're paying for the thrill of discovering a new visitor in their yard."

In China, RedNote's 2025 Birdwatching Trend Report highlighted a dramatic rise in birding among younger consumers. According to the report, searches for "birding" surged 19-fold year-on-year, and users around the age of 25 have become the dominant demographic driving online content.

Liu Feng, CEO of Birdfans.com, which has more than 400,000 registered users, explained the broader forces behind this growth. "Young people today seek a deeper connection with nature," Liu said.

"Birding has become a fashionable, emotional lifestyle connected to the natural world. Coupled with online social sharing platforms, it's creating a thriving digital ecosystem for enthusiasts."

Birding tourism is also taking flight, with remote areas such as Mingxi county in Fujian province attracting European and US visitors.

With smart technology, AI and community engagement converging, companies such as Netvue see enormous market potential.

Flooding in Turkiye



An aerial view shows a collapsed section of the Antakya-Samandag highway after heavy rainfall on Thursday in Hatay, Turkiye. Five parked vehicles were damaged in the collapse, while one person was killed as flooding caused a house to collapse. MEHMET BAYRAK / GETTY IMAGES

Wider opening-up to draw more foreign investment

Multinational firms ready to deploy resources in high-end manufacturing, service industries

By **ZHONG NAN** and **CANG WEI** in Suzhou, Jiangsu

Inside

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China will remain a prime long-term destination for global investors, driven by its vast consumer market, deeper opening-up and rapid advances in digital and green technologies, which are reshaping industries and generating fresh growth opportunities, government officials and business executives said on Thursday.

Speaking at a business conference ahead of the 32nd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting, which will be held in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on Friday and Saturday, Li Chenggang, China international trade representative with the Ministry of Commerce, said the nation will continue to remove restrictive measures beyond the negative list.

The negative list outlines the specific industries in which foreign investors are either restricted or prohibited from operating.

Li, who is also a vice-minister of commerce, said that China expects all parties attending the meeting in Suzhou to engage in in-depth discussions on advancing regional economic integration, supporting the multilateral trading system, strengthening digital cooperation and promoting green economic development.

To create a more attractive investment environment for multinational companies, China will further expand its opening-up in service-related industries, such as telecommunications, healthcare and education, while also promoting the orderly opening-up of the internet and cultural sectors, he added.

According to information released in March by the National Development and Reform Commission, China has dynamically updated its negative list for foreign investment access, with reduction of special management measures in the services sector becoming a major priority.

The nation has also increased platforms for expanding services opening-up. The number of comprehensive pilot areas established for expanding the opening-up of the services sector has so far reached 20.

Henry Ding, senior vice-president of 3M, said the United States-based industrial conglomerate will further scale up research and development investment in China this year, and it is targeting more than 30 percent growth in new product launches compared with 2025 — a pace significantly higher than in most other global markets.

"These investments help us respond faster to market upgrades, shorten innovation cycles and build a complete local industrial chain from research to testing and manufacturing. This establishes a solid foundation for our stable and long-term growth in China," said Ding, who is also a director of the American Chamber of Commerce in Shanghai.

Rob Iuppa, chief financial officer of Technimark LLC, a US manufacturer of high-value packaging products for the healthcare, consumer and industrial sectors, said the company expects its investment in China this year "to exceed the level of any of the past three years".

"As long as our customers continue to grow in China, we will continue increasing our investment in the country," he said.

Lee Hyuk-joon, president for China at Hyundai Motor Group, said that China's rapid development in sectors such as new energy vehicles, intelligent connected vehicles and digital technologies aligns closely with the group's global transformation strategy.

The South Korean automaker plans to deepen cooperation with Suzhou in areas including smart mobility, R&D, supply-chain integration and green technologies, while expanding collaboration with Chinese partners and increasing its participation in China's industrial upgrading.

Mirroring this momentum, high-tech industries accounted for 32.3 percent of foreign direct investment in China in 2025, with inflows into sectors including e-commerce services, medical equipment manufacturing and aerospace posting strong growth, while returns for foreign-invested companies remained stable, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

According to the ministry, foreign-funded companies account for one-third of China's foreign trade, one-quarter of industrial output value and one-seventh of tax revenue, and they support more than 30 million jobs.

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Visit: Building a multipolar world stressed

From page 1

"The second joint statement outlines how China and Russia will strengthen cooperation in building a multipolar world, and this cooperation itself is conducive to maintaining international stability and world peace," said Li.

The statement called on the international community to remain committed to four principles — upholding openness, inclusiveness and mutually beneficial cooperation; upholding equality and indivisibility of security; upholding the democratization of international relations and improving the global governance system; and upholding the diversity of world civilizations and values.

The two sides concluded by stating their commitment to continuing to develop a shared vision for building a multipolar world and a new type of international relations characterized by greater fairness.

Su Xiaohui, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said that the second statement shows that both China and Russia are committed to practicing genuine multilateralism.

"Both countries recognize that today's world is fraught with turmoil and uncertainty, and that many people fear the return of the law of the jungle when it comes to global stability," she said.

Su said that the two countries have established a model for bilateral relations, practicing mutual respect and refraining from imposing their own will or agenda on one another.

Boeing plan eases aviation ties after years of strain

By **LI JING**
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Inside

Views, **page 7**

China agreeing to purchase 200 aircraft from Boeing is expected to bolster commercial ties between China and the United States, especially in the aviation sector, as industry analysts said the agreement represents a partial easing of strained industrial ties after nearly a decade.

The Ministry of Commerce announced on Wednesday that China will purchase 200 Boeing aircraft "in accordance with its air transport development needs and on commercial principles", responding to a question regarding US President Donald Trump's recent remarks on the deal.

An official from the ministry said that aviation is a key sector for mutually beneficial and win-win cooperation between the two countries.

The US will also guarantee sufficient supplies of engines and spare parts for Chinese operators, according to a statement published on the ministry's website.

The comments came days after Boeing said that it had made progress in reopening the Chinese market during Trump's state visit to Beijing, where he was accompanied by a delegation of senior US business executives, including Boeing CEO Kelly Ortberg.

"We had a very successful trip to China and accomplished our major goal of reopening the China market to orders for Boeing aircraft," Boeing said in a statement to China Daily.

If finalized, the deal would mark Boeing's first major aircraft commitment from China in nearly a decade. The last major deal came during Trump's previous visit to China in 2017, when Chinese buyers signed agreements for 300 Boeing aircraft worth more than $37 billion.

Since then, Boeing has struggled to secure large orders from Chinese airlines amid geopolitical tensions and the grounding of the Boeing 737 MAX after two fatal crashes in 2018 and 2019.

China was once one of Boeing's most important overseas markets, with Chinese airlines accounting for roughly a quarter of the company's global deliveries before 2019. But the US manufacturer's presence has since weakened sharply as European rival Airbus expanded its footprint in China.

Airbus now holds roughly 55 percent of China's commercial aircraft market and has secured multiple large orders from Chinese carriers, including hundreds of Airbus A320neo family aircraft.

"Aviation has traditionally been a key link in China-US economic relations, and aircraft orders often serve as a barometer of bilateral ties," said Zhu Keli, founding director of the China Institute of New Economy.

The Boeing commitment signals a shift toward more pragmatic engagement, with both sides returning to cooperation based on commercial interests, Zhu said.

"It shows that the global aviation supply chain remains deeply interconnected," he said. "High-end manufacturing such as commercial aircraft is difficult to separate from the global division of labor."

For China, the move also signals continued openness and commitment to maintaining stable global industrial supply chains, Zhu added, while for the US, it reflects recognition of the importance of the Chinese market.

Beyond geopolitics, analysts said the proposed purchase also addresses the pressing operational needs of Chinese airlines.

Over the past nine years, Airbus has steadily expanded its dominance in China, leaving airlines increasingly dependent on a single supplier. Reintroducing Boeing aircraft into the market could help rebalance the supply structure and improve resilience, Zhu said.

At the same time, Chinese airlines are facing aging fleets and strong demand for capacity growth, while production of the domestically developed C919 by the Commercial Aircraft Corp of China is still ramping up and Airbus order backlogs remain long.

"In that context, 200 Boeing aircraft could help fill near-term capacity gaps and ensure stable operations on major routes," Zhu said.

US commitments to ensure supplies of engines and components could also ease maintenance pressures for airlines and reduce operational risks, he added.

However, Zhu cautioned that the deal represents only a partial thaw rather than a full recovery in China-US aviation cooperation.

While aircraft purchases and supply chains may expand, barriers remain in areas such as airworthiness certification, core technology sharing and deeper industrial integration. In particular, certification of the C919 by Western regulators remains a key hurdle, highlighting continued technological competition between the two countries, he added.

Zhu said that future cooperation is likely to follow a pattern of "strong commercial cooperation but cautious technological engagement", as sensitive technologies such as aircraft engines and advanced avionics remain tightly controlled.

Both Boeing and Airbus expect China to become the world's largest aviation market by around 2043, with a commercial fleet of roughly 9,000 to 10,000 aircraft.

Ebola outbreak



Congolese children read an advocacy poster on Wednesday as aid agencies step up efforts to contain a new outbreak of the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola in Bunia, Ituri province, Democratic Republic of Congo. On Tuesday, DRC Health Minister Roger Kamba said that 543 suspected cases had been recorded, including 32 laboratory-confirmed infections, while the death toll had reached 136. GRADEL MUYISA MUMBERE / REUTERS

Cooperation: Summit in Beijing can become a new start

From page 1

But almost none of the great problems of our time are zero-sum. Instead, consider: A stable climate, a generation in Africa or South Asia lifted out of poverty and into school and decent health, and a bigger global economy to share. None of these has a winner and a loser. The whole world rises together or it does not rise at all.

I have worked across Asia for decades, and I can tell you plainly that China, India and much of the continent do not reach instinctively for the zero-sum lens. It is a Western habit. Habits can be unlearned.

Iran shows what unlearning it would make possible. Set the reflex aside and look only at the interests on the table. Everyone wants the Strait of Hormuz kept open. No one gains from a wider war.

If the zero-sum map is the wrong one, the right one can be drawn. This is some substance I would read into President Xi Jinping's call for a "constructive strategic stability" relationship. Stability of that order rests on institutions. It is the patient construction of the channels through which a misunderstanding can be disarmed before it ever becomes a war.

So the real question in Beijing was never who won the better deal. It was whether two great powers can set down the old map. More than half a century ago, former US president Richard Nixon and former US secretary of state Henry Kissinger, Chairman Mao Zedong and Premier Zhou Enlai began the diplomacy that ended a generation of hostility. The week changed the world. I would ask people to remember how it was actually done. By refusing to pretend the differences away, the two sides made the common ground they did find believable. That is what optimism without naivety looks like.

That is the spirit this moment asks for. The summit in Beijing can become a new start, followed by a meeting in Washington later this year.

Standing in Beijing in 1972, Nixon raised his glass and borrowed a line from one of Chairman Mao's poems. So many deeds cry out to be done, he said, and always urgently. Ten thousand years are too long. Seize the day, seize the hour.

More than 50 years later, with the climate, with artificial intelligence, with the security of the world's energy, none of which either nation can solve alone, the hour presses again. China's success and the US' success need not be bought at each other's expense. Each can be the making of the other. That is a truer description of the world than the zero-sum story the West has told itself for far too long.

The author is the chair of the Europe-Asia Center and the former undersecretary-general of the United Nations. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Battling the blaze



Crew members combat the Sandy Fire as it continues to burn in the hills near a residential area in Southern California, on Wednesday. The wind-driven brush fire broke out on Monday in Simi Valley, a city of around 125,000 residents about 48 kilometers northwest of Los Angeles, spreading rapidly and prompting authorities to issue evacuation orders for thousands of people. APU GOMES / AFP

Role of collaboration emphasized

China-Russia cooperation seen as vital in helping bolster multilateralism

By YANG RAN in Beijing and **XU WEIWEI**, **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong

Global experts said that cooperation between China and Russia is vital in today's volatile world, highlighting the role of their collaboration in helping bolster multilateralism and foster stability.

Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a state visit to China from Tuesday to Wednesday, which also marked his 25th trip to the country. President Xi Jinping and Putin held talks, chatted over tea, visited a photo exhibition, and witnessed the signing of a slew of cooperation documents in Beijing.

The two presidents hailed a "new stage" in bilateral ties as they agreed to further extend a China-Russia friendship treaty and pledged to work together for a more just and equitable world order.

Maarij Farooq, deputy editor-in-chief at Daily Ittehad Media Group & Pakistan Economic Net, said the growing strategic coordination between China and Russia is becoming increasingly important in today's changing global environment.

Stronger cooperation between two major global powers like China and Russia can play a constructive and stabilizing role in the region and beyond, Farooq said. "Their coordination on global issues reflects the emergence of a more balanced and multipolar world order where countries seek dialogue, development, and cooperation instead of confrontation and pressure politics."

Karori Singh, former director of the South Asia Studies Centre at the University of Rajasthan in India, said that China and Russia, being founding members of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS, are endowed with greater responsibility to ensure fairness and justice in global governance.

Commitment reiterated

As the world shares deep concerns about the deteriorating global economic situation, China and Russia "reiterated their commitment to the United Nations' purposes and principles, international law, multilateralism and global governance", he said.

During Putin's visit, China and Russia issued a joint statement, advocating for a multipolar world and a new type of international relations.

Vasily Kashin, director of the Center for Comprehensive European and International Studies at the National Research University Higher School of Economics, said the declaration of Russia and China can be considered an alternative proposal on the architecture of global security, showing it's realistic to gather a wide group of developing countries that are afraid of unpredictable actions by some countries.

Lawrence Freeman, a US political-economic analyst and writer, said the geopolitical dynamic in the world is changing, with the Global South set to become the focus.

Anthony Moretti, an associate professor in the Department of Communication and Organizational Leadership at Robert Morris University in the US, said the leaders' summit comes at an important time.

"A multipolar world is inevitable. It would benefit the world if other nations or blocs were willing to acknowledge reality and end any commitments to undermining the trend of the times," Moretti said.

This year marks the launch of the China-Russia Years of Education, which is the 10th national theme year of the two countries.

On the same day, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun announced that, to continue facilitating personnel exchanges, China has decided to extend the visa-free policy to Russia until Dec 31, 2027.

Ilia Yampolsky, senior researcher at the Shemyakin and Ovchinnikov Institute of Bioorganic Chemistry of the Russian Academy of Sciences, said the visa-free policy has helped remove travel barriers for scholars and greatly facilitates the exchange of people and ideas.

Alexander Vladimirovich Pikover, senior researcher at the Institute of China and Contemporary Asia of the Russian Academy of Sciences, said, "Now more than ever, it is important for Russia and China to develop mutually enriching humanitarian, scientific and educational contacts and cooperation. It is here that the prospects and development paths will open up, giving hope to the very community with a shared future for humanity."

Yifan Xu in Washington, Liu Hongjie in Moscow, and Xinhua contributed to this story.

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Long-standing Sino-Pakistani relationship valued

By XU WEIWEI in Hong Kong
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As China and Pakistan marked the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties on Thursday, political leaders, diplomats and analysts in Pakistan have highlighted the long-standing, multifaceted Sino-Pakistani relationship, emphasizing its economic, social, cultural and diplomatic dimensions.

China's significant investments, particularly through the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, have not only transformed Pakistan's economy and boosted its infrastructure but also helped Pakistan make substantial strides toward sustainability and green energy, they said.

Pakistan and China established diplomatic relations in 1951, and their partnership has since expanded into multiple sectors, including trade, infrastructure, defense, and cultural exchanges.

On Thursday, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif sent a message on the 75th anniversary of ties with Beijing, saying that his nation "deeply appreciates" China's cooperation in "multifaceted fields".

The CPEC, as a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has made a tremendous contribution toward Pakistan's infrastructure development, energy security, industrial cooperation, and regional connectivity, said the prime minister.

On Wednesday, the Senate of Pakistan unanimously passed a resolution reaffirming Pakistan-China friendship on the occasion of the 75th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two nations.



Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan Jiang Zaidong (fourth from left) and Pakistan's Minister for Planning, Development and Special Initiatives Ahsan Iqbal (third from right) pose for a photo with Pakistanis who won the award for Outstanding Pakistani and Chinese Staff of CPEC Projects 2026 in Islamabad, on March 31. AHMAD KAMAL/XINHUA

The resolution was moved by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Mohammad Ishaq Dar, who described Pakistan-China ties as a model of mutual trust, respect and shared aspirations. He said the relationship has continued to strengthen over the past 75 years and remains a cornerstone of regional peace, stability and development.

Dar reaffirmed Pakistan's commitment to further expanding cooperation, while emphasizing the shared resolve of the two countries to carry forward their iron-clad friendship for future generations.

Zafar Uddin Mahmood, former special assistant to the prime minister of Pakistan, noted that Pakistan was the 17th country and the first Muslim nation to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China. Since the establishment of ties on May 21, 1951, the two countries have built a deep bond characterized as an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

The economic underpinning of the relationship evolved significantly, highlighted by the CPEC, which has driven major investments in infrastructure, energy and other projects, Mahmood said.

In the meantime, the acceleration of people-to-people connections, cultural and educational exchanges, scientific cooperation, frequent high-level visits, consensus and cooperation on major international issues and mutual support on core issues strongly bonded the countries, he said.

Shahid Khaqan Abbasi, a former prime minister of Pakistan, said implementing solar power, electric motorcycles and other electric vehicle projects with Chinese investment will help Pakistan reduce the amount of gas and diesel imported into the country while also cutting carbon emissions and greenhouse gas emissions.

Looking ahead, Mahmood told China Daily that facilitating more social contacts and exchanges, and promoting the study of the Chinese language and cultural understanding, are important for Pakistan. Meanwhile, the nation can learn from China's development and governance model to meet the challenges and move forward.

"China's development model for industrialization, poverty alleviation, education, health and other areas" is something that Pakistan can benefit from, he said.

Salman Bashir, a former foreign secretary of Pakistan, said the bonds of friendship between Pakistan and China are everlasting and each succeeding generation has contributed to making this relationship ever more special.

"It's good to see that the next generation is doing so well to give additional meaning to the relationship," he said. "This process of renewal is what makes the ties enduring. This process has continued over the ages and will continue."

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Deeper exchanges on human rights stressed

By ZHANG ZHOUXIANG in Paris
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The right to development and the relationship between national stability and the protection of human rights emerged as key themes of the 2026 China-Europe Seminar on Human Rights held in Paris on Thursday, where scholars and experts from China and Europe called for a more inclusive and development-oriented understanding of human rights amid growing uncertainty.

The seminar was launched in 2015 at the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, France. For a whole decade, it has brought together academics, diplomats and policy experts to discuss the challenges facing global human rights governance in an increasingly multipolar world.

Hussein Askary, vice-chairman of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden, said the right to development should be understood as a fundamental human right.

"Human beings must, first of all, have enough food, clothing, housing, healthcare and education. These are the basic rights people should enjoy," Askary said.

He argued that human rights should not be reduced to abstract political concepts detached from material conditions.

"Once people are educated and healthy, they become productive members of society," he said. "The highest level of human existence comes in the ability to practice our creative powers and contribute through science, culture and philosophy."

Askary also criticized what he described as double standards in Western human rights discourse, pointing to conflicts in Iraq, Libya and Gaza.

"Human rights can become less of a genuine universal principle and more of a geopolitical tool serving the interests of major powers," he said.

Adrian Severin, former deputy prime minister and foreign minister of Romania, stressed that effective human rights protection depends on the existence of a stable and functioning state.

"Individuals naturally seek freedoms and rights, but those rights can only become real if the state is strong enough to protect them," Severin said. "If the state and the community are weak, then individual rights also become weak, fragile and largely symbolic."

Historical traditions

He said human rights systems are shaped by each country's historical traditions and cultural foundations, and warned against imposing a single model on all societies.

Richard Trappl, former director of the Confucius Institute at the University of Vienna, also emphasized the importance of development and social cohesion in safeguarding human rights. "If a political system can provide people with development, stability and solidarity, then human rights are embedded within that system itself," he said.

Tian Feilong, vice-dean of the Law School of Minzu University of China, said both China and Europe have long histories of contributing to human civilization and global governance.

He said China-Europe human rights dialogue should move beyond ideological confrontation and help build "a new form of human rights" based on civilizational diversity, equality among nations and peaceful development.

Tang Jianjun, secretary-general of the China Society for Human Rights Studies, stressed the importance of China and Europe exchanging views on human rights at the seminar, expressing hope that it will play a bigger role in the future.

If China and the EU stick to equal dialogue, respect differences, and expand human rights cooperation, they can narrow disputes, strengthen cooperation, and support global human rights progress, the conference concluded.

Nature-based solutions key to cities: UN official

By EDITH MUTETHYA in Nairobi, Kenya
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Anaclaudia Rossbach, executive director of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, or UN-Habitat, says cities must place housing, resilient infrastructure and nature-based solutions at the center of urban planning to withstand growing climate threats such as floods, heat waves and droughts.

In an interview with China Daily on the sidelines of the 13th session of the World Urban Forum, or WUF13, being held in Baku, Azerbaijan, Rossbach said rapid and often unplanned urbanization is concentrating people and infrastructure in highly climate-vulnerable areas, exposing millions of residents, especially low-income communities, to escalating climate risks.

She said more than 1 billion people live in informal settlements, often located in flood-prone or environmentally fragile areas globally, while nearly 3 billion people face some form of housing inadequacy.

"Without stronger climate action, inequality and housing insecurity will only deepen," Rossbach said.

She stressed that urban planning must become more "housing-first and resilience-driven", aligned with the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

"This means investing in affordable, climate-smart housing with resilient building standards, passive cooling, water-resistant materials and secure tenure, while upgrading informal settlements," Rossbach said.

She said cities should address climate risks in informal settlements through community-centered upgrading rather than forced displacement.

Rossbach said that participatory risk mapping can help identify areas where relocation may be unavoidable, emphasizing that any resettlement must follow due process to protect livelihoods.

"When cities align housing, land management, infrastructure and social protection policies, they can reduce climate risks while keeping communities connected to jobs, schools and services," Rossbach said.

Looking ahead, Rossbach said a truly climate-smart city will balance lower emissions, stronger climate resilience and improved access to services, while ensuring better housing conditions for all residents.

The forum running through Friday, and themed "Housing the World: Safe and Resilient Cities and Communities", is the largest to date, attracting more than 40,000 participants from more than 180 countries.

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WORLD

Paths open for US-Iran pact despite strains

Regional mediation efforts gain fresh momentum as escalation risks loom

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

Iran said it has consistently honored its commitments, and all paths remain open to a diplomatic solution as the United States claimed it is in the "final stages" of securing a deal with Tehran, but the situation could also "escalate quickly".

Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian defended his country's strategy amid the ongoing war — triggered by the US and Israel attacks on Feb 28 — saying Tehran has "explored every avenue to avert war".

"All paths remain open from our side. Forcing Iran to surrender through coercion is nothing but an illusion. Mutual respect in diplomacy is far wiser, safer, and more sustainable than war," said Pezeshkian.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baqaei said in a televised interview on Wednesday that Iran and the US have been exchanging messages through Pakistan.

In the latest developments, Pakistan's army chief Asim Munir is said to be traveling to Tehran on Thursday, according to Iran's ISNA News Agency.

On Wednesday, Pakistan's Interior Minister Mohsin Naqvi traveled to Iran, marking his second trip to the country in a week.

"Many times, intermediary parties prefer to be present alongside the texts being exchanged and help with the process," Baqaei was quoted as saying by Iran's Nour News Agency. He said Iran is currently focused on "ending the war on all fronts, including Lebanon", while reiterating Tehran's long-standing demands.

Baqaei said that "our demands are clear", citing the release of Iran's blocked assets, issues related to US "maritime piracy", and harassment of Iran's shipping activities.

"We view the other side with intense suspicion and entirely based on our right to do so, because of their very bad record over the past year and a half," Baqaei was quoted as saying by Nour News Agency.

"At the same time, we are pursuing the discussions with full capability and complete goodwill," he added.

US President Donald Trump told reporters on Wednesday that the situation was "right on the borderline" and could escalate quickly.

He reiterated his determination not to allow Iran to acquire a nuclear weapon. "We're in the final stages of Iran (talks). We'll see what happens. Either (we) have a deal, or we're going to do some things that are a little bit nasty, but hopefully that won't happen," Trump told reporters.

Meanwhile, Saudi Arabia's Foreign Minister Prince Faisal bin Farhan said in a post on X that Riyadh appreciates Trump's willingness to find a diplomatic end to the war and also praised Pakistan's mediation efforts.

Faisal also said Saudi Arabia is looking forward to Iran seizing the opportunity to avoid the dangerous implications of escalation and urgently responding to efforts to advance negotiations toward a comprehensive agreement to achieve lasting peace in the region and the world.

Strategic miscalculation

Arhama Siddiqa, a research fellow at the Pakistan-based Institute of Strategic Studies Islamabad, told China Daily that the latest diplomatic activity suggests that Trump is seeking to contain the consequences of a war that increasingly appears to have been a strategic miscalculation.

"The decision to use force against Iran may have been intended to compel concessions, but it has instead increased regional instability, exposed Gulf energy and maritime vulnerabilities, and created diplomatic pressure on Washington to find an exit without appearing to retreat," said Siddiqa.

She said Pezeshkian's statement that Iran remains open to diplomacy is therefore "significant", as it gives the regional mediators a basis to press for a negotiated settlement.

Further, Siddiqa noted that Trump's claim shows that Washington is trying to preserve coercive leverage even as it explores de-escalation.

"The reported role of Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkiye, and Egypt in refining a proposal to bridge US-Iran differences indicates a wider regional consensus that prolonged conflict would damage regional stability, energy security, and trade routes," she said.

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Reduced to rubble



Lebanese civil defense workers search through the rubble in the southern Lebanese village of Deir Qanun al-Nahr on Wednesday, a day after Israeli strikes. Tuesday's Israeli airstrikes across southern Lebanon killed 19 people, the health ministry said, as Hezbollah reported clashes with Israeli troops despite a truce. ADRI SALIDO / GETTY IMAGES

Uganda's electric buses drive green shift

KAMPALA — On the busy streets of Kampala, Uganda's capital, a quiet transformation is unfolding. Sleek, locally manufactured electric buses are becoming part of the city's daily rhythm, marking the country's accelerating drive toward greener and more sustainable urban transport.

Since their introduction, the green-and-gray 40-seater electric buses have quickly drawn growing public attention. Equipped with onboard WiFi, they allow passengers to share photos and videos of their journeys on social media in real time.

Uganda's journey into electric mobility dates back to 2016, when it unveiled Africa's first solar-powered electric bus, the Kayoola electric vehicle, a name loosely translated as "mass carrier".

At the heart of this transition is Kiira Motors Corporation, or KMC, and its subsidiary E-Bus Xpress Kiira Ltd, which are spearheading efforts to scale up electric mobility across the country.

During a recent media tour of the company's production plant, managing director Ian Kyeyune said the number of buses operating on city routes is set to rise from 16 to 45 within a month.

He added that Uganda plans to produce more than 1,500 electric buses over the next year, forming part of a broader national e-mobility strategy targeting 15,000 electric vehicles by 2030.

To support the shift, city authorities are reshaping urban traffic management — removing roadside parking in downtown areas and introducing dedicated bus lanes, aimed at easing congestion and prioritizing public transport in a city long dominated by fuel-powered vehicles.



An engineer stands inside an electric bus at the Kiira Vehicle Plant in Jinja, eastern Uganda, on Monday. HAJARAH NALWADDA / XINHUA

The government is also expanding the sector through a campaign that encourages private participation. Under the initiative, transport operators can own buses, while investors may purchase seats for fixed periods under franchise arrangements.

KMC engineers say the electric buses offer clear economic advantages over diesel-powered alternatives, particularly in acquisition, servicing, and maintenance costs.

"We save over 60 percent of energy costs. While an ordinary taxi would spend 1,800 shillings ($0.48), we only spend 800 shillings on energy costs per kilometer," Kyeyune said.

He added that studies indicate operators can recover their investment within about three years, thanks to lower fuel expenses. The batteries can later be reused for applications such as solar energy storage.

Richard Madanda, KMC's director of production, said the batteries used in the buses, with an estimated lifespan of 12 years, are imported from China and that the company is working closely with Chinese partners to develop local technical expertise in electric vehicle technology.

"We are working with a partner from China because their auto industry, in terms of electric vehicles, is the best in the world. We want to learn from the best," Madanda said.

Uganda is also testing its electric mobility ambitions beyond its borders. Late last year, Uganda launched an African expedition featuring a locally manufactured electric bus that traveled 13,000 km across five African countries — Tanzania, Zambia, Botswana, Eswatini, and South Africa.

XINHUA

Indonesia steps up coal gasification amid fuel shocks

By **PRIME SARMIENTO** in Hong Kong and **LEONARDUS JEGHO** in Jakarta

As the Middle East crisis rattles global fuel markets, Indonesia needs to pull in more investments and technology transfers to accelerate a coal gasification program that can shield its economy from the import costs of volatile liquefied petroleum gas, or LPG, analysts said.

Indonesia is a net exporter of coal and one of Asia's largest coal consumers. Its vast coal resources enable it to produce higher-value products like dimethyl ether, or DME — a colorless gas synthesized from coal-derived methanol that can be used as an alternative to LPG, a widely used cooking fuel.

However, there is still no coal-to-DME project operating commercially in Indonesia due to high operating costs.

Ahmad Erani Yustika, secretary-general of Indonesia's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, said on Tuesday that the government is developing domestic energy sources to cut Indonesia's reliance on imported fuels and strengthen national energy independence.

Yustika said a coal gasification-based DME project remained under consideration for investment by Danantara, Indonesia's sovereign wealth fund.

Fahmy Radhi, a lecturer and energy economist at Gadjah Mada University in Yogyakarta, called for the government to issue policies to attract investors in the coal gasification industry. Radhi cited Indonesia's Domestic Market Obligation policy, which requires producers of coal and other resources to allocate a portion of their production for domestic use before exporting it.

He said a clear tax mechanism for coal exports is also needed to ensure a sufficient supply of coal for local needs.

Elias Ginting, chairman of the Association of Indonesia Coke Industry, said Indonesia can cooperate with China on coal downstreaming, such as converting coal into DME.

"We need innovation and technology, we need technology transfer. And at this time, the best of them come from China," Ginting told China Daily.

In March 2025, Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto met with the Task Force for Accelerating Downstreaming and National Energy Resilience to discuss the development of coal gasification projects on the islands of Sumatra and Borneo. By producing its own DME, Indonesia can cut its reliance on imported LPG. Indonesia imports over 7 million tons of LPG each year, about 20 percent of which is sourced from the Middle East.



Workers unload frozen fish at Juwana fishing port, as rising diesel prices leave many fishing boats docked, in Pati, Central Java Province, Indonesia, on May 8. WILLY KURNIAWAN / REUTERS

Tri Winarno, director general of Minerals and Coal at Indonesia's Ministry of Energy and Mineral Resources, said coal downstreaming is part of the country's strategy to develop local energy resources.

"Indonesia views the energy transition as needing to be carried out in a realistic, gradual, and just manner," Winarno said on May 11 during the opening of the Indonesia Coal and Energy Expo in Jakarta.

He said China is becoming increasingly central to Indonesia's downstream strategy.

Lei Huang, vice-president of China Coal Technology & Engineering Group, said at the expo that Indonesia "has a solid industrial foundation and huge development potential" as a major coal producer and exporter, and that there are opportunities to deepen China-Indonesia cooperation on coal downstream projects.

Promoting coal gasification, however, may not align with Indonesia's climate commitments. At the G20 Summit held in Brazil in November 2024, Prabowo announced that Indonesia will achieve net-zero emissions by 2050, phase out coal plants within the next 15 years and build 75 gigawatts of additional renewable energy.

But according to Putra Adhiguna, managing director of the Energy Shift Institute, an Australia-based energy finance think tank, climate mitigation measures such as carbon capture and storage may help reduce emissions, but they will also come at an extra cost. He added that DME is expensive to produce, casting doubt on the economic viability of such plants.

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China's UN envoy urges protection of civilians

By **MINLU ZHANG** in the United Nations
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China called for ceasefires, political dialogue and civilian protection during a UN Security Council annual debate on the protection of civilians on Wednesday, as the United Nations reported rising civilian deaths, displacement and attacks on hospitals in conflicts worldwide.

"Only by ending conflicts can civilians be fundamentally protected," Fu Cong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said while chairing the Security Council meeting on the protection of civilians in armed conflict.

On Iran, Fu said the conflict "has already caused serious losses to people across the region, including in Iran itself". He called on the parties concerned to respond to international appeals, reopen shipping routes, and safeguard the stability and smooth functioning of global industrial and supply chains.

Iranian state media IRNA said on Sunday that around 3,468 people were killed during the 40-day war with Israel and the United States, including 1,460 civilians.

On Gaza, Fu said it "should not remain a permanent battlefield" and called for "a comprehensive and lasting ceasefire" and expanded humanitarian access.

The UN secretary-general's annual report on the protection of civilians in armed conflict, circulated on May 7, recorded more than 37,000 civilian deaths across 20 armed conflicts last year, compared with 36,000 civilian deaths across 14 armed conflicts in 2024.

"Even war has rules," Fu said, calling for upholding international law and safeguarding the bottom line of civilian protection. He noted that methods of warfare "continue to break basic norms", with schools, hospitals and towns full of civilians becoming targets of military operations, while humanitarian workers, medical personnel and peacekeepers are subjected to attacks.

Humanitarian action

China, together with France, Brazil, Jordan, Kazakhstan, South Africa and the International Committee of the Red Cross, or ICRC, jointly launched the "International Humanitarian Law Initiative" in 2024.

The initiative aims "to renew firm commitment to international humanitarian law", the Chinese ambassador said, calling on more countries to join it.

Fu said China appreciates the contributions made by humanitarian organizations such as the ICRC, and called on the international community to "provide greater political and financial support for humanitarian action and ensure the safety and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance".

Fu also warned that the misuse of technologies such as artificial intelligence and drones was creating new risks for civilians in conflict zones.

China believes weapons systems using artificial intelligence "must remain under human control" and comply with international humanitarian law, he said.

Fu added that governments bear the primary responsibility for protecting civilians and cautioned against "external interference" and unilateral sanctions imposed without Security Council authorization, saying such measures weaken governance capacity and worsen civilian suffering.

Edem Wosornu of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs said one civilian was killed approximately every 14 minutes in armed conflicts in 2025, adding that the true toll was likely higher.

Violence against journalists and aid workers has also intensified, according to UN officials.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Passing on cultural heritage and tradition, pursuing cultural innovation and creativity

As China advances toward the goal of building a modern socialist country in all respects, culture is emerging not only as a new driver of economic growth and high-quality development, but also as a source of national confidence and social vitality.

The Forum on Building up China's Cultural Strength 2026, which opened in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Thursday reflects this broader shift. The forum focuses on passing on cultural heritage and tradition, and pursuing cultural innovation and creativity.

Coming at the start of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, the forum underscores the growing recognition that cultural prosperity, service-sector upgrading and innovation-driven development are becoming increasingly interconnected with the country's modernization.

China's per capita GDP surpassed the $10,000 threshold in the mid-2010s. Since then, cultural consumption has accelerated significantly. Official data show that domestic tourism trips in 2025 exceeded 6.5 billion, up more than 16 percent year-on-year, while tourism expenditure reached 6.3 trillion yuan ($875 billion), both record highs. Meanwhile, the value-added output of tourism and related industries accounted for about 4.35 percent of China's GDP.

The 15th Five-Year Plan treats culture as a horizontal policy instrument embedded across the broader economy. Through "culture plus industry" models, cultural resources are being integrated into manufacturing, tourism, urban renewal and technology development. Historical districts, heritage sites and museums are no longer viewed merely as preservation projects, but as economic zones capable of generating consumption, employment and innovation. This marks a structural shift from "culture as industry" toward "culture for economic transformation".

China's rapid expansion of public cultural services reflects this. By the end of 2025, the country had established more than 70,000 public libraries nationwide, while museums, reading spaces and digital cultural platforms have become increasingly accessible to ordinary citizens.

At the same time, digital technology is reshaping cultural creation and participation on an unprecedented scale. The integration of artificial intelligence, immersive technologies, digital publishing and short-video platforms is expected to become one of the core growth engines of China's cultural sector.

By lowering the production and distribution costs of cultural goods, digital platforms and AI technologies are accelerating cultural participation and human capital formation. Online literature, micro-dramas, interactive entertainment and AI-assisted content creation are expanding access to cultural products while creating new service-sector business models.

This transition is already visible across China's booming digital economy. Chinese online literature now has around 200 million active overseas users, while Chinese micro-drama applications have expanded into more than 160 countries and regions. Movie productions such as *Ne Zha 2* and the global popularity of Chinese short-video content demonstrate how the fusion of traditional culture and digital innovation is enhancing both economic value and the country's international cultural influence.

In knowledge-based economies, highly skilled talent gravitates toward cities and regions with strong cultural ecosystems, vibrant creative industries and high-quality public services. By leveraging cultural amenities to attract creative talent, China is strengthening the interaction between cultural vitality and innovation-driven growth.

Meanwhile, related efforts to build an independent Chinese knowledge system in philosophy and social sciences are becoming increasingly important as China seeks to provide intellectual frameworks rooted in its own development experience while contributing new perspectives to global governance, modernization and civilizational exchanges.

Culture carries the memory of a civilization, but it also shapes future productivity, creativity and social cohesion. As China moves toward the goal of becoming a cultural powerhouse by 2035, the interaction between cultural prosperity, technological innovation and service-sector transformation is likely to form a new virtuous cycle. Rising incomes stimulate cultural consumption, cultural participation strengthens human capital and creativity, and stronger innovation capacity in turn generates new momentum for high-quality development.

In that sense, culture is no longer merely a reflection of development. It is increasingly becoming one of its engines.

Restrictions serve no party's interest

In a recent interview, Christophe Fouquet, chief executive officer of ASML, compared US chip restrictions on China to cutting off food supplies in a desert. "If I put you in a desert and tell you that you're not going to have access to food anymore — how long does it take you to make your own garden?" he asked. "It's a matter of survival."

This analogy underscores a critical point: While the United States' escalating export controls might disrupt markets in the short term, they are also pushing China to accelerate its own innovation. This shift from a passive recipient of technology to a proactive innovator highlights China's resilience and determination in the face of the technological walls the US is trying to erect.

The global semiconductor industry is undergoing profound changes. The rise of artificial intelligence, 5G communications and autonomous driving has fueled a surge in demand for high-end chips. Market research suggests that by 2030, the global chip market could reach $1.5 trillion. In response to these trends, the US seeks to curb China's growth by restricting advanced semiconductors and fabrication equipment and urging its allies to do the same. However, such protectionist policies, shortsighted as they are, threaten global supply chain stability and may cause the US to miss out on key opportunities in the semiconductor sector.

As the world's two largest economies, cooperation and mutual benefit are the best choices for both China and the US, and attempts to use technological restrictions to halt China's innovation progress will lead nowhere.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) places technological innovation at the core of the national development strategy. The plan states that accelerating high-level technological self-reliance and self-improvement is the key to leading the development of new quality productive forces.

Through systematic measures such as enhancing original innovation, tackling core technologies and strengthening the role of enterprises, the plan presents a clear road map for China's technological progress.

Recent China-US economic and trade consultations in the Republic of Korea produced generally balanced and positive outcomes, as the two sides reached a consensus on major issues such as tariff arrangements, councils to manage trade and investment disputes, and agricultural trade, showcasing a spirit of mutually beneficial cooperation. This cooperation model, grounded in mutual respect, equality and reciprocity, is the rational way to handle trade and technology disputes between the two sides.

Both countries and the global tech industry have much to gain from their collaboration.

In particular, the two sides agreed in principle to discuss a framework for reciprocal tariff reductions on products of equal value under the trade council, with each side committing to $30 billion or more. This will help the two countries establish a stable trade framework. The agreements will bring greater certainty and stability to the next phase of China-US economic and trade relations, and to the global economy as well.

China is building a comprehensive innovation ecosystem, spanning from basic research to industrial applications. This enhancement in self-innovation capability serves as the best defense against technological blockades. Consequently, China is accelerating breakthroughs in several "choke point" technologies, ranging from lithography machines to AI chips.

Recently, China's three major telecom operators launched AI token packages, marking a new step in the country's AI development. This innovative model not only lowers the barriers to AI technology use, but also provides strong momentum for industrial upgrading. It has injected new vitality into global technological progress as well.

While US restrictions will continue to pose challenges, they also present incentives for China to innovate and thrive independently.

Yet the path forward lies in cooperation, not confrontation. By working together, China and the US can create a more stable and prosperous global tech landscape. But this requires dialogue, mutual understanding and a commitment to shared goals.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Bloc politics divorced from reality of alliance relations

Speaking at a forum hosted by the Center for American Progress on Tuesday, shortly after US President Donald Trump concluded his second visit to China in nine years, former US secretary of state Antony Blinken warned that the United States must rally allies into a broad coalition against China as it could not compete with China alone.

The irony was difficult to miss. Rather than reflecting on the failure of the policy he helped design, Blinken merely prescribed more of the same medicine: more alliance-building, more geopolitical mobilization and more zero-sum thinking.

That outlook is deeply rooted in the Cold War mentality that has long shaped sections of Washington's foreign policy establishment. For many in that circle, the US' triumph over the Soviet Union became not merely a historical episode but a permanent intellectual template. They continue to see international relations through the prism of ideological confrontation and strategic containment, believing any rising power must inevitably be treated as an adversary to be weakened and isolated.

However, the global economy is now profoundly interconnected and the challenges facing humanity — climate change, public health crises, energy security, technological governance and economic recovery — demand cooperation rather than bloc confrontation.

Despite the loud rhetoric about "small yard and high fences", trade between China and the US under the Joe Biden administration, for which Blinken served as the top diplomat, remained sizable. What emerged was not "decoupling", but selective restrictions in a handful of strategic sectors by the US alongside continued cooperation across much of the broader economy.

And even as Washington urged allies to reduce economic ties with China, it preserved its own extensive commercial relationship with the world's second-largest economy — a contradiction that did not go unnoticed by US partners.

Blinken's latest call for rebuilding the "united front" also conveniently overlooks the costs that US allies and partners were forced to bear under the previous administration's ill-advised policies. Washington repeatedly demanded strategic alignment against China while pursuing economic measures that primarily benefited the US.

The Inflation Reduction Act and the CHIPS and Science Act were promoted as pillars of industrial renewal, yet many US allies viewed them as unmistakably "America First" policies in new packaging. European governments openly criticized US subsidies and "Buy American" provisions that diverted investment away from Europe toward the US. Concerns spread from Paris to Berlin that Washington was effectively weaponizing economic policy against friends.

In other words, some allies increasingly felt they were being asked to provide the oil to keep the US' engine running while absorbing the economic losses themselves. This exposes the inherent weakness of Blinken's coalition logic. Partnerships cannot endure if they are built primarily around pressure, fear and asymmetric sacrifice, which the former US administration branded as a moral imperative. Nor can strategic stability emerge from attempts to divide the world into opposing camps.

The reality is that China is not an enemy. It is a major partner with which the US should learn to coexist. That is precisely why the new vision jointly advanced during Trump's visit to China last week — of building a constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability — deserves serious attention. It reflects valuable lessons drawn from decades of Sino-US engagement.

The "constructive strategic stability" is a positive stability with cooperation as the mainstay, a sound stability with moderate competition, a constant stability with manageable differences, and an enduring stability with promises of peace.

Those who still cling to outdated bloc politics should do their homework carefully. Until those like Blinken in Washington's policy circle step out of their "comfort zone", it will be difficult for US policymaking to shed the musty odor of the Cold War playbook.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Stable supply chains smooth economic circulation

Editor's note: *China released regulations for industry and supply chain security in April. China Economic Times spoke to Wei Jigang, a researcher at the Development Research Centre of the State Council, on the resilience and security of the country's supply chain system. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Supply chains represent a form of core competitiveness, reflecting a country's ability to coordinate production, match supply with demand, manage risks and improve efficiency. Supply chains have increasingly become a governance tool tied to industrial development, security guarantees and international cooperation.

Domestically, supply chains are critical to ensuring smooth economic circulation and unlocking the advantages of China's vast domestic market. Internationally, they are a strategic instrument for participating in global competition, expanding development space and safeguarding national interests.

For industries, they serve as the driving force behind technological upgrading and high-quality growth. From a security perspective, they protect against external shocks and ensure stability in critical sectors.

The development of high-quality industry chains requires coordinated efforts across strategic planning, technological innovation, digital transformation, security protection and ecosystem building.

First, China should strengthen its top-level institutional design and improve its strategic support systems. Supply chain development should be incorporated into national development plans, while cross-regional and cross-sector coordination mechanisms should be enhanced.

The legal and regulatory framework needs improvement. Greater support should be provided in finance, technology, talent and industrial policy to foster globally competitive leading enterprises as well as specialized and innovative small and medium-sized firms.

Second, China should focus on key sectors and strengthen both weak and competitive links. Tailored policies should be introduced for major industries such as manufacturing, energy, food security, information technology and transportation. For bottleneck technologies such as semiconductors, machine tools and critical components, resources should be concentrated on achieving technological breakthroughs and greater self-reliance.

Meanwhile, China should consolidate its advantages in areas such as new energy, 5G, high-speed rail and construction machinery to strengthen its position in the global industrial competition.

Third, digital and intelligent technologies should drive supply chain modernization. Under the national action plan for digital and intelligent supply chains, technologies such as big data, artificial intelligence, the internet of things and blockchain should be more deeply integrated into supply chain management.

Fourth, development and security must be advanced together. China should establish a multilevel supply chain security framework featuring risk monitoring, early-warning systems, stress testing and emergency response mechanisms for critical sectors.

Strategic reserves and emergency production capacity for key products should also be improved. In addition, legal and policy tools should be strengthened to address external risks and safeguard China's supply chain security against containment and disruption.

Finally, green and open development should remain central to the country's future supply chain strategy. China should accelerate the transition toward low-carbon supply chains by promoting green procurement, green manufacturing and environmentally friendly logistics systems.

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VIEWS

China and the World Roundtable | China-US Relations of Strategic Stability

Editor's Note: *The symposium on the Future of China-US Relations was conducted by China Daily's Opinion Channel, the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Chinese Association of American Studies on Thursday. Several experts from both China and the United States shared their views on the theme. Below are excerpts of their speeches.*

Sailing Sino-US relations with stabilizing levers



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Cooperation is the 'why not' moment for China and US



Siddharth Chatterjee is the CEO of Global Neighbours and former United Nations Resident Coordinator in China.

Today, we face five major challenges unprecedented in the postwar era.

First, the pandemic has exposed the fragility of human health and global health systems.

Second, we are grappling with a triple climate crisis: climate change, loss of biodiversity, and climate refugees.

Third, there are around 80 ongoing conflicts in the world. Fourth, 800 million people are suffering from hunger. Fifth, inequality is widening, whether it is digital, income or quality of life.

A mother in Beijing, Washington, Nairobi or Mali shares the same aspirations for her children: better education, improved nutrition and greater opportunities.

For the first time after World War II, over 170 million people have been displaced because of conflicts, climate change, poor governance, despondency, poverty and other factors.

Having served for 30 years in the United Nations, I firmly believe that the Global Development Initiative presents a massive opportunity for companies from the United States, China and Europe to come together and transform Africa.

The potential is boundless, and limited only by our imagination. Consider how Russia and the US collaborated on the vaccine that eradicated smallpox.

If scientists from the US, China, Germany, India, Russia and other countries work together, we could probably develop vaccines that can prevent future pandemics.

The Sino-US relationship, the most consequential relationship of the 21st century, has the capacity to manage these global challenges that affect everybody across the world.

I speak not as an American and not as a Chinese but as a global citizen with three decades in the UN.

If the US and China can collaborate on the Global Governance Initiative proposed by China at the Shanghai Cooperation Organization meeting last year, the potential is promising.

So why not? Why don't we see the Build Back Better Act of the US and the Global Development Initiative and Global Governance Initiative of China coming together for a transformative change?

To conclude with the remarks of George Bernard Shaw, who said: "You see things; and you say 'Why?' But I dream things that never were; and I say 'Why not?'"

This is the "why not" moment for China and the US.

Summit helps to strengthen responsible major-power relations



Fred Teng is the president of the America China Public Affairs Institute.

The May 14 Beijing meeting between the two heads of state represents a serious attempt to move China-US relations from confrontation management to strategic stability.

Confrontation can lead to uncertainties and severe repercussions, with farmers, students, researchers, manufacturers, and consumers all paying the price.

That is why this summit matters.

A "constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability" does not mean the two countries agree on everything — they clearly do not — but that they recognize that unmanaged rivalry is dangerous.

The goal is not to eliminate competition but to discipline it.

There are five important outcomes of the summit.

First, trade and tariffs. The reported extension of the tariff truce sends a direct signal to the markets. Politicized tariffs have become weapons triggering higher costs, disrupting supply chains and damaging confidence.

Easing tariffs, especially on agricultural products, supports US farmers, helps Chinese importers and consumers and reduces one of the most visible sources of economic friction.

Second, institutional mechanisms. The proposed economic, trade and investment review channels matter because they replace sudden escalation with structured negotiation.

A mechanism does not solve every dispute, but it creates space to talk before disputes become crises. That is how serious great-power relations must be managed.

Third, technology. This remains the hardest area.

High-end AI chips, advanced lithography machines, and military-related technologies might remain restricted.

But the reported easing of certain mid-range chips and equipment restrictions suggests a more practical distinction between strategic technology and normal commercial technology.

That distinction is essential to avoid a technological Cold War, from which neither country benefits.

Fourth, people-to-people exchanges. This may be the most overlooked achievement.

Visas, flights, students, scholars, businesspeople and tourists are not side issues.

They are the human foundation of the relationship. Restoring direct flights and longer-term visas is not symbolic but practical diplomacy to foster trust.

Fifth, crisis management. Restarting fentanyl-related law enforcement cooperation moves the issue from accusation to action.

Restoring military communication channels helps reduce the risk of miscalculation in the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait.

Hotlines are not signs of weakness but signs of strategic maturity.

Of course, this is not a full reset. But diplomacy should not be judged only by whether it solves everything.

It should also be judged by whether it prevents the worst outcomes.

The real choice before China and the US is not friendship or confrontation but managed competition or unmanaged rivalry.

If these understandings reached in Beijing are implemented seriously, this summit may mark an important step toward stability, predictability, and responsible major-power relations.

And in today's world, that is a major advance.

Beijing summit matters more than immediate headlines



Einar Tangen is a commentator on US current affairs.

For years, the dominant assumption surrounding US-China relations was that deterioration had become irreversible and the world's two largest economies were drifting toward a modern version of the Thucydides Trap, the historical pattern where rising and established powers slide into conflict.

Yet what unfolded in Beijing last week may force us to reconsider that assumption.

The easy interpretation is to dismiss the summit between the two heads of state as just optics: Washington received Boeing headlines and export announcements and Beijing gained goodwill while projecting confidence and stability.

But the reactions afterward suggest something more substantial may be emerging — the outline of a "grand bargain", a strategic understanding where both sides continue competing, but within mutually recognized limits designed to avoid systemic rupture.

The agreement to define a "constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability" reflects concepts that Beijing has pursued for years: managed competition, coexistence, and recognition that neither side can eliminate the other from the international system.

For China, stability is the prerequisite for peace and progress.

The appeal of a broader bargain also exists on the US side, especially for the Donald Trump administration.

A grand bargain with China offers it the ability to reframe its policy as the mechanism that produced peace and strategic advantage — reduced tensions between the world's two largest economies, expanded US exports to China, and stabilized global supply chains.

This explains why the Beijing summit may matter far more than the immediate headlines suggest.

The deeper issue is whether Washington and Beijing are beginning to accept a common reality — that neither side can achieve absolute dominance without imposing catastrophic costs on itself and the world; that China is not collapsing; and that the US remains indispensable to global finance, technology, consumption, and security architecture.

And most importantly, both countries now require stability more than escalation.

If Beijing and Washington are now exploring ways to manage global strain together rather than intensify it, historians may eventually look back at this summit very differently from the way contemporary commentators initially framed it.

Truly seismic shifts in geopolitics rarely announce themselves clearly and more often first appear as optics.

Peoples' bonds timeless pillar for Sino-US ties



Zhao Mei is a research fellow at the Institute of American Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

At an international symposium commemorating the victory in the World Anti-Fascist War late last year, I spoke about the Flying Tigers, General Joseph Stilwell, and the rescue of the Doolittle Raiders.

The United States moderator, with tears in her eyes, added that her father was one of the US pilots rescued by Chinese soldiers and civilians.

The attendees were deeply moved by this heartfelt bond between the Chinese and US people.

The friendship across the Pacific spans over two centuries.

In 1784, the US merchant ship Empress of China arrived in Guangzhou, initiating the first exchange.

In 1879, Ge Kunhua, a scholar from the late Qing Dynasty, taught the Chinese language at Harvard University.

In 1901, a Chinese laborer named Dean Lung donated $12,000 to support the establishment of East Asian Studies at Columbia University.

Among the Chinese students studying in the US, Zhou Peiyuan, Zhu Kezhen, Qian Xuesen, Qian Weichang, and Liang Sicheng made significant contributions to the development of science, education and culture in China.

Richard Sears, known as "Uncle Hanzi", founded the website named Chinese Etymology, which now features nearly 100,000 ancient Chinese character forms.

The website has ignited a passion for learning Chinese characters and culture among many foreigners.

Such "cultural ambassadors" have made significant contributions to enhancing mutual understanding and learning between the two civilizations.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the US, Sino-US relations have weathered twists and turns but have generally remained stable.

Throughout this period, people-to-people exchanges have been a crucial pillar supporting the steady development of the bilateral relationship.

However, since 2018, headwinds have emerged, causing more than 100 dialogue and exchange mechanisms to largely come to a halt.

The number of students studying in both countries has also declined.

In April 2024, a US newspaper warned that the decrease in US students in China could result in a lost generation of China experts in the US.

History shows that mutual engagement between the Chinese and US people has repeatedly helped the bilateral relationship overcome its low points.

In 1971, ping-pong diplomacy broke the ice of estrangement.

In 1979, Deng Xiaoping, then Chinese leader, attended a welcoming event hosted by the US side, where he warmly interacted with US children singing a Chinese song, an exchange that was met with applause and was hailed as an iconic moment in China-US relations.

Today, dialogue, exchanges, and cooperation continue to provide a steady stream of positive energy for deepening mutual understanding and promoting the healthy development of the bilateral relationship in a complex international landscape.

Scientific cooperation and educational exchanges mutually beneficial



Denis Simon is a senior research fellow at the Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft.

After the establishment of diplomatic relations in 1979, the United States and China built one of the world's largest bilateral scientific and educational relationships.

The 1979 US-China Science and Technology Cooperation Agreement became one of the most important scientific partnerships in modern history and provided the institutional foundation for decades of collaboration.

At the same time, educational exchanges exploded.

Hundreds of thousands of Chinese students studied in the US, while thousands of US students studied in China.

Joint research programs connected universities, laboratories, companies and government agencies.

This relationship accelerated China's modernization, strengthened US universities and research labs, increased scientific productivity globally, and created deep people-to-people ties between the two societies.

For nearly four decades, scientific collaboration and educational exchanges remained among the most stabilizing and constructive dimensions of the US-China relationship. The benefits were real and mutual.

Chinese students and scholars became deeply integrated into the US innovation system.

Many remained in the US and contributed significantly to the development of US universities, Silicon Valley, biotechnology, semiconductors and entrepreneurship.

At the same time, Chinese students returning home helped build China's research universities, technology sector, AI ecosystem, and industrial innovation capacity.

The relationship was never a one-way transfer of knowledge. Instead, it became an interdependent innovation ecosystem. However, since roughly the late 2010s, the relationship has shifted.

Mutual concerns of both countries have led to declining trust, reduced institutional cooperation, greater scrutiny of researchers and the fragmentation of global science networks.

Concerns emerged in Washington over issues such as intellectual property protection, technology transfer, export controls and dependency in critical technologies as policymakers concluded that advanced technologies could no longer be separated from national security considerations.

China, in turn, became concerned about technological containment, semiconductor restrictions, visa scrutiny, limitations on academic collaboration, and barriers to accessing US research ecosystems.

A realistic assessment suggests that the era of broad, optimistic engagement is over.

The future of US-China scientific relations is unlikely to return to the openness of the 1990s or 2000s.

But a complete scientific divorce is neither realistic nor desirable. It will be defined by how successfully the two countries manage a difficult coexistence.

I remain cautiously optimistic about the future. Strategic competition in science and technology may continue for years to come.

Yet history also shows that scientific collaboration and educational exchange can create channels of communication and reduce misperceptions even during periods of geopolitical rivalry.

The central challenge for both countries is whether they can protect legitimate national security interests while preserving enough openness to sustain innovation, academic inquiry, and global problem-solving.

The stakes are not simply bilateral but global.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

DARYL GUPPY

Unity or division

The APEC meeting in Suzhou is a key point to reaffirm multilateral rules prior to the leaders' meeting



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

The 32nd Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation trade ministers' meeting in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, convenes at a critical time when many businesses and organizations fear that the rules governing the global trading environment are fraying. The fears have been compounded by the unrest in the Strait of Hormuz, which has exposed the fragility of international rules and the vulnerability of global supply chains.



With its focus on major economic and trade issues in the Asia-Pacific, the meeting in Suzhou on Friday and Saturday is an important part of this year's APEC cooperation process and provides a platform for determined action to support the multilateral trading system based on the World Trade Organization rules.

The trade ministers' meeting aligns with the theme of the APEC "China Year", "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together", which emphasizes openness, innovation and cooperation.

According to China's Ministry of Commerce, the major focus of the APEC trade ministers' meeting in Suzhou is on strengthening regional cooperation amid slowing global growth and increasing trade uncertainty. Such regional cooperation can provide a counterbalance to the disruptions in the trade environment.

The Suzhou meeting is a key decision point, allowing the APEC middle powers and smaller economies in the Global South to focus on supporting the basis of international trade. Reaffirmation of a common unity and determined support for multilateral solutions in preference to unilateral action will send a message to those forces that are disrupting global trade. The proposals from the Suzhou meeting will help set the agenda for the future of trade relations within the APEC region.

The catalyst for distraction is the security of oil and product supply chains from the Middle East. Although the media focus is on oil supplies, the impact of the obstructions in the Strait of Hormuz is far more diverse, including disruptions to the supply of agricultural fertilizer, the feedstocks for the production of plastics and the specialist gases required for semiconductors and other industries.

These are important supplies whose disruption has the potential to trigger social dislocation, but it is important that they do not detract from the strategic issues that the APEC meeting in Suzhou also needs to consider. These include a cluster of trade development issues and the broader question of support for the international trade environment.

Li Chenggang, China's international trade representative with the Ministry of Commerce and vice-commerce minister, highlighted this strategic task when he noted that China will work with all APEC members to promote consensus on building an open and predictable regional and multilateral economic and trade order.

The emphasis on an "open, predictable and multilateral economic and trade order" provides the basic logic for the Suzhou meeting. Reaching consensus on this objective would further enhance the status of APEC.

Consensus would signal a commitment to supporting multilateral solutions and rejecting unilateral diktat. Such consensus would explicitly deny arbitrary orders or settlements imposed by a superior authority which are typically without negotiation or consent.

It is this multilateral framework that will enable and empower the trade ministers' discussions on deepening cooperation in emerging sectors including the digital economy, green development and supply-chain resilience. These objectives are only achievable by creating a more open, stable and predictable trade environment.

Support for these objectives is consistent with China's long-term support for the authority of the United Nations, as demonstrated by the four global initiatives that China has put forward.

These initiatives are designed to help reform the international governance systems and promote a community with a shared future. They address global challenges through cooperation, development, and enhanced multilateralism with the UN at the center. APEC is consistent with these proposals because it strengthens regional economic and trade cooperation amid slowing global growth and increasing trade uncertainty.

These global objectives can be placed within a regional context via the Suzhou meeting, which is expected to help push forward regional economic integration and reinforce support for the rules-based multilateral trading system.

In the fast-moving world of artificial intelligence, quantum computing and digital economy, it is essential that trade ministers consider ways to enhance digital cooperation, which goes hand-in-hand with the development of the green economy.

APEC has a record of introducing practical measures that boost economic productivity. The Suzhou meeting can consider policy proposals including the wider and coordinated use of electronic bills of lading and digital port networks. Standardization in these areas would improve port and trade efficiency with faster customs clearances and shipping processes.

Moreover, one of APEC's most important gatherings of the year can prove decisive by reaching a key consensus to observe multilateral unity and reject the path of balkanization and fragmented self-interest.

As a member economy of APEC, Australia places great importance on the stable and positive trade performance with other APEC economies. In 2024, bilateral trade in goods between China and Australia reached $211.27 billion, marking an 85.6 percent increase from 2015, and accounting for 24 percent of Australia's total foreign trade.

According to the "China Business Environment Brief" released by the China-Australia Chamber of Commerce, 70 percent of Australian companies view China as their top investment destination, with half planning to expand their presence there. China's vast market of 1.4 billion people, with a growing middle-income group, has a strong demand for high-quality Australian food, health products and services. This is a "big pond" that no forward-thinking business can afford to overlook.

The APEC trade ministers' meeting in Suzhou presents a fresh opportunity for China-Australia cooperation. In the future, there can be deeper collaboration in optimizing trade structures and promoting trade diversification, fully leveraging the APEC cooperation mechanism to inject lasting vitality into the economic prosperity and stability of the Asia-Pacific region.

The author is an international financial technical analysis expert and a former national board member at the Australia China Business Council. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

ZHANG YUN

Restorative process

APEC ministerial meeting can help revive confidence in regional economic integration and globalization



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The 32nd APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting takes place in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, on Friday and Saturday. It serves as a key preparatory session for the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, scheduled to be held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November. The meeting comes against the backdrop marked by last year's tariff war launched by the United States, and the US-Israeli war against Iran, which has produced intense shocks to energy markets and global supply chains.



The current international situation is arguably the most volatile and uncertain since the end of the Cold War. Regional conflicts and disputes are flaring up. Trade protectionism in the name of economic security is spreading. And confidence in the post-World War II multilateral global governance framework has been severely shaken.

In these times of compounding turmoil, Asia-Pacific economies need to return to APEC's founding mission and reaffirm their confidence in regional economic integration and globalization. As President Xi Jinping emphasized at the 2025 APEC meetings in Gyeongju, the Republic of Korea: "We should stay true to APEC's founding mission to promote economic growth and improve people's lives." As the world's second-largest economy, China is the top trading partner of nearly all APEC members. Its rapid development model illustrates how opening-up and shared growth with other economies can work. China has economic and trade ties with almost all countries and regions worldwide, pursuing equal and mutually beneficial development under World Trade Organization principles. It has achieved remarkable success through openness, inclusiveness and sharing.

China is willing to share its development opportunities with other countries. It is hosting the APEC meetings for the third time, which is testament to its commitment to development through opening-up and sends a strong message that it continues to uphold free trade and inclusive development.

This year also marks the start of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period. The country will make moves to expand its openness and strengthen its global economic connectivity. With high-quality development goals in place, China's market will expand in scale and improve in quality, offering a counterweight to the sluggish growth trend in international trade, especially for the Asia-Pacific region. China is the world's second-largest consumer market and import market, at nearly 50 trillion yuan ($7.35 trillion) and about 20 trillion yuan, respectively. Rising incomes, expanding demand and consumption upgrading will provide sustained momentum for regional economic integration.

As a major economic powerhouse, Jiangsu province has benefited from China's opening-up drive and its integration into the world economy. According to statistics from customs authorities, the province's foreign trade volume reached 5.95 trillion yuan in 2025, accounting for 13.1 percent of China's total. And in the first two months of this year alone, Suzhou's total imports and exports surged by 27.3 percent to 514.51 billion yuan, accounting for 6.7 percent of the national total and 49.8 percent of Jiangsu province's total. In short, Jiangsu province and Suzhou exemplify China's open economy and the country's steady push toward institutional opening-up and international cooperation in the new era.

The APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting in Suzhou can help channel positive energy into trade frictions management through equal consultation, and prevent normal economic activities from being overly politicized or securitized. In recent years, there have been growing claims that economic globalization and interdependence undermine national security and harm domestic economies. In the name of economic security, some economies have adopted various legislative measures and investment restrictions, leading to a decline in cross-border investment and rising risks facing industry and supply chains. These protectionist measures, in essence, reduce economic efficiency and dampen confidence in free trade and investment.

Yet the process of economic globalization will not be stopped, nor reversed. The current international economic turbulence reflects a deeper transition in global trade rules and order. As core stakeholders, Asia-Pacific economies must shoulder the responsibility of improving those rules and order. Just as in international politics, disputes and differences among countries are normal. Trade frictions and disputes are not inherently fearsome; the key lies in how they are handled. During complex transitions, destructive factors — such as erecting walls and barriers — are on the rise. But constructive forces are also at work, building consensus, strengthening connectivity, and countering fragmentation and bloc formation through integration. The former are driven by short-term self-interest; the latter are rooted in long-term strategic planning.

The APEC trade ministers' meeting in Suzhou can answer a long-term strategic question: What kind of trade and economic order should the Asia-Pacific region build? The Asia-Pacific economies vary greatly in size, systems, cultures and development levels. Their achievements in economic development and integration have been built on the principles of equality, inclusiveness and mutual benefit. In 2025, China initiated and promoted the establishment of the International Organization for Mediation in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, offering an Asia-Pacific solution and wisdom for resolving international trade disputes.

As the host of this year's APEC meetings, China will rally efforts toward the ambitious goal of building an Asia-Pacific community. Faced with rising protectionism, Asia-Pacific economies cannot afford to merely worry about the global outlook or retreat into self-protection. Instead, they must work to solidify consensus and prevent the region's trade order from sliding into the law of the jungle.

The theme for the APEC "China Year" is "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together". This is about answering the question of where the Asia-Pacific is heading. Setting the goal of building an Asia-Pacific community will provide clear direction and stability for regional development. As Foreign Minister Wang Yi stated at the APEC Senior Officials' Meeting in Guangzhou in February, "China will focus on the three priorities of openness, innovation and cooperation", and "we should reaffirm the original aspirations of Asia-Pacific cooperation, focus on the future of APEC and work toward a clear, substantive outcome document at this year's leaders' meeting", holding high "the banner of building an Asia-Pacific community, and exploring objectives and a road map for community-building in the period ahead".

The APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting in Suzhou and the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen will play a critical role in restoring confidence and effectively helping reform the multilateral trade governance system across the Asia-Pacific region and the wider international community.

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BUSINESS

Nation ramps up ultra-deep gas development

Domestic AI solutions help unlock reserves buried 4,500 m underground

By **ZHENG XIN**
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As global energy markets grow increasingly volatile, China is looking deeper underground to insulate its economic engine.

The ability to unlock massive, ultra-deep subterranean reserves is no longer just an engineering triumph, but has become a vital geopolitical shield, allowing the world's second-largest economy to steadily replace vulnerable foreign gas imports with a homegrown "ballast stone" of energy security.

At the heart of this strategic shift is the newly certified Ziyang Dongfeng shale gas field in the Sichuan Basin, China's first ultra-deep shale gas field of this scale.

Operated by State-owned energy giant China Petroleum and Chemical Corp, or Sinopec, the field passed the Ministry of Natural Resources' review on May 13 with proven geological reserves totaling 235.69 billion cubic meters.

Tapping into this immense energy reservoir pushed Chinese exploration into uncharted territory. The gas lies trapped within the Earth's oldest commercially discovered shale layer, formed over 540 million years ago. To extract these resources, engineers had to drill to punishing depths ranging from 4,500 to 5,200 meters, said Sinopec.

Operations at this subterranean level present world-class geological challenges, including complex accumulation mechanisms, thick and difficult-to-drill rock formations, and extreme high-temperature and high-pressure conditions, it said.

By integrating artificial intelligence into geophysical imaging and developing fully proprietary ultra-deep drilling and fracturing systems, domestic engineers successfully cracked these global bottlenecks to turn theoretical reserves into commercially viable yields.

Industry experts emphasize that unlocking these staggering reserves substantially elevates China's domestic natural gas self-sufficiency.

In an era marked by severe geopolitical unpredictability and sharp fluctuations in international oil and gas prices, heavy reliance on imported energy can expose a country to imported inflation and supply disruptions, said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

Tapping into domestic mega-reserves like Ziyang Dongfeng effectively cushions Chinese industrial supply chains and consumer markets from these external shocks. By lowering the nation's overall external dependence, the newly proven reserves act as a crucial stabilizing force, ensuring that energy supply remains uninterrupted despite global market turbulence, Lin added.

This achievement strongly aligns with the broader strategic framework outlined by the National Energy Administration.

For decades, China's fundamental resource endowment has been officially characterized by the NEA as being "rich in coal, poor in oil and short of gas". To bridge the domestic supply gap and enhance self-reliance, the NEA has systematically prioritized the exploration of unconventional oil and gas resources.

According to the NEA's ongoing assessments, as homegrown exploration technologies have matured over the past decade, shale gas has emerged as an indispensable pillar for the country's sustainable reserve growth.

Securing massive, stable domestic outputs is considered vital to accelerating China's broader green energy transition while maintaining economic stability, it said.

The NEA has consistently stressed that in the face of increasingly complex global geopolitical dynamics, national energy security must be anchored by robust, autonomous production capabilities.

Overcoming these ultra-deep hurdles provides a replicable technical pathway to expand China's development frontier. Moving forward, the accelerated capacity growth of the Ziyang Dongfeng field will ensure that China retains firm control over its energy destiny, reinforcing the nation's resilience amidst a complex and shifting global landscape, said Sinopec.



Consumers gather at a Mixue store in Bangkok, Thailand, on March 21. Mixue is a Chinese beverage brand. PATRICK CHENGZHI WANG / LIGHTROCKET VIA GETTY IMAGES

Beyond EVs, electronics, more Chinese brands surge across ASEAN markets

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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4,153
number of Mixue's overseas stores by April

Chinese consumer brands are rapidly expanding across Southeast Asia, moving beyond electronics and electric vehicles into sectors such as beauty, food service and home appliances, according to a report by Euromonitor International.

Its "Rise of Chinese Brands in Southeast Asia" report found that the ASEAN economies of Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam account for 95 percent of the region's $4 trillion GDP. The region has become the largest and fastest-growing export destination for Chinese goods.

In 2024, China's exports to Southeast Asia reached $587 billion, up 12 percent year-on-year. More than 70 percent of Chinese companies operating in ASEAN plan further expansion, citing strong performance and untapped consumer demand, said the China Council for the Promotion of International Trade.

With a population exceeding 650 million, 63 percent under 40 and a median age of 31, Southeast Asia's consumer market is thriving. This demographic fuels demand for e-commerce, livestreaming shopping, fintech solutions and affordable premium products.

Countries like Vietnam and Indonesia are outpacing China in GDP growth, offering Chinese brands a rapidly expanding consumer base with rising disposable incomes and accelerating urbanization, said the report.

Chinese companies have long dominated sectors such as EVs, consumer electronics and home appliances. In EVs, BYD is now the top brand in most Southeast Asian markets and the number-one car brand in Singapore, surpassing Toyota. In home appliances, Chinese brands' share of the air conditioner market rose from 9 percent in 2015 to 25 percent in 2024. Haier, Midea and Gree have become household names. In smartphones, Chinese brands' market share has increased from 21 percent in 2014 to over 60 percent today.

Now, Chinese companies are breaking into sectors once considered difficult for foreign entrants. In beauty and personal care, mass-market skincare brands achieved a 115 percent compound annual growth rate (CAGR) from 2019 to 2024. In the consumer food and beverage sector, chains such as Mixue, Luckin Coffee and Chagee are expanding aggressively. Mixue outlets grew 80 percent between 2019 and 2024, and by April 2026, Mixue had 4,153 overseas stores, while Chagee reached 262, said the China Chain Store and Franchise Association.

Nathanael Lim, APAC insight manager for beverages at Euromonitor International, said: "Chinese coffee and tea chains maintain consumer interest through relentless product innovation, often unveiling new menu items monthly. Significant investment in research and development and direct ingredient sourcing allows them to craft unique flavors that resonate with local palates."

Partnerships with local players are also central to expansion. In January, Eastroc Beverage signed a cooperation agreement with Indonesia's Salim Group to establish a joint venture, with investments of up to $200 million. Since 2021, Eastroc has exported products to 30 countries and regions.

Euromonitor said deep localization is key to Chinese brands' success, surpassing mere price competition. Many beauty and F&B companies register as local entities, adapt products for tropical climates and employ local teams for livestreaming and marketing activities.

"To move beyond transactional entry points, Chinese companies must transition from exporters to long-term ecosystem participants. Embedding within local value chains, adapting to cultural and economic contexts, and cultivating trust — through local manufacturing, customer service and community engagement — will be essential to sustaining growth," the report said.

China-Africa corridor enters new era of industrial, green cooperation

By **JIANG XUEQING**
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The China-Africa corridor is emerging as one of the world's most important economic partnerships as cooperation shifts beyond traditional resource trade toward industrial development, green investment and deeper supply-chain integration, business and financial leaders said at a forum in Beijing.

Speaking at the China-Africa Financial Bridges Forum 2026 on Wednesday, Youssef Rouissi, deputy CEO of Attijariwafa bank, said the bank recognized years ago that the China-Africa corridor would become "one of the defining economic realities of our era".

As Morocco's largest bank and one of Africa's leading financial groups, Attijariwafa bank is ready to serve as the financial bridge between China and Africa, he said.

Rouissi said China's decision to implement zero tariffs for 53 African countries with diplomatic ties to China, effective May 1, signals a long-term strategic commitment rather than simply a trade measure.

"It is the clearest signal that China sees Africa not as a supplier of raw materials, but as a partner in a shared economic future," he said, adding that the policy is expected to create new momentum for trade finance and improve the competitiveness of African industries and small businesses.

> "It is the clearest signal that China sees Africa not as a supplier of raw materials, but as a partner in a shared economic future."
>
> **Youssef Rouissi,** deputy CEO of Attijariwafa bank

Bill Feng, APAC regional contributor relations senior manager at London Stock Exchange Group, said China-Africa cooperation is increasingly focused on balanced trade and industrial collaboration. He noted that the zero-tariff policy will not only encourage African exports to China, but also help retain more processing, manufacturing and value-added activities within Africa.

Feng said Chinese companies' acquisitions and investments in African industrial assets have become a new driver of bilateral economic and trade cooperation, particularly in resources, energy and power sectors. Over the past five years, Chinese companies' mergers and acquisitions in Africa have highlighted three major trends: a growing focus on new energy resources and critical minerals such as lithium and gold; expansion of the building materials sector to support infrastructure, urbanization and industrial parks; and a shift from simple trade procurement toward deeper participation in local assets and industrial development.

"Africa is becoming one of the centers of global supply-chain restructuring, competition for critical minerals, green transition and infrastructure financing," Feng said. "The next stage of China-Africa cooperation will focus not only on infrastructure connectivity, but also on green development, industrial-chain integration and the co-creation of long-term value."

Lyu Xiaohui, vice-president of the China-Africa Development Fund, said Africa's demand for sustainable, high-quality and green investment is both urgent and far greater than previously expected.

"In the past, we thought Africa's greatest needs were infrastructure such as transportation and electricity. In fact, we have found that what Africa urgently needs is local processing capacity, the establishment of local industrial chains and the development of self-sustaining capabilities. There is a pressing need to implement green energy, high-end manufacturing and industrial cooperation in Africa," Lyu said.

He added that the strengths China has developed through its modernization and industrialization over the years align closely with Africa's needs, creating strong long-term opportunities for both sides.



Youssef Rouissi, deputy CEO of Attijariwafa bank, speaks at the China-Africa Financial Bridges Forum 2026 in Beijing on Wednesday. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Rouissi highlighted Morocco's role as a manufacturing and logistics hub, particularly in the electric vehicle and renewable energy sectors.

"We are seeing more industrial projects entering Morocco, with Chinese investors leveraging the country's strategic position as a gateway for global trade and investment, particularly through its logistics network and access to European markets," he said.

Rouissi also emphasized the growing importance of technology, innovation and services in Africa, noting that startups and fintech companies are flourishing across the continent, creating significant opportunities for Chinese companies to invest and expand.

Attijariwafa bank serves more than 12 million clients through a network of over 8,000 branches. The bank has established a strong presence in North, West and Central Africa, where it is enhancing partnerships and synergies with Chinese financial institutions to help provide Chinese investors and banks with a stronger local presence, he said.

Quectel sues US DoD over blacklisting

By **CHENG YU**
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Chinese wireless communications module maker Quectel Wireless Solutions sued the US Department of Defense recently after Washington placed the company on a blacklist of firms allegedly linked to China's military.

"Quectel has always operated with integrity, transparency and full compliance with the laws and regulations of every jurisdiction in which we do business," the company said in a statement, strongly denying any ties to the Chinese military.

The lawsuit challenges the Pentagon's January decision to add Quectel to a list of so-called Chinese military companies. Quectel is one of the world's largest suppliers of wireless communication modules used in IoT (the internet of things) devices, ranging from smart cars and industrial equipment to logistics systems and consumer electronics.

The Pentagon has increasingly expanded its blacklist of Chinese technology firms in recent years as Washington seeks to curb Beijing's rise in technology. The latest list of Chinese companies, mandated under US law as the "Section 1260H list", designated 134 companies, including chipmaker ChangXin Memory Technologies, Quectel Wireless Solutions and drone maker Autel Robotics.

In fact, the move came just weeks after the Pentagon removed two companies, including Advanced Micro-Fabrication Equipment Inc China, a leading Chinese chip equipment manufacturer, from the blacklist.

> "Their goals have been unmasked, that is, to suppress emerging Chinese companies and industries and curb China's tech rise at minimal cost."
>
> **Tu Xinquan,** dean of the University of International Business and Economics' China Institute for WTO Studies

AMEC, which said it has never been involved in military activities, filed a federal lawsuit against the decision in August. The court ruled in December that there was "insufficient evidence" to justify the decision.

In 2021, Chinese smartphone maker Xiaomi filed a lawsuit against the US DoD over the same blacklist. Four months later, Xiaomi was removed from the list.

Last year, the Pentagon also removed six companies it said no longer met the requirements for the designation, including artificial intelligence company Beijing Megvii Technology, China Railway Construction Corp, China State Construction Group and China Telecommunications.

Tu Xinquan, dean of the University of International Business and Economics' China Institute for WTO Studies, said that US suppression has become increasingly unreasonable and lacks legitimacy.

"Their goals have been unmasked, that is, to suppress emerging Chinese companies and industries and curb China's tech rise at minimal cost," Tu said.

"However, the more Washington escalates its measures against China, the less effective these measures prove to be, and the more they reveal their underlying fears," he said.

Brian Tycangco, an editor and analyst at Stansberry Research, posted on social media platform X, "It's turning out that if you're an innovative Chinese business making money, you're likely to be considered a threat to US national security."

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BUSINESS



A staff member (right) promotes Wonderful Pistachios at an event in Daly City, California, on Feb 7. ALEXANDER TAMARGO / GETTY IMAGES

Growing demand for US pistachios

Country imported fruits, nuts worth $5.88 bln in first four months of 2026

By **ZHONG NAN**
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Driven by rising demand for healthy snacks among Chinese consumers, nut growers in California, the United States, are expected to export 111,000 metric tons of pistachios to China in the 2026 crop year (Sept 1, 2026 to Aug 31, 2027), according to a major US industry player.

Wonderful Pistachios and Almonds LLC, or Wonderful Pistachios, the largest pistachio producer by production volume and sales revenue in the US, projected that total California pistachio shipments to China by the company and other growers could reach 110,000 tons in the 2025 crop year (Sept 1, 2025 to Aug 31, 2026), up 3.8 percent from 106,000 tons in the previous crop year.

Anita Lam, managing director for China and chief representative for Asia Pacific at Wonderful Pistachios, said the industry remains confident about the long-term growth potential for Californian pistachios in the Chinese market, and her company will continue leveraging its vertically integrated supply chain and longstanding operations to deepen its presence in the country.

Lam said the Los Angeles-based company is well-positioned to meet growing demand from the Chinese market, backed by more than 500,000 acres (202,300 hectares) of pistachio orchards in California and over $1 billion invested in next-generation processing facilities, while pistachio acreage in the state continues to expand at an annual rate of 6 to 10 percent.

Having cultivated the Chinese market for nearly two decades, Wonderful Pistachios has developed strong local expertise. Its local team closely tracks consumer preferences, allowing it to tailor products and marketing strategies to evolving demand, particularly as consumption shifts beyond major cities.

To create new channels for foreign products entering the Chinese market, the Ministry of Commerce launched the "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative in November, a move business experts said underscores China's commitment to further unilateral opening-up and consumption upgrading.

Against this backdrop, Lam said opportunities are expanding as health awareness spreads from top- and second-tier cities to lower-tier markets. Younger consumers, in particular, are showing a growing appetite for nutritious snacks, with pistachios gaining traction due to their high protein and dietary fiber content.

"At the same time, digital platforms such as Douyin and WeChat are accelerating the shift from seasonal gifting to everyday consumption," said Lam, adding that through short videos and collaborations with key opinion leaders, pistachios are increasingly positioned as snacks for fitness, office breaks and outdoor activities.

She said younger consumers' rapidly evolving tastes and growing expectations for interactive brand engagement are pushing companies to innovate in marketing formats and pursue more cross-industry collaborations.

According to the outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development, China will strengthen coordination between imports and exports, place equal emphasis on trade in goods and services, and better integrate efforts to attract foreign investment and promote outbound investment.

"We will deepen cooperation with industry partners in China by ensuring stable supply, promoting diversified applications and jointly building a stronger ecosystem for category growth," said Lam.

China imported fruits and nuts worth $5.88 billion in the first four months of 2026, up 0.1 percent year-on-year, said the General Administration of Customs.

Sino-Russian trade riding cross-border trains

By **REN QI**
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From Manzhouli Port in North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region to Russia's Zabaykalsky Krai and Irkutsk Oblast, bustling cross-border trains and a steady two-way flow of tourists highlight thriving industrial cooperation in grain processing, timber production and cultural tourism, serving as a vivid microcosm of upgraded and more efficient bilateral economic ties.

In the workshop of Manzhouli Xinfeng Grain and Oil Industrial Limited Company, the aroma of raw grain fills the air as fully automated production lines operate smoothly. Flaxseeds and oats from Russia undergo hulling, pressing and grinding, transforming into high-quality edible oils and premium coarse cereals before being dispatched across China.

"Following the closed-customs operation of the China-Russia Border Residents' Mutual Trade Zone at Manzhouli railway port in 2024, our 'mutual trade plus' import model has significantly reduced raw material costs and notably boosted profits," said Yang Zhihong, the company's deputy general manager. In 2025, the enterprise's agricultural imports from Russia surged to 19,000 metric tons from about 7,400 tons.

"Border residents enjoy a daily tax-free mutual trade quota of 8,000 yuan ($1,176), and enterprises purchase these imported agricultural products through cooperatives, which lowers procurement costs and provides locals with doorstep income," said Pei Xintong from the zone's economic development bureau.



People learn about Russian handicrafts during a cultural exchange event in Manzhouli, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on Dec 20. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

This trade relies on Russian hubs like the Zabaykalsk grain terminal. As a flagship facility of the Sino-Russian New Land Grain Corridor, it features dual-gauge railways for efficient transfer and dispatch.

Chinese enterprises have formed a complete chain of overseas planting, cross-border logistics, and domestic processing and distribution. Alexander Osipov, governor of Russia's Zabaykalsky Krai, highlighted broad prospects for supplying organic agricultural products to China.

At Manzhouli Tianwang Wood, the sound of sawing echoes as imported Russian timber is cut, polished and assembled into various solid structures.

General Manager Wang Wei recounted the company's evolution from a small workshop in 2010 to a 47,000-square-meter facility with over 60 employees, producing cabins, biomass pellets and solid wood flooring. Recently, the company opened new avenues through livestreaming and customized tourism products.

Forestry is a pillar industry in Russia's Khabarovsk and Zabaykalsky Krais. Welcoming Chinese joint ventures in timber harvesting and processing, Osipov said Zabaykalsky is a major timber supplier to China.

"We use high-quality Russian timber to build zero-formaldehyde solid wood cabins," Wang said. Targeting ecological tourism, the company partners with herdsmen to build tourist spots, integrating timber processing with cultural tourism.

This cooperation has formed an industrial cluster in Manzhouli integrating imports, processing, manufacturing and sales, achieving a multiplication of timber value.

The mutual visa-exemption policy has invigorated cross-border tourism. Inner Mongolia's Hulunbuir, bordering Zabaykalsky Krai, launched a "Tracing the Great Tea Road" route in May 2025, while study tours and activities like the "China-Russia Friendship, Argun Journey" have become prominent calling cards for cultural exchanges.

Russian resources are equally attractive, said Igor Kobzev, governor of Irkutsk Oblast, adding that nearly 40,000 Chinese citizens visited last year. In 2026, the Russian federal government approved a tourism and recreation special economic zone in Baikalsk, offering settled enterprises preferential tax and infrastructure policies.

To attract Chinese tourists, restaurants in Chita and Irkutsk offer Taiga forest and Siberian cuisines, while some mining enterprises have launched industrial tourism featuring factory tours and shopping.

Mineral cooperation remains a crucial direction for industrial integration. Kobzev said resource-rich Irkutsk seeks Chinese partners to jointly develop resources and advance high-end manufacturing, adding that exports of edible oils and mineral water to China will also be expanded to broaden cooperation.

Magnum pins growth on Chinese cravings for sweet indulgence

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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At a sprawling factory in Taicang, Jiangsu province, Peter ter Kulve, CEO of The Magnum Ice Cream Company, watched as a robot dog patrolled the factory complex. Nicknamed *Ne Zha*, the robot conducts 24/7 safety inspections — monitoring temperatures, checking compressor systems and feeding real-time data to the team.

"I want that dog everywhere," he joked.

This mix of cutting-edge automation reflects TMICC's broader strategy. "We have created a business that is very much China for China. But when it comes to technology and innovation, we now take a lot of innovations from here to the rest of the world," ter Kulve said.



> "Everyone can afford a little happiness. Our job is to make life taste better with ice cream — making these brands exciting through joy, entertainment and a touch of luxury."
>
> **Peter ter Kulve,** CEO of The Magnum Ice Cream Company

While products are tailored to Chinese tastes, the technological advances — like artificial intelligence-driven production — are shared with TMICC operations worldwide.

For ter Kulve — who first arrived in China in 1982 and later led Wall's China from 1999 — the encounter with *Ne Zha* symbolized the dramatic transformation sweeping the country's supply chains. On a recent two-week trip, he observed firsthand how AI, robotics and automation are reshaping production, logistics and retail operations.

Leveraging technology and innovation is key to balancing high quality with affordability, particularly for a leading ice cream company like TMICC, he said. Precision manufacturing has also helped narrow the price gap with local competitors by minimizing waste and optimizing ingredient usage. For example, innovative products such as the Cornetto seven-layer ice cream stick now retail for just six yuan ($0.88).

Yet, the transformation isn't just technological. Chinese consumers themselves have evolved. "People used to want something cheap and large or foreign," he recalled of 25 years ago. "Now, they are sophisticated, discerning and exposed to the best from around the world. Yet, they also want the best to be Chinese."

TMICC has embraced this shift. China remains a strategic market for the company. Since being demerged from Unilever in 2025 and its subsequent global listing, TMICC has operated as a standalone company, positioning China as a key hub. Earlier this year, its Asia headquarters officially opened in Shanghai, signaling a deepened commitment to the market.

The company's numbers back up this strategy. TMICC holds a 21 percent share of the global retail ice cream market and manages four of the five largest global ice cream brands, including Wall's, Magnum, Cornetto and Ben & Jerry's. In China alone, nearly 30 new products have been launched this year, driving high-single-digit growth in the first quarter of 2026.

Ter Kulve attributes the company's success in China to a mix of high-quality production, strong local management, premium branding and relentless innovation — a formula that ensures sustainable growth.

Despite per capita consumption of ice cream being lower than the global average, competition in China remains fierce. Euromonitor reports that in 2025, Yili led the market, TMICC was among the top five players along with Mengniu, General Mills and Deshi China. Meanwhile, snack and beverage companies are entering the ice cream category, adding pressure with offerings ranging from high-end to budget-friendly products.

To stay ahead, TMICC's China unit has announced plans for this year, including expanding freezer deployment, accelerating local innovation through the China research and development center, investing in digital marketing and advancing supply chain digitization.

Globally, the ice cream market grows 3-4 percent annually, one of the fastest-growing consumer categories. The trend, however, is shifting: consumers are increasingly favoring smaller, premium products with superior ingredients, flavors and health benefits. Magnum aims to lead this transformation, using China as both a testing ground and a launchpad for global innovation.

The CEO highlighted the entertainment side of the ice cream business over mere convenience. "Online offers convenience, but it can't replicate the joy of experiencing ice cream in person," he said. Pop-up stores, influencer events and sampling campaigns are becoming integral to the ice cream shopping experience.

For example, from April 30 to May 10, the company launched the Magnum pleasure store pop-up in Hangzhou's iconic West Lake, attracting large crowds and becoming one of the city's standout summer lifestyle destinations. Visitors could co-craft their own limited-edition Magnum ice creams and beverages.

For ter Kulve, ice cream is more than a product — it's a cultural statement. "Ice cream is fashion — it's the 'lipstick' of the food world. Everyone can afford a little happiness," he said. "Our job is to make life taste better with ice cream — making these brands exciting through joy, entertainment and a touch of luxury."



A boy enjoys ice cream at a Magnum pop-up store on Hubin commercial street in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on May 4. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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CHINA

China bucks global trend, curbs dengue

Country willing to share effective and low-cost strategies with intl partners

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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China has successfully curbed the domestic spread of dengue fever despite rising global infection rates, and the country stands ready to work with international partners to share effective, low-cost control strategies and technologies with regions in need, a senior health official said this week.

Dengue fever has spread rapidly in recent years and is now endemic in more than 100 countries. The number of global infections surged to a record high of 14.4 million in 2024 and remained at elevated levels in 2025, according to data shared on Monday at an event on the sidelines of the World Health Assembly in Geneva, Switzerland, which concludes on Saturday.

Shen Hongbing, vice-minister of the National Health Commission and administrator of the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration, said local outbreaks in China are usually triggered by imported cases.

"In 2025, even as imported cases rose by 89 percent, locally transmitted outbreaks fell by 65 percent compared with the previous year — a notable achievement in disease control," Shen, who is also deputy head of the Chinese delegation to the assembly, said at the event hosted by the GX Foundation, a Hong Kong-based NGO.

At the heart of the nation's effective disease control efforts are comprehensive strategies that include government leadership, intensified surveillance, vector surveillance and control, prompt outbreak responses and growing public health awareness, he said.

Shen said that since 2005, China has established special dengue control funds and steadily increased investment over the years.

To strengthen surveillance and early warning, authorities have established mechanisms for public health cooperation and cross-border coordination at ports and border areas. Intelligent software has also been deployed at medical institutions to facilitate syndromic surveillance and active case finding.

Efforts have also been made to deepen the integration of climate monitoring with disease early warning systems to predict epidemic trends and upgrade prevention measures in advance.

Because dengue fever is transmitted to humans through the bites of infected mosquitoes, China has established a national surveillance network on the ecology, pathogens and insecticide resistance of mosquito vectors. The country has also carried out environmental management to reduce mosquito density and applied automated, digital, intelligent and other novel technologies.

In response to local outbreaks, measures such as designating risk zones, intensifying vector control, activating emergency surveillance and risk assessments, and enhancing treatment and isolation management are being implemented to curb further spread of the viral disease, Shen said.

The country also provides public health education to improve awareness of the disease and preventive measures. Inbound and outbound travelers are encouraged to voluntarily report symptoms and adopt personal protective measures.

On global cooperation, Shen said China has held an international conference on sustainable management of vector insects for 10 consecutive years and offered training to professionals from around the world, demonstrating the nation's commitment to building a global community of health for all.

"Looking ahead, China will continue to strengthen dengue prevention and control under the coordination of the World Health Organization and support GX Foundation and other nongovernmental actors in playing their role," he said.

Shen added that through communication and exchanges, it is hoped that effective prevention and control experience, as well as efficient and low-cost technologies, will benefit more regions and contribute to building a global community of health for all.

In April, the GX Foundation released a consensus statement on the physical control of dengue fever, introducing a Chinese solution that uses tools such as mosquito lamps, bed nets and sticky fly traps to curb the spread of the viral disease.

Shen said the strategy introduces convenient and safe control measures and is particularly valuable in endemic areas with limited resources.

Arthur Li Kwok-cheung, a member of the Executive Council of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and a board member of the GX Foundation, said during the side event that the strategy has proved sustainable, well accepted by communities and environmentally friendly. It has already yielded tangible results in Timor-Leste and Honduras.

He added that the strategy is now being promoted further in Cambodia and Vanuatu. The foundation plans to further upgrade mosquito lamps and other devices based on practical needs, promote solar-powered and intelligent systems, enhance the accuracy of rapid test kits, and deepen supply chain cooperation.

Revving up trade



Visitors view a replica of the champion ZXMOTO 820RR-RS bike from the Superbike World Championship at the Eighth Western China International Fair for Investment and Trade that opened in Chongqing on Thursday. The fair highlights the participation of nearly 1,400 enterprises from 50 countries and regions.
HE PENGLEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Bilateral concert



Chinese and Russian musicians perform the accordion duet *Tango pour Claude* accompanied by the Central Conservatory of Music symphony orchestra during the opening concert of the China-Russia art education exchange series, part of the China-Russia Years of Education (2026-27), in Beijing on Thursday evening.
ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Young Russian builds biz bridges in Xi'an

By **REN QI**
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Every year, more than 1.5 million Russians cross the border into China, a country they see as full of opportunities. More than 50,000 Russians have already settled across the nation.

From the chilly province of Heilongjiang to the tropical island of Hainan, from the bustling metropolis of Shanghai to the historic capital of Beijing, an increasing number of Russians are quietly blending into China's urban landscape.

Among them is Anna Samodolova, a 27-year-old Russian entrepreneur who is determined to stay in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, and continue developing her startup.

"Currently, my career in China is very important to me. Starting a business in China has made me more independent and confident," she told Chinese media.

While at university, Samodolova noticed China's rapid economic development and abundant entrepreneurial opportunities, prompting her to choose Chinese as her second foreign language. In 2019, she came to China for the first time to study Chinese for a semester at Heilongjiang International University.

"From the airport to the city, everything was very clean and highly modern," she said. "China was completely different from what I had imagined before."

In 2022, carrying her dreams with her, Samodolova returned to China to pursue a master's degree at Xi'an Jiaotong University. After graduation, she decided to stay in Xi'an and start her own business, registering a consulting company aimed at building a bridge for cultural and people-to-people exchanges between China and Russia.

"Xi'an is an international tourist city and an important node city of the Belt and Road Initiative. There are many foreigners and abundant opportunities here," she said.

Her first project involved facilitating business cooperation between a Moscow ice cream manufacturer and three Chinese enterprises. Taking charge of a large-scale business negotiation for the first time, she made extensive preparations in advance, helping arrange meetings between the Moscow manufacturer and the three Chinese companies in one day.

"The Chinese companies needed localized flavors, while the Moscow manufacturer had cost considerations, so a deal was ultimately not reached," Samodolova said. "But this experience made me realize that I was somewhat reserved in social interactions and lacked certain language and business etiquette skills."

To improve communication with Chinese and foreign business people, she began studying business Chinese and Chinese etiquette online.

In August 2024, a Russian producer approached her for help in arranging performances in China for the Russian band Garage Dayz. Although unfamiliar with Xi'an's performing arts market, Samodolova immersed herself in finding venues, connecting with Chinese performance companies and applying for performance permits.

Thanks to her meticulous work, Garage Dayz successfully performed in Xi'an in April this year.

Having lived in China for more than three years, Samodolova said she has quickly integrated into local life and become more mature and confident. On Sept 23, she attended the "2025 Euro-Asia Youth Elite Dialogue" during the Euro-Asia Economic Forum in Xi'an, where she delivered a speech highlighting the opportunities created by China's rapidly developing digital economy.

"In China, the rapid development of technologies such as AI and mobile payments has made Sino-foreign cooperation much more convenient," she said in her speech.

Living in the ancient capital of Xi'an, Samodolova has also developed a deep appreciation for local cuisine and intangible cultural heritage.

Inspired by her daughter, Samodolova's mother has also begun learning Chinese online. The pair now greet each other in Chinese during phone calls.

As exchanges between China and Russia become increasingly convenient, Samodolova's business projects have continued to grow.

Guideline calls for human-centric AI

By **JIANG CHENGLONG** in Beijing and **SHI RUIPENG** in Nanning

China has released a technical guideline on the ethics and safety of artificial intelligence applications, offering a Chinese approach that emphasizes human-centered development, AI for good, and human leadership over AI systems.

The document, titled "Ethics-Safety Guidelines for Artificial Intelligence Applications 1.0", was released on Tuesday at a subforum of the 2026 China Internet Civilization Conference in Nanning, capital of the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region.

Issued by the National Technical Committee 260 on Cybersecurity, China's key body responsible for cybersecurity standardization, the guideline is described as a "principle-based and reference technical document". It covers AI application development, service provision and use, and provides guidance for organizations and individuals carrying out AI-related activities.

The document was drafted by leading Chinese institutions and companies, including Tsinghua University, the China Electronics Standardization Institute, technology giants Alibaba Group and Huawei Technologies, and DeepSeek, a well-known AI enterprise.

It outlines major principles including reasonable risk control, openness and transparency, privacy and security protection, controllability and trustworthiness, agile co-governance, and inclusive sharing.

Fan Kefeng, vice-president of the China Electronics Standardization Institute, said AI applications are expanding from content generation to assisted decision-making, interactive control and other fields. With the emergence of new forms such as intelligent agents and integrated AI systems, AI applications are becoming increasingly autonomous, complex and influential, he said.

"While improving production efficiency, AI has also made ethical and safety issues such as job displacement, decision-making responsibility and emotional dependence more prominent," Fan said, adding that such changes are bringing new challenges to human agency, social trust and public order.

The guideline states that AI applications should always serve "the common well-being of humanity", calling for ensuring that "the leadership over AI applications belongs to humans", with mechanisms for human control, emergency response and intervention established at key stages.

The document also urges relevant parties to retain "human judgment, supervision, intervention and correction" in key processes to avoid excessive replacement of human decision-making by AI.

For users, it advises moderate AI use and a proper understanding of AI emotional services. It states that AI should be treated as "a tool to assist real life", urging users to avoid excessive dependence, addiction, or replacing real interpersonal communication and activities with AI.

For information and communication services, the guideline calls for stronger risk governance of AI-generated and recommended content, warning against "information cocoons, cognitive misleading and cognitive degradation".

The guideline also encourages building an open-source innovation ecosystem, while improving the security capabilities of the open-source ecosystem.

Zhang Linghan, director of the institute of AI law and governance at China University of Political Science and Law, said the guideline provides detailed pathways and a Chinese approach to preventing ethical and safety risks at a time when AI is increasingly embedded in production and daily life, reshaping human-machine relations and being applied in more complex scenarios.

She said the guideline emphasizes that human leadership must not be weakened.

Beyond interpersonal and socio-political relations, it also addresses ecological concerns. "It also takes into account AI's consumption of energy and resources," said Zhang, who is also an expert with the United Nations High-Level Advisory Body on Artificial Intelligence.

Zhou Jingren, a partner at Alibaba Group and senior AI executive, said AI technology and large language models are still undergoing rapid development. From the outset, Alibaba established an ethics committee for large language models and invited experts from different fields to jointly explore solutions in this emerging area, he said.

Cheng Zixin contributed to this story.

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APEC exhibitors shine at intl fair

By **ATLAS SHAO**
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With the debut of a dedicated APEC exhibition zone, the 22nd China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair opened on Thursday, serving as a premier showcase for the nation's cultural and technology trends while fostering global ties.

Spanning 160,000 square meters, the event — China's largest cultural expo — has drawn more than 6,300 exhibitors across 65 countries and regions. Running until Monday, this year's fair spotlights innovative retail models, tech-driven products and the rich cultural and tourism resources of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation economies, offering a preview as Shenzhen prepares to host the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in mid-November.

At the APEC exhibition zone, coffee from Vietnam, Thailand's creative cultural products, Malaysian handicrafts, snack foods produced by South Korean companies, wine from Chile, Peru's alpaca products and Canada's tourism offerings have attracted visitors, transforming the exhibition zone into an area for cultural exchange and cooperation across the Asia-Pacific region.

Viann Ye, administrative executive of the MayCham China Guangdong office, said this is the first time the Malaysian Chamber of Commerce has participated in a culture-themed exhibition. Instead of selling products, she hopes to enhance public recognition of Malaysia through the fair, and thereby attract more travelers to the country.

Ye told China Daily that the chamber would like to participate in the November APEC meeting in Shenzhen if there are themes of mutual interest, and hopes to find more opportunities for Malaysian products to go global.

"The exhibition's scale and diversity have amazed me," said Hartanto W. Tanto, an Indonesian exhibitor who attended the event at the invitation of the Indonesian consulate general in Guangzhou.

He brought specialty products to the event, including batik silk scarves and sambal sauce, and received inquiries from buyers within the first hour of the opening.

He owns six restaurants in Xiamen and Fuzhou in Fujian province, and said Chinese consumers have a high level of enthusiasm for Indonesian cuisine.

Given that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is a region he has hoped to tap into, he said the fair is providing him with the opportunity to better understand the Shenzhen market.

Under the theme "Unboxing Hong Kong", the Hong Kong Pavilion at this year's cultural fair is displaying more than 100 exhibits to showcase Hong Kong's design capabilities.

A pop-up store has been opened for the first time in the pavilion, making Hong Kong cultural and creative products available for on-site purchase.

During the exhibition, the Hong Kong Pavilion will also host multiple cultural activities, including a lecture on the transformation of neon lights and mahjong craftsmanship, as well as a seminar exploring the use of emotional language in design.

The Macao Pavilion features enterprises from the Macao SAR's film production, advertising, large-event organization and technology sectors.

This year's cultural fair has also set up three major exhibition areas showcasing AI technology products.

Duan Chao, senior marketing manager at DexForce Technology Co, an enterprise specializing in embodied intelligence technology, said several cultural and tourism government departments and overseas chambers of commerce had visited his booth and shown strong interest in the company's products.

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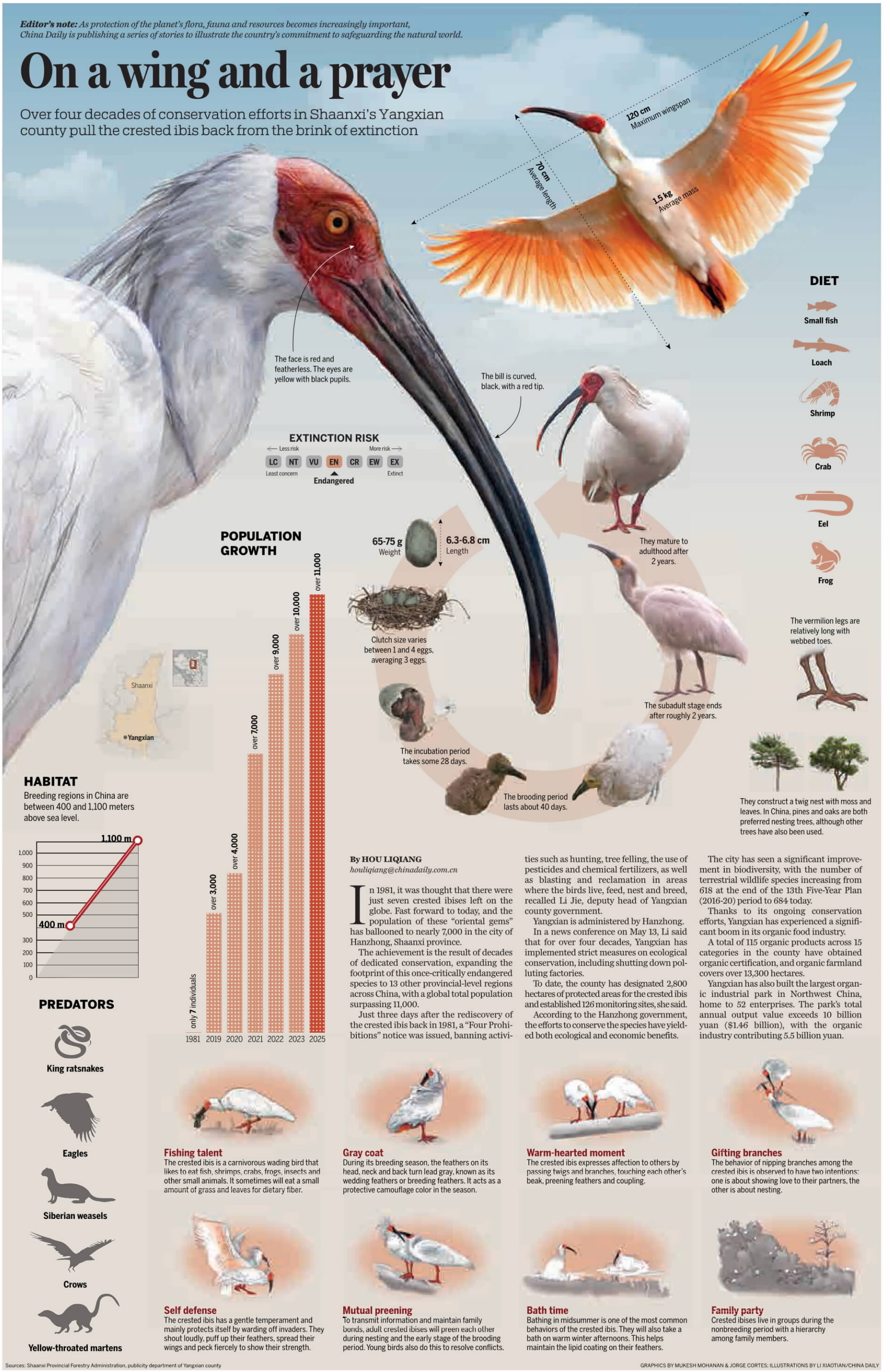
Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*

On a wing and a prayer

Over four decades of conservation efforts in Shaanxi's Yangxian county pull the crested ibis back from the brink of extinction



By **HOU LIQIANG**
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In 1981, it was thought that there were just seven crested ibises left on the globe. Fast forward to today, and the population of these "oriental gems" has ballooned to nearly 7,000 in the city of Hanzhong, Shaanxi province.

The achievement is the result of decades of dedicated conservation, expanding the footprint of this once-critically endangered species to 13 other provincial-level regions across China, with a global total population surpassing 11,000.

Just three days after the rediscovery of the crested ibis back in 1981, a "Four Prohibitions" notice was issued, banning activities such as hunting, tree felling, the use of pesticides and chemical fertilizers, as well as blasting and reclamation in areas where the birds live, feed, nest and breed, recalled Li Jie, deputy head of Yangxian county government.

Yangxian is administered by Hanzhong.

In a news conference on May 13, Li said that for over four decades, Yangxian has implemented strict measures on ecological conservation, including shutting down polluting factories.

To date, the county has designated 2,800 hectares of protected areas for the crested ibis and established 126 monitoring sites, she said.

According to the Hanzhong government, the efforts to conserve the species have yielded both ecological and economic benefits.

The city has seen a significant improvement in biodiversity, with the number of terrestrial wildlife species increasing from 618 at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20) period to 684 today.

Thanks to its ongoing conservation efforts, Yangxian has experienced a significant boom in its organic food industry.

A total of 115 organic products across 15 categories in the county have obtained organic certification, and organic farmland covers over 13,300 hectares.

Yangxian has also built the largest organic industrial park in Northwest China, home to 52 enterprises. The park's total annual output value exceeds 10 billion yuan ($1.46 billion), with the organic industry contributing 5.5 billion yuan.

Fishing talent
The crested ibis is a carnivorous wading bird that likes to eat fish, shrimps, crabs, frogs, insects and other small animals. It sometimes will eat a small amount of grass and leaves for dietary fiber.

Gray coat
During its breeding season, the feathers on its head, neck and back turn lead gray, known as its wedding feathers or breeding feathers. It acts as a protective camouflage color in the season.

Warm-hearted moment
The crested ibis expresses affection to others by passing twigs and branches, touching each other's beak, preening feathers and coupling.

Gifting branches
The behavior of nipping branches among the crested ibis is observed to have two intentions: one is about showing love to their partners, the other is about nesting.

Self defense
The crested ibis has a gentle temperament and mainly protects itself by warding off invaders. They shout loudly, puff up their feathers, spread their wings and peck fiercely to show their strength.

Mutual preening
To transmit information and maintain family bonds, adult crested ibises will preen each other during nesting and the early stage of the brooding period. Young birds also do this to resolve conflicts.

Bath time
Bathing in midsummer is one of the most common behaviors of the crested ibis. They will also take a bath on warm winter afternoons. This helps maintain the lipid coating on their feathers.

Family party
Crested ibises live in groups during the nonbreeding period with a hierarchy among family members.

Sources: Shaanxi Provincial Forestry Administration, publicity department of Yangxian county

GRAPHICS BY MUKESH MOHANAN & JORGE CORTES; ILLUSTRATIONS BY LI XIAOTIAN/CHINA DAILY

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CULTURE







Above left: Director Chen Yi oversees the full-cave digital scanning of the Binyang Central Cave at the Longmen Grottoes in Henan province. **Above:** Chen interviews an expert at the Longmen Grottoes. **Left:** Chen examines fragments of the *Emperor and Empress Paying Homage to the Buddha* alongside an expert in the storeroom of the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute. **Below left:** Chen films ancient cultural relics at the Longmen Grottoes. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The hunt for an emperor's face

Documentary captures the decades-long search for Longmen fragments scattered overseas after historic looting, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



Inside the Binyang Central Cave at the Longmen Grottoes in Central China's Henan province, a researcher from the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute holds a small 3D-printed fragment against a weathered stone wall. For a moment, nothing happens. Then the piece clicks into place, its curve fitting perfectly into a shallow groove carved 15 centuries ago.

The data show a 93.3 percent match.

"It was the most unforgettable moment," recalls Chen Yi, the documentary filmmaker who witnessed the discovery. "Completely unexpected. We found the face of Emperor Xiaowen."

In the past, it could take cultural heritage workers years to relocate a single Buddha head to its original position. This time, the documentary team helped accelerate the process, completing it in just 14 months.

"The key was finding the right method," Chen says.

That breakthrough and the years of detective work behind it lie at the heart of Chen's new documentary, *How I Miss "Her"*, which aired on China Central Television's documentary channel on Sunday.

The film traces the century-long odyssey of the *Emperor and Empress Paying Homage to the Buddha*, a pair of carved stone reliefs from the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534), regarded as masterpieces of Chinese Buddhist cave art.

In the 1930s, the reliefs were violently dismantled.

Working on orders from overseas buyers, a Beijing antiquities dealer named Yue Bin organized the systematic chiseling of the two panels into more than 6,000 fragments. Around 4,000 pieces made their way to the United States, split between the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York and the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art in Kansas City, Missouri. The remaining 2,300 or so were kept in Longmen's storerooms.

No one could determine with certainty which fragments were authentic. Looters had mixed genuine pieces with fakes to inflate prices, according to historical records of Yue Bin's confession cited in the film.

Abroad, the fragments were also subjected to questionable restoration practices. At the Nelson-Atkins Museum of Art, then-curator Laurence Sickman — whose teacher, Langdon Warner, remains controversial for removing murals from the Dunhuang caves — spent two to three years patching the broken pieces together with plaster. The restored panels, scholars point out, carried the fingerprints of their modern reconstruction as much as their ancient origins. At the Met, when the documentary team requested restoration records, very little was provided.

"The result became a huge mystery in Chinese art history," Chen notes.

The film introduces Wen Yucheng, the 87-year-old honorary director of the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute, who first began sorting the fragments in 1965 shortly after graduating from Peking University's archaeology department. He was on a three-person team investigating the looting.

Six decades later, he appears in Chen's documentary as a living bridge between the original crime and the ongoing effort to repair its damage.

Xiao Guangyi, a documentary studies teacher at Chengdu College of Arts and Sciences in Sichuan province, says she was deeply moved by Wen's lifelong devotion to the Longmen caves.

"Hearing an elderly scholar say that — how he missed the stones when he was away — is deeply moving. We see a tourist site. But generations of people have devoted their lives to protecting our civilization," Xiao says.

For Xiao, the documentary's most powerful moment comes when researchers test the fragment against the cave wall.

"Piece by piece, centimeter by centimeter — until it clicked. Suddenly you feel that all those efforts, all those generations of dedication, have finally found hope."

A chance encounter

Chen first heard about the project by chance in 2022, while filming at the Yungang Grottoes in North China's Shanxi province for the second season of *Hello AI*, her documentary series on artificial intelligence and cultural heritage. It is a follow-up to the 2019 film that marked one of the country's first documentaries dedicated entirely to AI.

On set, she ran into an old collaborator, Huang Xianfeng, a remote sensing expert from Wuhan University. They had previously worked together on digital restoration projects at Dunhuang in Gansu province and the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in Beijing.

She asked him whether his work had ever extended to artifacts that had been looted and taken overseas. That was when Huang mentioned the Longmen reliefs.

Chen started digging. What she found was a detective story spanning continents and decades, with smuggling rings and a paper trail buried in archives from New York to Cambridge, Massachusetts. As shown in the film, a key piece emerged from the Harvard University archives — a letter from Sickman to Alan Priest of the Met, accompanied by a sketched male head. The drawing proved that American curators had been searching for the same specific missing piece, providing crucial historical corroboration for fragments later found in Longmen's storeroom.

For years, Chen had worked with two seemingly separate tool kits. Her early career was focused on cultural documentaries, such as *The Forbidden City, Kunqu of Six Centenary* and *Taipei Palace Museum*. Later, she directed *A Century with Cars*, a 12-part series examining Western industrial civilization through what she describes as "the eyes of a Chinese documentary filmmaker".

That was followed by *Hello AI*, where she learned to visualize invisible algorithms while tackling the challenge of projecting data streams onto server racks and using crosscutting techniques to keep otherwise static code visually alive on-screen.

"One foot in the humanities, one foot in technology. I'd been waiting for a subject that could bring them together," she recalls.

She realized that the emperor and empress reliefs offered exactly that opportunity.

In 2024, the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute launched a full-scale digital restoration project, led by senior researcher Gao Junping. The first challenge was separating authentic fragments from fakes.

Tian Hengci, a researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences who usually analyzes lunar samples, applied nondestructive testing technology to the Longmen fragments. His device can detect trace elements at concentrations as low as one part per million — a geological fingerprint precise enough to distinguish different stone sources.

As documented in the film, of the five candidate pieces, only one cataloged as H05 matched the chemical composition of the original cave wall. The rest were counterfeit.

Yet, finding the correct fragment solved only part of the puzzle. The cave wall stands two meters high and four meters wide. H05 is roughly the size of a palm. Somewhere on that vast, weathered surface, the tiny piece needed to find its home.

The documentary reveals how researchers combined high-precision 3D scanning, AI-assisted surface matching, and what some scholars call "digital reunion": scanning overseas collections and virtually reassembling scattered fragments without physically moving them.

"Academically, 'digital reunion' isn't quite accurate, but it helps people understand what we're trying to do," Chen emphasizes.

Privately, she prefers another phrase: "civilization backup".

"For people 200 years from now, these digital models will be a heritage of their own — a record of how we, in our time, tried to save what we could," she explains.

Xiao sees this fusion of technology and humanity as essential to the documentary's success.

"Hard technology plus soft humanities is the soul of this kind of film, and a growing trend," she says.

"Without technology, Wen Yucheng's regret might have remained just regret. But without humanities, the film becomes a boring engineering log. You need both — technology as the engine, humanities as the heart. Neither works alone," she elaborates.

For Xiao, the idea of "reunion" defines the film.

"It's not only about reassembling broken stones," she says. "It's also about reuniting hearts and reconnecting civilizations." She adds that researchers, scientists, curators and scholars from China and abroad are all participating in an effort to restore a fragmented cultural legacy.

"We're using hands that reached for the moon to touch the missing pieces left behind a thousand years ago," she says.

The film's title *How I Miss "Her"* comes from a line by early 20th-century poet Liu Bannong. The Chinese character *ta* (her) was once reserved in Chinese documentary captions for national treasures, a grammatical gesture that imbued stone and bronze with something like soul.

"This film is an innovative work that uses contemporary thinking to question history and technological artistry to empower imagery," says Tan Xue, the film's producer.

In recent years, artificial intelligence has opened new narrative possibilities for cultural heritage, giving rise to many moving stories of "reunion", Tan notes.

The film allows those who have missed "her" to see how cultural heritage researchers, represented by the team at the Longmen Grottoes Research Institute, are using contemporary wisdom to heal the wounds of history, she says.

The title also raises the question: how do you miss something that may never come back?

Chen's answer lies less in sentiment than in action.

"Science and art part ways at the foot of the mountain. But they meet again at the summit," she says.

At the foot of that mountain, a sixth-century artisan carved an emperor's face into stone. At the summit, a laser originally developed for lunar exploration scans a fragment no larger than a hand while algorithms search for patterns invisible to the human eye.

"That's where we are now," Chen says.

"Not because we have all the answers. But because, for the first time, we have a way to ask the right questions."

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Ancient volumes reunite across the strait with digital vision

LANZHOU — Inside a climate-controlled repository in Northwest China's Gansu province, Fung Ming-chu leans toward a display case, her eyes fixed on a rare surviving set of ancient Chinese texts.

For the former director of the Taipei Palace Museum, the moment carried the weight of decades.

"My wish has finally come true," Fung says. After spending years guarding the Wenyuange copy, she has now seen with her own eyes all the surviving three-and-a-half copies of the *Siku Quanshu*.

Known in English as *The Complete Library of the Four Treasuries*, the *Siku Quanshu* is regarded as one of the most comprehensive collections in Chinese history. The monumental compilation was produced during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911).

Of the seven copies originally produced, only three and a half survive today. The Wenyuange copy is housed at the Taipei Palace Museum, the Wenjinge copy at the National Library of China in Beijing, and the Wensuge copy in Lanzhou, the capital city of Gansu.

Chu Hui-liang, a former researcher at the Taipei Palace Museum, shares Fung's excitement while looking at the neatly stacked 1,128 camphorwood book chests containing the Wensuge copy.

"As descendants of the Chinese nation, it is a source of great pride to witness this monumental work with our own eyes," Chu says.

"We often call the stains on ancient texts 'age spots'. But the Wensuge copy is nearly free of such marks. That shows how carefully generations of guardians in Gansu have preserved it," Chu adds.



Fung Ming-chu (center), former director of the Taipei Palace Museum, visits the Gansu Provincial Library in Lanzhou, Gansu province, on May 13. LIU KEYING / XINHUA

Xiao Xuezhi, director of the Gansu Provincial Library where the repository is located, says local authorities have invested heavily in preservation efforts since the Wensuge copy arrived in the province. Dedicated institutions and specialist staff have also been established to ensure its long-term protection.

Over the years, the library has developed preservation methods suited to local conditions. The building's structure and natural ventilation help regulate temperature and humidity, while the camphorwood chests protect the texts from insects and mildew.

Another former Taipei Palace Museum researcher, Lin Tieng-jen, gently touched the pages and the wooden case with gloved hands under the guidance of museum staff members. A specialist in ancient Chinese cartography, Lin had systematically studied the Wenyuange copy but had rarely had the chance to touch it.

"I can't bear to let go, yet I'm afraid to touch it too much," he says. The Wensuge copy, he notes, is similar to the Wenyuange version in the calligraphy, line spacing and even the design of the wooden cases.

"The *Siku Quanshu* is a monumental collection that preserves the very essence of Chinese heritage," Fung says, emphasizing its growing research value. She expresses hope for future joint exhibitions.

After learning that the Wensuge copy has been digitized and is set for facsimile publication, Fung envisions a "digital reunion" of the copies from both sides of the Strait.

Fung also expects more cross-Strait efforts to help wider audiences engage with classical texts through digital platforms and cultural products.

XINHUA

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LIFESHANGHAI

Travelers take in city through new lenses

An eyeglasses market benefits from visa exemptions as international tourists seek better services than their home countries provide, **Zhou Wenting** reports.







Left: Sofiia Pavlova and her husband from Russia visit Tong Qingying's shop at the Shanghai International Glasses City on May 15. **Top above:** Swiss tourist Mia Bernauer, who was on her first trip to China, bought two pairs of prescription glasses at the Shanghai store on May 15. PHOTOS BY ZHOU WENTING / CHINA DAILY **Above:** New Zealander Chris picks eyeglasses frames at the Shanghai store, during his visit there on May 16. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Swiss tourist Mia Bernauer's first trip to China in mid-May included a stop that may seem unexpected to many: getting prescription glasses in Shanghai. She bought glasses for myopia in two different styles to switch between.

While planning her trip to Shanghai, Bernauer found through online research that the city offers affordable, high-quality eyewear. She was also influenced by TikTok videos featuring foreign tourists sharing their shopping experiences at the Shanghai International Glasses City, located in the heart of the city.

"The shops here have a really nice selection, and they have world-famous brands that are good quality. But the price is half, or even less, than in Switzerland," says Bernauer, 24, who spent five days in Shanghai.

"It's a great bonus that some of the shop managers speak English," she says.

Bernauer is not alone. Many international tourists are adding the eyeglasses market to their Shanghai itineraries these days, alongside traditional attractions, such as custom-made *qipao* at the clothing market near the Bund, and trying local delicacies like *xiaolongbao* (steamed buns).

On TripAdvisor, a popular travel review site, the four-story Shanghai International Glasses City on Zhongxing Road ranks among the city's top five landmarks, following the Bund, Yuyuan Garden, and Xintiandi. Opened in 2007, this eyeglasses market, which began in wholesale markets, offers retail prices generally half of those at other optical shops and has recently gained popularity on overseas social media platforms.

Many shop owners at the market noted an increase in foreign customers starting last year, with more this year. They said some foreign tour guides have been spontaneously bringing tour groups in.

In 2024, China significantly upgraded its visa-free transit policy. By 2025, the number of countries with unilateral visa exemptions increased to 48, and the number of countries with mutual visa exemptions expanded to 29, with 65 ports allowing 240-hour visa-free transit.

Riding this wave of inbound travel, Shanghai has continued to establish itself as a first stop for international tourists arriving in China. According to the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Culture and Tourism, the city received over 9.36 million inbound travelers last year, a nearly 40 percent increase year-on-year, setting a new record. In the first two months of 2026, international tourist arrivals in Shanghai reached nearly 1.15 million, up 21.4 percent compared with the same period last year.

Hua Xiaochun, owner of one of the eyeglass shops in the market, says that the number of visitors arriving from Russia increased noticeably at first, and now international customers hail from around the world, mainly from Europe, North America, and Southeast Asia. Many come well-prepared, with a large proportion bringing their existing prescriptions, avoiding an on-site eye exam, he says.

"Customers from Europe and the United States have strong purchasing power. Some are satisfied with a particular style and directly calculate the price to make a purchase. Others will bargain, which the guides probably taught about negotiating with individual businesses in China," says Hua.

According to foreign customers, what attracts them is not just the price but also the quality and the speed of service. In many countries, getting glasses requires first seeing a doctor for a prescription and then having the glasses made, which sometimes takes a week. As a result, many people have experienced the embarrassment of having to temporarily fix broken glasses with tape.

> "The shops here have a really nice selection, and they have world-famous brands that are good quality. But the price is half, or even less, than in Switzerland."
>
> **Mia Bernauer,** Swiss tourist

They praise the shopkeepers at the market for their friendliness and professionalism, and they also appreciate the wide range of options available.

There are hundreds of shops in the market, each with a different selection based on the shop owner's buying preferences. Hua says his preference focuses on trendy styles.

"Foreigners usually have a different aesthetic preference from our local customers. They prefer trendy, bold designs. Most Chinese customers accept recommendations from shopkeepers, but foreigners are often confident in their own choices," he adds.

Many shopkeepers recall having experienced groups of foreign tourists buying more than 20 pairs of glasses at once. Hua notes that foreigners like sunglasses a lot, mentioning a recent customer from the US who bought several pairs one day and returned two days later to purchase more, totaling over a dozen pairs, likely as gifts for his family and friends.

Getting glasses at the market usually takes only 30 minutes to an hour from order to pickup. During this time, shopkeepers recommend that customers visit the shopping center across the street, and many return with bags full of items, such as blind box toys, hair accessories, power banks, and hairdryers.

More complex lenses, like progressive and multifocal, take two to three days to customize. Some customers return to pick them up, while others opt for express delivery to their hotel to save time.

On May 15, at Tong Qingying's counter, more than 20 pairs of custom-made glasses were awaiting foreign customers to pick up over the weekend. She had already sent another 20 to customers' hotels via express delivery that day.

Tong speaks some English and has learned the professional terms for the glasses-fitting process. Her shop is one of the market's most popular with foreign customers, who make up a huge proportion of her clientele.

The recent increase in foreign business at her shop is partly attributed to a Russian customer who bought glasses and posted a video sharing her experience on Instagram in April, which received over 100,000 views.

Sofiia Pavlova, a Russian customer who visited Tong's shop on May 15, was brought there by this video.

"Eyeglasses are far more expensive in Russia, almost two to three times the price here. Also, it takes a week to get them in Russia, but here I get them within 30 minutes," says Pavlova, 27, who was visiting China with her husband for the first time. Their plans in Shanghai also included checking out a Chinese brand hybrid car and getting trendy clothes for their dog.

Tong, 42, says some foreign customers send her photos on WeChat after returning home, expressing satisfaction with the glasses and wanting to order more for themselves or family members.

"I send international shipments weekly to countries like Germany, Denmark and Russia," she says.

To better accommodate international customers, the market has suggested that shops prepare reading test cards in English and accept international bank card payments. It also plans to install multilingual signs in the mall and enhance foreign-language services at the information desk.

Experts agree that Shanghai's inbound tourism is evolving from merely visiting typical scenic spots to a dual focus on service and consumption. The city's competitive edge lies in its combination of productive service industries, such as finance and shipping, and daily life service industries, including eyewear and dining.

Wang Hong, a city-level lawmaker in Shanghai, says it is necessary to make full use of the benefits of visa-free inbound tourism and turn them into opportunities for consumption and service upgrades. Among these, the key lies in providing high-quality city services, such as improved payment systems, tax refunds and multilingual services.

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Attraction to DIY handicrafts beads to the urban surface

By **ZHENG YIRAN**
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Consumers create on fuse-bead crafts at "San Qian Zao Wu She" (also called 3000 DIY Store) in May. As part of the emerging "handmade economy", bead-craft stores are tapping into younger consumers' growing appetite for emotionally rewarding experiences. PHOTOS BY GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

On a weekday night at a DIY store on Nanjing East Road, William Brook, an 11-year-old visitor from the United Kingdom in Shanghai, finally finished his peach blossom tree fuse-bead handicraft.

He worked on his "masterpiece" over two days. With the last pink bead pressed on the 50 by 50 centimeter plastic baseplate, the vivid peach blossom tree artwork was completed.

"I came to China for a piano competition. Yesterday, my mother and I were walking past this hobby store. I was fascinated by the fuse-bead handicraft. I love Chinese culture, so I decided to make a peach blossom tree as a special gift to take home," William says.

His mom also made over 100 heart-shaped fuse-bead handicrafts at "San Qian Zao Wu She", or 3000 DIY Store, as gifts for relatives and friends. She feels the handmade craft symbolizes sincerity.

Fuse bead art, also known overseas as Perler beads, is a handicraft that involves arranging small plastic beads into patterns and fusing them with heat. It is usually marketed as a toy for children, but is now widely practiced by adults as a stress-relieving hobby.

Wu Yuyan, a customer working in advertising, says she was bombarded with work-related text messages day and night, which exhausted her. "When I put my phone away and focused on making fuse-bead art, I could feel relaxed joy.

"I love the concentration and serenity," the 32-year-old says.

"Modern people are usually under great stress. It's hard to concentrate. The charm of fuse beads helps people concentrate and relax. When they are immersed in handicrafts, they don't think about anything else," says Qian Mengyao, a young shop assistant born after 2000.

"In addition, they can use fuse beads to make patterns they like, such as idols or cartoons, which demonstrate their creativity," she says.

Fuse bead art can be traced back to the 1970s, when it was not originally intended for personal enjoyment, but for rehabilitation training in nursing homes. In the 1980s, Perler, in the United States, improved it into a children's puzzle toy, which later spread worldwide.

At the end of 2024, a young Chinese actor showcased a homemade fuse-bead brooch during a live promotional broadcast, thus igniting the "fuse bead craze" in China.

Subsequently, with the continued support of numerous popular IPs, the trend grew stronger: in Taobao's "top 10 products of 2025", fuse bead art ranked second, with year-on-year search volume increasing by nearly 500 percent. The hashtag "I'm addicted to fuse beads" on the social media platform Xiaohongshu exceeded 6.9 billion views. The 2026 Spring Festival consumption data of Douyin, China's TikTok, show that the number of orders placed by Generation Z (those born between 1995 and 2009) for group purchases of beads is up by 9,018 percent year-on-year, much higher than the 348 percent growth rate of the second-rated group buy, pet foster care.

In Luer King, a handicrafts store on Daxue Road in Shanghai, customers stay for the whole afternoon or even till evening working on their handicrafts, and there are consistently team-building activities with over 20 people in the store.

Lin Xianping, associate professor of Hangzhou City University, says: "Fuse beads' rapid popularity lies in its precise alignment with the consumption and emotional needs of young people today. Its creation threshold is low and does not require professional skills. The time-consuming and focused assembly process allows young people to break away from electronic devices, achieve emotional and stress relief, and after completing exclusive works, they can also gain a strong sense of achievement."

As promising as the market is, Lin says that in the long run, the "handmade economy" needs to continuously innovate gameplay, create differentiated content, and deepen IP integration to overcome the limitations of trends. Overall, if the demand for emotional consumption remains unchanged, the "handmade economy" has long-term growth potential and is on a high-quality track for consumption upgrading, according to Lin.

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CULTURE







From left: Tianjin Conservatory of Music stages *Cavalleria Rusticana* (Rustic Chivalry), an outdoor production of the opera by Italian composer Pietro Mascagni, in Tianjin during the May Day holiday; Zheng Xiaoying gives a master class at the Tianjin school on May 8; Wang Hongwei, tenor and president of Tianjin Conservatory of Music, announces the school's plans on May 12. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A legend returns home

At 97, pioneering conductor Zheng Xiaoying heads back to Tianjin, the city where her artistic journey began, **Chen Nan** reports.



Ninety-seven-year-old Chinese conductor Zheng Xiaoying leads a two-week master class at Tianjin Conservatory of Music, guiding young conductors and opera performers in the art of Chinese-language opera.

At 97, most people might retire into quiet reflection, but Zheng Xiaoying, China's first female opera and symphony conductor, is boarding flights, stepping onto stages, and returning to her roots to teach.

Invited by Tianjin Conservatory of Music, she has returned to the city that she calls her artistic homeland to lead a two-week master class that began on May 8, guiding young conductors and opera performers in the art of Chinese-language opera.

The two-week master class culminated in a concert performance of Mozart's comic opera *The Marriage of Figaro* on Thursday at Tianjin Grand Theatre, showcasing the results of Zheng's teaching and the enduring vitality of Chinese-language opera.

"Tianjin is my 'old home'," Zheng says. "When I was invited to teach here, I didn't hesitate. This is where my formal music education began, and where my artistic journey truly started."

In 1952, Zheng began her studies at what was then the Tianjin campus of the Central Conservatory of Music. Three years later, she was selected to study choral conducting in Beijing. By the end of 1955, she returned to Tianjin to become one of the first teachers of China's newly founded conducting department, simultaneously continuing her composition studies.

"Walking into this school, the building on my right housed the country's first conducting department," she recalls. "That period of hard work laid the professional foundation for my entire career and shaped my respect for art and dedication to teaching."

Zheng has devoted decades to Chinese opera. She recounts the early days of opera education in Tianjin with pride.

"The first opera we staged was Verdi's *La Traviata*, performed in Chinese. It brought Western classics to Chinese audiences for the first time," she says.

In 1982, Zheng and the China National Opera House staged Verdi's *La Traviata* in Tianjin, performing 39 consecutive sold-out shows. Before each performance, she gave a 20-minute public lecture explaining the music, characterizations, and dramatic techniques, ensuring audiences could not only hear, but also understand the operatic storytelling. These efforts cemented her belief that "singing foreign operas in Chinese" is a great way for Western classics to resonate with Chinese audiences.

For this master class in Tianjin, Zheng selected *The Marriage of Figaro*, teaching students how to interpret, rehearse, and perform Western operas in a way that is authentically Chinese in language, expression, and cultural understanding.

"The story isn't just about a wedding ceremony," she tells the students. "It's about the conflict between the aristocracy and commoners, about interference and negotiation. The translation reflects the work's core themes, not just its surface plot."

This opera has long been a cornerstone of Zheng's teaching. In 1983, a Chinese-language production of *The Marriage of Figaro* became the graduation showcase for the Central Conservatory's vocal department, later refined by Zheng into a model teaching production. With the Chinese adaptation of *The Marriage of Figaro*, Chinese audiences were able to enjoy the performance without the language barrier, which helped make opera popular in the country.

"Chinese-language operas serve as the best practical training for young vocalists," she says. "I hope this master class can plant a seed here, so that systematic, high-quality opera education continues in Tianjin."

For the students, every gesture of this silver-haired maestro carries weight. In the very building where she once learned, practiced, and taught, Zheng is not just instructing technique but passing on a lifetime of experience, dedication, and love for opera, planting seeds that will shape China's musical landscape for generations to come.

"For students, stage experience is the most important. It's only on stage that they can truly discover their own shortcomings," says veteran tenor Wang Hongwei, the president of the Tianjin Conservatory of Music, who invited Zheng to deliver the master class to students of the conservatory.

Wang says that from May to July, the conservatory will take center stage during the 2026 Tianjin Music Festival, offering a spectacular lineup of 100 concerts, performances, and academic lectures across the city.

Audiences will enjoy operas staged in unique urban spaces in Tianjin, as well as concerts featuring works by Shi Guangnan (1940-90) — one of the most famous and prolific songwriters in the country — student-teacher recitals with soprano Lei Jia, and performances by tenor Yan Weiwen and his students.

Besides *The Marriage of Figaro*, on the operatic front, the conservatory will present a dynamic mix of classics, original works, and beloved revivals. Highlights include *Xiao Erhei Gets Married*, *Knot of Togetherness* and *Erquan*.

Knot of Togetherness will be staged at the National Centre for the Performing Arts on June 13 and 14 in Beijing, while *Erquan* will embark on tours nationwide.

Throughout the year, Tianjin Conservatory of Music's traditional Chinese music department will hold a total of 107 events featuring traditional Chinese musical instruments. Besides concert halls, shows will be staged in public schools, communities, and at scenic destinations nationwide.

"As a music school, besides teaching our next generation of musicians, we want to bring music directly to the general public, making music more accessible, engaging, and connected to everyday life," says Wang.

Wang notes that earlier this year, Tianjin Conservatory of Music launched a memorial hall for the composer Shi Guangnan, allowing the public to learn about the creative life of this musician, who graduated from Tianjin Conservatory of Music, and is known for compositions such as *Toast Song* and *On the Fields of Hope*. Over the decades, these songs have been performed by generations of singers, resonating deeply with listeners.

The collection includes more than 13,000 items, such as his enrollment certificate, examination papers, original manuscripts, clothing, personal belongings, and collectibles.

"We believe in a 'campus without walls', connecting with the wider community and sharing the joy of art with everyone," says Wang.

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Immersive attractions spark interest in literary masterpieces





Left: A performance is staged at the Unique Dream of Red Mansion theater complex in Langfang, Hebei province, last month. REN LIYING / XINHUA **Right:** A play inspired by *Outlaws of the Marsh* is staged at the Wansuishan Martial Arts City in Kaifeng, Henan province, last month. REN ZHUORU / XINHUA

BEIJING — Wang Zixuan's fascination with classic Chinese novels was sparked by a recent trip to a bustling theme park.

During his visit to Kaifeng in central China's Henan province, the 10-year-old boy watched plays inspired by the Chinese classic *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Afterward, he asked his mother to find him audio recordings to delve deeper into the story, and eventually, he lost himself in the print books.

"Every character in the book captivates me," Zixuan says. "Reading the book after school is the happiest moment of my day, and it allows me to learn about society and the history of that era."

Wansuishan Martial Arts City is a Disney-style theme park that features many scenes and plays inspired by *Outlaws of the Marsh*. Not far from its entrance stands a sculpture of the literary masterpiece written about 700 years ago.

In a nearby pub, a well-known scene from the classic novel was brought to life, as Lin Chong, one of the book's main characters, engaged in a spirited duel with another martial arts master, deftly wielding a stick as he moved with agility. The audience erupted in thunderous applause.

Zixuan's mother never expected that the trip could transform her child from a passive reader into a bookworm. But after watching the shows, she was impressed. "Incredible! They have perfectly re-created the iconic scenes from the original work."

Lin Chong, an official-turned-rebel, was portrayed by 25-year-old Zhao Yunze. "During the early rehearsals, the director told me repeatedly that I wasn't capturing the essence of the character. So I immersed myself in the book and watched the TV adaptation over and over again, delving deep into Lin's personality," he recalls.

In the theme park, there are over 100 such shows a day, catering to an enthusiastic audience. During the three-day Qingming Festival holiday last month, a show depicting an epic siege in the novel attracted nearly 4,000 spectators per performance. It was staged three times daily by over 100 actors, including 20 cavalrymen.

It represents a new approach to inspiring youngsters to read the sometimes obscure literary classics in the era of short videos. Wansuishan Martial Arts City has become a social media sensation with vibrant live-action shows and charismatic performers. Still, many visitors like Zixuan say such an "influencer hot spot" has nevertheless motivated them to dive into the original texts.

"Our programs aim to honor the original work while ensuring that audiences can easily grasp and connect with the story," says Yu Liuyi, director of the performances. "Our performance style is more like a cinematic presentation than a traditional stage play, and we enhance the visual impact with special effects like pyrotechnics."

More than 500 kilometers away from Kaifeng, an attraction in Langfang, in North China's Hebei province, draws inspiration from yet another Chinese magnum opus and has amassed 14 million visits since its launch in 2023.

Named Unique Dream of Red Mansion, this theater complex features 21 innovative plays, including those inspired by the seminal 18th-century book *A Dream of Red Mansions*, as well as independent plays. In one theater, the audience members stand onstage while characters from the book observe them from spectator seats as if gazing upon the afterlife, while in another show, female figures from the novel confront the author over the cruel twists of fate he penned for them.

Among the visitors were about 270 10th-grade students from Hua Chen School in the neighboring city of Tianjin, who are currently studying the novel that chronicles the rise and fall of an aristocratic Chinese family. Yang Zhuqing, 16, was visiting the theater complex for the second time.

"I used to find the book hard to comprehend, but the plays here helped me better understand the characters," she says. "Now we even playfully liken our classmates to characters from the book."

Han Shiyan, a Chinese-language teacher at the school, believes that the social atmosphere for reading classics is improving, noting that schools are encouraging students to read classic literature. She says that a dedicated class on the novel is held every two weeks, and continues for an entire semester.

Many new media formats, including short videos and immersive plays, are also fueling this wave of classic reading. Han says such content can spark interest, encouraging more children to pick up physical books. "Once they become interested in a certain story, they will probably explore the entire book," she says.

Wang Zuoquan, who is in charge of the Unique Dream of Red Mansion brand, says that they have forged partnerships with more than 100 schools, resulting in approximately 150,000 visits from teachers and students.

He notes that one primary objective of this attraction is to ignite people's interest in the original work. "Through our performances, we plant a seed in the hearts of the audience. The director of the plays envisions these theaters as a starting point, encouraging audiences to open the book once again," he says.

China has made nationwide reading a national strategy. In the Outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development, it is stated that the country will further promote nationwide reading to build China into a nation of avid readers.

To enhance institutional support, a regulation on promoting nationwide reading, which took effect in February, designates the fourth week of April as National Reading Week, observed for the first time this year.

Hui Dong, an associate professor at the School of History and Culture at Henan University, agrees that performance-based attractions help with the reading trend, as they translate static texts into dynamic experiences, rendering ancient books more approachable and comprehensible to modern readers.

"This is mutual empowerment between tourism and literature," Hui says.

"Classics are those that transcend their times and touch upon universal human nature," says Wang Zuoquan. "Engaging in a dialogue with classics is akin to engaging in a dialogue with human nature. The reading of classics by successive generations ensures the inheritance and continuity of civilization."

At the end of a 65-minute play at the Unique Dream of Red Mansion, characters from the original novel appeared onstage to remind readers to go back to the original book.

Dowager Lady Jia, a pivotal character in *A Dream of Red Mansions*, thanked the audience: "We have lived for 270 years (since the book was written). We will continue to be alive as long as you keep reading this book."

XINHUA

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AMERICA FOCUS

A BIGGER WORLD THROUGH CHINESE

American youths discover language learning provides opportunities for wider communication and understanding other cultures

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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For many young American students, learning Chinese began at an early age and gradually became part of their identity, family life and understanding of the world.

This shared passion for language and cultural exchange recently brought students from across the western United States together in Los Angeles, where they exchanged stories, performances and experiences centered around their journey of learning Chinese.

Luca Pole, an elementary school student from Denver, Colorado, said he enjoys both the Chinese language and culture.

"I like the Chinese culture and language because I can learn writing, reading, et cetera," Luca told China Daily during the 2026 Chinese Bridge Chinese Proficiency Competition Los Angeles regional final held on May 9.

"Chinese Bridge is like a place where everyone is brought together to learn Chinese, and it's a really friendly competition," he said.

Luca, whose Chinese name is Lu Ke, performed the song *Xin Nian Hao* and shared the traditional Chinese New Year legend of Nian during the competition. His parents said they enrolled him in a Chinese immersion school when he was 4 years old to help him develop his language skills and broaden his worldview.

"I think it's great for him to become a global citizen and recognize other cultures," his father Larry Pole said. His mother Traci added that she hopes Luca will "understand and appreciate other cultures".

For some families, learning Chinese is closely connected to preserving family heritage and cultural roots.

Jacob Hegedus, whose Chinese name is Zhao Zhuoran, said he enjoys speaking Chinese because his mother's family speaks the language.

"I am proud to be part of a Chinese family," he said.

Jacob's mother, Zhao Jing, said she has spoken Chinese with him since he was very young because she wanted to "pass down Chinese culture and language". His father, who is Hungarian, also encourages multilingual learning at home.

"For us, our family roots are very important," Jacob's father said. "That's why I really encourage him to speak his mother's language Chinese, and my language Hungarian."

Other students described Chinese as a bridge to understanding the wider world and building friendships across cultures.

Lewis Green, a student from Cedar City, Utah, attended the competition wearing traditional Chinese dragon-themed clothing. His Chinese name is Guo Luyi.

"I love the pattern of the traditional Chinese dragon," Green said. "I feel great to wear it."

Green said his interest in Chinese began after a professor from China visited his home and shared meals and conversations with his family.



Luca Pole (center), an elementary school student from Denver, Colorado, poses with his parents during the 2026 Chinese Bridge Chinese Proficiency Competition regional final in Los Angeles on May 9. RENA LI /CHINA DAILY

"I really enjoy communicating with people from different countries," Green said. "It made me feel that the world is very big, but people are still closely connected."

Now able to speak Chinese with his father and older sister, Green said the language has opened a new perspective on the world. He also expressed excitement about an upcoming family trip to China.

"I want to see what China is like, try Chinese food and talk with Chinese children so we can learn from each other," he said.

For Vesper Gaines from Hawaii, Chinese has become much more than a school subject. Gaines, who won first place in the middle school division of the Hawaii regional preliminary competition, said learning Mandarin has shaped much of her life.

"Learning Mandarin has been like all I've ever known my whole life," Gaines said.

She described her Chinese teachers as being "more like aunties than teachers", and said Chinese language learning introduced her to a broader community and different ways of seeing the world.

"Chinese has enveloped me into a community that I didn't know," Gaines said. "Chinese culture taught me so much about how to view the world in different ways and value diversity."

For some students, visiting China transformed their understanding of the language from a classroom subject into a real-life cultural experience.

Students from Mountain Ridge High School in Utah shared how their trips to China changed their perspectives on communication and cultural exchange.

Chase Glenn, who has studied Chinese for 12 years, said his first visit to China helped him realize the practical meaning of the language.

"For a long time, Chinese was just a subject to me," Glenn said. "All that changed when I went to China for the first time."

After giving a speech in China and being understood by the audience, Glenn said he realized language could become "a connection between people".

"That moment changed everything for me," he said. "It was my first real intercultural exchange."

Scott Tolman said he hopes to become "a bridge between Chinese and American cultures", while fellow student Max Warren said learning Chinese has given them "a bigger world".

"We are not just learning Chinese," Warren said, "we're building bridges."

The students also shared how they created a Chinese-language music video during one of their trips to China, combining singing and musical performances in Mandarin. The project later won second place in a national competition.

"I was able to express myself through singing, performing, playing the piano and guitar, all in Chinese," Warren said. "It wasn't about trying to impress people. It was about expressing who we are and telling our story."

Educators at the gathering also emphasized the growing role of Chinese language programs in promoting cultural understanding and youth exchanges.

Shana Tong, president of Maryknoll School in Honolulu, Hawaii, said the school's Mandarin immersion program, launched in 2017, remains the only program of its kind in Hawaii.

Students spend half of the school day learning in Chinese and half in English, studying subjects including mathematics and science in both languages.

The school has also organized cultural events celebrating the Mid-Autumn Festival, Spring Festival and Lantern Festival, while expanding exchanges with China through youth cultural programs and student visits.

"Through these trips, students not only improve their Chinese, but also develop a greater understanding of contemporary China," Tong said. "Seeing is believing."

Tong said educational exchanges have helped build friendships and understanding across cultures.

"When education connects people, the Pacific Ocean is no longer a distance — it becomes a bridge of friendship and understanding," she said.

Students find real connection in China through Mandarin studies

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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A cloth tiger toy. A miniature framed calligraphy. A transparent phone case holding a Polaroid photograph of two smiling teenage girls — one American, one Chinese.

To 16-year-old Beatrix Leonards, a high school student in Berkeley, California, these souvenirs from a summer trip to China are reminders of a friendship forged across the Pacific and kept alive through weekly video calls, where the two girls practice each other's languages and laugh at pronunciation mistakes.

More than 100 kilometers away in Sacramento, California, 14-year-old Sam Fine recalled a shared meal with a stranger that helped him understand what communication could accomplish.

It was Thanksgiving break last year in China's Guilin, a city in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, known for its beautiful landscapes. He and his family had hired a rideshare driver who pulled over because he was hungry. The driver invited them to join him for Guilin rice noodles at a small roadside stand.

"Rather than just a driver, I felt he was more like a tour guide," Sam said in an interview conducted in Chinese.

Sam first visited China with his parents at age 6. He started learning Chinese in first grade at an elementary school with a Chinese immersion program in Sacramento.

"My father felt that we had gone to China so many times but still could not talk to people there, and he felt like we were letting them down," Sam said in fluent Chinese. "So I started learning Chinese. That way, we could chat with our friends and also gain a deeper understanding of China."

By the time he graduated from elementary school, Sam had committed fully to his studies. Now he takes Chinese lessons entirely online, including composition classes, mathematics instruction in Chinese and even debate courses. His younger brother, Thomas, has followed the same path, taking lessons several times daily.

The shift in how Sam experienced China struck him most powerfully during the 2024 Chinese Bridge competition in Beijing.

"After I learned Chinese, the overall experience changed. Compared with before, I could talk to the people around me, and it was as if the experience had gained a little more color," he said.

During the competition, held at the Forbidden City, Sam looked at the classical characters inscribed on the ancient structures.

"If I had just been a foreign tourist like before, I definitely would not have known how to read them," he said. "But as someone who knows Chinese, I could read them."

For that competition, Sam won the Americas championship in the fourth Chinese Bridge Chinese Show for Foreign Primary School Students in October 2024.

That ability to read the language opened doors to understanding the country itself. After visiting multiple Chinese cities, Sam absorbed the weight of Chinese history, such as the Sanxingdui ruins and the legends of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

He also began to feel frustrated with stereotypes he heard back home.

"Some people around me still do not understand China very well and have some stereotypes, so I tell them that the real China is completely different from what they imagined," he said. "That is why I definitely hope they can visit China. To me, China is a very interesting country."

His motivation deepened during that Thanksgiving trip to Guilin. The driver who invited them over for rice noodles told Sam something that stayed with him.

"He said he had picked up many foreign tourists before but could only translate simple phrases on his phone," Sam recalled. By contrast, the driver spoke freely with Sam and his family about Guilin's beauty, local life and his own experiences.

"Thank you for talking with me. I hope I can be your driver again next time," the man said when they arrived at their destination, Sam recounted. "He said no foreign tourists had chatted with him before, so he really treasured the experience of driving and talking with me and my family."

That encounter helped Sam understand why communication matters. "I feel like learning Chinese has helped me understand how Chinese people feel, and how different people feel," Sam said.

Beatrix took a different path into Chinese studies. Now a junior at a high school in Berkeley, she became drawn to the language at a cultural event in Chinatown in Oakland, California.

"I really love learning languages, and I think the really interesting thing about Chinese is that it is so different from English. That was one of the reasons I wanted to learn it," Beatrix said.

The tonal system, the character-based writing and the grammar being fundamentally distinct from English all appealed to her sense of intellectual adventure. She committed to her studies, and several years of dedication paid off when she was accepted into a summer exchange program in China.

Last summer, Beatrix traveled to Beijing, Shanghai and several other Chinese cities. She visited historical sites and, more importantly, spent time with Chinese students her own age. Among them was a girl whose face appeared in the Polaroid photograph she carries in her phone case.

What began as a summer friendship has endured across the Pacific. The two young women video call regularly, switching between English and Chinese as they practice pronunciation and trade stories about their lives.

The friendship surprised her with its ease. During the exchange, she and her Chinese friends encountered moments when one struggled to express a thought in the other's language. Rather than abandon the conversation, they simply used English when Chinese fell short, or Chinese when English did not quite capture the meaning.

Both Sam and Beatrix have thought deeply about what their cross-cultural friendships mean at a time of geopolitical tension.

"When you have two groups of people who are on opposite sides of the world, like the United States and China, it can be very hard to learn about each other and see what life is actually like for a person in the other country," said Beatrix.

Geopolitical tension, she suggested, can seep into personal relationships if people allow it to. But direct contact, genuine friendship and real conversations can disrupt that dynamic.

"Cultural exchange is so important, because it reminds you that the relationship between two countries' governments should not affect people's ability to bond with each other, get to know each other, really learn about each other and have a good relationship," she said.

Sam observed that American and Chinese young people have much in common.

"To young Chinese people, I would tell them America is similar to China in a lot of ways," Sam said. "Both places are big, they have a lot of cities and you can explore a lot once you understand the languages."







Left: Beatrix Leonards, a high school student in Berkeley, California, holds a miniature framed calligraphy she received as a gift during her summer trip to China. LIA ZHU / CHINA DAILY **Middle:** Sam Fine (left) is learning *bian lian*, a rapid mask-changing technique that is part of Sichuan opera, during a recent trip in China. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** At age 6, Sam Fine (right) reads his favorite picture book about the magical brush of Ma Liang, in Shanghai during his first visit to China, as a local man photographs him. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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CHINA DAILY

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Students enjoy their break at China-Laos Friendship Nongping Primary School in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, on May 21. YANG WANLI / CHINA DAILY

VISITS OF VISION

Enduring ties grow ever stronger

China-Laos collaboration, connectivity yield fruit as Xi promotes development assistance

By **YANG WANLI** in Vientiane
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Along the banks of the Mekong River in Vientiane, the capital of Laos, stands a recently expanded modern medical complex — Mahosot Hospital, Laos' first hospital when established in 1910 and now its largest.

Financed by Chinese funds and with a total investment of about $92 million, the expanded hospital now spans three hectares, with 600 beds and a rooftop helicopter pad.

In 2017, President Xi Jinping made a state visit to Laos — the first by a Chinese head of state and top leader of the Communist Party of China in 11 years.

Since then, there have been frequent mutual visits between Chinese and Lao leaders. In the latest development, General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith arrived on Tuesday in Hangzhou, the capital of eastern China's Zhejiang province, formally starting a five-day state visit.

The visits have led to closer cooperation between the two countries in areas such as infrastructure, energy, trade, agriculture and people's livelihoods, including the Mahosot Hospital project.

The groundbreaking ceremony in 2017 for the hospital's expansion was attended by Xi and then Lao president Bounnhang Vorachit.

The hospital's director, Susa Vongphachan, who served as deputy director at that time, still remembers Xi's visit.

"There were several meters (distance) between President Xi and me, but I was deeply impressed by his presence," Susa recalled.

"Tall and dignified, he projected both confidence and approachability," Susa said, adding that whenever he sees Xi in the news today, memories of that visit immediately return.

Susa recalled Xi visiting Lao patients receiving free cataract surgery from Chinese ophthalmologists as part of a medical assistance program, while encouraging Chinese medical teams to continue supporting the Lao people.

In 2024, the expansion project was completed, doubling the hospital's treatment capacity. Susa said that the hospital recorded around 220,000 patient visits last year, an increase of 40 percent compared with the number before the renovation.

In addition to funding hospital infrastructure, the Chinese government has supplied medical equipment to Mahosot Hospital. Over the years, more than 10 Chinese hospitals have carried out training programs and exchanges with the Lao medical staff.

During Xi's state visit to Laos in 2017, the two countries agreed to strengthen cooperation to improve Lao people's livelihoods and advance the building of a China-Laos community with a shared future.

Since Xi's visit, connectivity between the two countries has undergone a dramatic transformation. Connectivity has paved the way for win-win cooperation, and the China-Laos Railway stands as a landmark of friendship, unleashing the efficiency of the China-Laos Economic Corridor.

The China-Laos international freight train service was launched in December 2021. Data from China Railway Kunming Group shows that more than 71,000 freight train trips had operated along the route as of March this year, while transportation costs had dropped by 30 to 50 percent.

Passenger service on the railway, which is more than 1,000 kilometers long, has also expanded rapidly since cross-border operations began in April 2023, according to the group. As of mid-May, the railway had handled 73.38 million passenger trips, including more than 840,000 cross-border journeys.

In northern Laos, the Luang Prabang station has emerged as the busiest passenger hub on the railway line. As of April, it had served more than 4.36 million domestic and international passengers, helping drive local economic and social development, according to Laos-China Railway Co.

"The number of hotels has nearly tripled over the past three years because of booming tourism," said Wongporapi Mengho, owner of a local family-run hotel. "Improved connectivity has created jobs and increased incomes for local residents.

"Now the city has a wide range of restaurants, from Chinese to Italian cuisine," he added. "The growing number of international tourists has also boosted cultural exchanges and mutual understanding."

See ***Visit,*** *page 3*

Chinese team to support Ebola response in DRC

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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A Chinese medical team arrived in Kinshasa, the capital of the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Tuesday for a three-month mission to support the Central African country's response to an Ebola outbreak.

The five-member team includes experts in epidemiology, clinical diagnosis and treatment, research, and traditional Chinese medicine, according to the National Health Commission, which organized the mission along with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Chinese embassy in Kinshasa and other government agencies.

Lu Ming, an official from the commission's department of international cooperation, who is leading the team, said that all members have extensive experience in their respective fields and have participated in previous global medical aid missions and Ebola responses.

"We plan to establish communication and cooperation mechanisms with local governments, healthcare institutions and international organizations under the guidance of the Chinese embassy," Lu said.

"We also aim to obtain the latest, accurate information on the outbreak to formulate a targeted and detailed response," he added.

Furthermore, the team of experts will provide training in disease prevention and treatment for local medical institutions, Chinese-funded enterprises and local Chinese communities.

On May 17, the World Health Organization declared the Ebola outbreak in the DRC "a public health emergency of international concern". The cause of the outbreak is the Bundibugyo strain, which has no approved vaccine and treatment. This strain of Ebola can kill up to 50 percent of those it infects.

The WHO said on Tuesday that there were 321 confirmed cases and 116 suspected ones in the DRC. The confirmed death toll is 48, while six people have recovered, it added.

Lu, the Chinese team leader, said the outbreak poses a bigger challenge due to poor access to the affected areas, risks of cross-border transmission and a lack of funding.

"Sending a high-level medical team demonstrates China's commitment to participating in international action against the epidemic and working hand in hand with other countries to fight the virus," he said.

Jiang Rongmeng, a team member and vice-president of Capital Medical University's Beijing Ditan Hospital, noted that China has accumulated decades of experience in tackling infectious diseases, particularly through low-cost, easily accessible methods.

In the face of the Ebola outbreak, it is crucial to quickly identify suspected cases through screening for typical symptoms and carry out epidemiological investigations into possible contacts with confirmed cases or deceased victims, he said.

On Monday, the commission and the National Administration of Traditional Chinese Medicine released updated diagnosis and treatment guidelines for Ebola. China has so far not reported any domestic or imported infections, it said.



A Chinese medical team, mobilized to assist the Democratic Republic of Congo in its fight against the Ebola virus, prepares for departure at Beijing Capital International Airport late on Monday. ZHANG DAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

SCENT OF A GUANGXI CITY CAPTIVATES THE WORLD

Hengzhou's jasmine vines powering wellness and tourism sectors, generating billions in revenue

By **LIN QI, ZHANG LI** and **SHI RUIPENG** in Nanning

"What a beautiful jasmine flower!
Fragrant and enchanting you are, blooming on the stems,
Incredibly sweet and purely white, you are admired by all,
Let me pluck you and gift you to someone else."

This folk song, one of the best-known Chinese melodies in the world, is believed to have originated in the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) and was featured in *Turandot*, an opera with Asian influences that the great Italian composer Giacomo Puccini left unfinished at the time of his death. As the opera was staged around the world, jasmine became an iconic cultural symbol of China, embodying romantic sensibilities.

Today, the starry white blossom inspires not only poetry, music and love, but also a wide range of products, including flavored drinks and snacks, incense sticks and sachets, and personal care products that soothe the body and mind.

A major source of this rich scent is Hengzhou in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. Hailed as the global jasmine capital, the city boasts a history of cultivating jasmine vines for more than 500 years. However, large-scale production and processing began in the 1980s.

Over the past four decades, Hengzhou has worked to become one of the world's largest jasmine production bases and a prominent exporter of the exotic fragrance.

According to Guangxi's Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, the city produces over 80 percent of China's jasmine flowers and jasmine tea, as well as more than 60 percent of the world's total jasmine flower output.

Irish travel blogger Luke O'Farrell and his British partner, Alexander Short, were among the foreigners who recently visited the lesser-known city, which is blessed with fertile soil and a climate conducive to growing jasmine. They learned from local farmers how to pick the flowers and witnessed how those were processed on factory lines.

See ***Jasmine,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Sino-US cooperation can benefit from wider scope

WORLD WATCH
By Park Seung-chan

In his dinner speech following the recent summit between China and the United States, President Xi Jinping mentioned that the Chinese Dream and US President Donald Trump's push to "Make America Great Again" can go hand in hand.

If MAGA and the Chinese Dream of achieving the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation are viewed from the perspective of cooperation and symbiosis, rather than conflict and confrontation, the two countries could grow and develop in the direction of win-win cooperation rather than a zero-sum game in the future.

While the meeting concluded without a joint statement, this vision offers a hopeful blueprint. But since differences and competition between the two countries remain, a pragmatic understanding of each other's strategies and a concerted effort to foster cooperation will be required instead of escalating confrontation.

Beijing believes that in the medium to long term, although strategic competition with the US is already an unavoidable reality, China can manage the current tense situation and expand its global role without a possible head-on confrontation with the US. However, the current US administration is running out of time, as it must demonstrate, within the remainder of Trump's term, tangible achievements and results for his "Make America Great Again" approach.

However, the strategic competition between the impatient US and the relaxed China must be observed from a long-term perspective.

The US and China are within a complex framework of relationships, in which they must maintain structural strategic competition to avoid a catastrophic scenario for both, and must protect their respective national interests.

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INDEPTH

Chinese aerospace leaders engage industrial thrust

Viability, speedier launches and mass production prioritized by developers

By REN QI
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Driven by an increase in orbital filings and successful launches, China's commercial aerospace sector is steadily transitioning from a phase of technical verification to large-scale deployment of its achievements.

Advancements in satellite mass production, in-orbit services and reusable rocket technologies are fueling this expansion. As satellite services integrate into consumer markets and various industries, China is also propelling its position in the competitive domain of low-Earth orbit.

This progress is reflected in recent industry figures. According to the China National Space Administration, the sector conducted 50 commercial launches in 2025, accounting for 54 percent of the country's total space launches for the year.

Meanwhile, 311 commercial satellites were placed into orbit, representing 84 percent of the national total. The newly operational Hainan Commercial Space Launch Site facilitated nine of these missions, demonstrating a turnaround capability of "seven days for launch, and seven days for recovery" at its primary pad.

Alongside physical deployment, China submitted filings to the International Telecommunication Union in late December for up to 203,000 additional satellites. However, the practical execution of this strategy relies heavily on a maturing domestic supply chain.









Clockwise from top left: A Lijian-2 Y1 carrier rocket with three satellites onboard blasts off from the Dongfeng commercial space innovation pilot zone in northwestern China on March 30. WANG JIANGBO / FOR CHINA DAILY Lihong-1 Y1, China's commercial recoverable spacecraft designed for space tourism, successfully completes its suborbital flight test mission on Jan 12. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY Visitors observe a model of China's space station at a commercial space exhibition in Beijing on Jan 24. CHEN XIAOGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY A visitor explores a commercial space exhibition in Shanghai on March 12. ZHANG JIANSONG / XINHUA

Fresh focus

Key industry leaders note that the focus has shifted toward mass production and the urgent development of heavy-lift launch capabilities.

Lin Guangrong, a constellation communication system architect at GalaxySpace, said his company has successfully transitioned from a "custom workshop" model to a "digital factory" approach.

Recognized as China's first unicorn company in the commercial aerospace and satellite internet sector, GalaxySpace has established a complete manufacturing chain for satellites weighing 100 to 2,000 kilograms. The company's annual production capacity for medium-sized satellites has stabilized between 100 and 150 units, with the manufacturing cycle shortened by 80 percent compared with traditional models. This efficiency is driven by a "smart brain", where algorithms continuously optimize industrial processes based on data from front-line engineers.

Industrialization extends to launch vehicles, with the aim of turning aerospace equipment into standard industrial products. For example, the Lijian-2 Y1 carrier rocket, which recently had a successful launch, shares an almost identical design for the core stage and two boosters.

Lian Jie, deputy chief designer of the Lijian-2, said this "universal booster core" configuration allows major components to be mass-produced.

Making rockets is becoming akin to assembling building blocks; simplifying the manufacturing process and enabling rapid replacement of parts can support high-frequency, airline-style launch schedules, Lian said.

Space 'gas station'

Chinese commercial space enterprises are also pushing the boundaries of in-orbit capabilities.

A prime example is the Yuxing-3 06 satellite, recently launched from the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in Northwest China. It carried out a series of complex in-orbit operations hundreds of kilometers above the Earth, including simulated propellant refueling tasks using a robotic arm.

Developed by Suzhou Sanyuan Aerospace Technology Co, a subsidiary of Beijing Aerospace Yuxing Technology, the satellite is intended to serve as a "space gas station".

Equipped with a flexible robotic arm, it is China's first commercial experimental satellite designed to perform high-difficulty in-orbit operations.

Chen Jing, chief technology officer of Sustain Space, said the satellite utilizes three control modes for refueling: autonomous path planning, remote manual control, and visual servo-guided docking.

Cao Meng, vice-president of Beijing Aerospace Yuxing Technology, envisions a future where satellites swiftly locate targets, perform precise docking, and refuel them. "We hope to build the future 'Space 4S shop' to provide one-stop maintenance and repair solutions for space assets," Cao said.

Meanwhile, computing power is also heading to the stars.

In a low-Earth orbit approximately 500 km above the ground, 12 computing satellites are operating to form a space computing network. Spearheaded by the Zhijiang Lab, this "Three-Body Computing Constellation" aims to bring artificial intelligence directly to space.

Wang Jian, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and director of the Zhijiang Lab, said nearly 90 percent of satellite data is currently discarded before reaching the ground due to limited onboard processing. By deploying AI models in orbit, the constellation can process data locally.

The team has already successfully deployed 10 AI models in orbit, including an 8-billion-parameter space-based remote sensing model 80, and a 150-million parameter Fuxi weather model 1.5, ensuring data timeliness for critical applications like disaster relief and urban governance.

Technological innovation is also driving the efficiency of communication payloads.

Lin, from GalaxySpace, highlighted the development of payloads using the Q/V band, which combines the Q and V bands to cover frequencies from 47 to 52 gigahertz, more than doubling the bandwidth of current satellite systems.

Lin compared traditional frequency bands to congested city streets and the Q/V band to a new, wider superhighway essential for high-speed satellite internet.

GalaxySpace has developed its fourth-generation Q/V antenna, reducing its weight from over 7 kg to just 3.2 kg, allowing engineers to stack more satellites inside a single rocket fairing, or protective shell. In September, the company also launched the world's first satellite equipped with large flexible solar wings.

These breakthroughs are being tested in the Little Spider Web, China's first low-Earth-orbit broadband trial constellation. The network has verified the ability to provide continuous broadband communications for 30 minutes at a time. It has successfully conducted tests in diverse environments, from verifying power grid connectivity in Yunnan province to enabling maritime emergency communications. Through satellite internet, drones have successfully conducted firefighting missions, and humanoid robots have achieved "remote perception" via synchronized visual data transmission.

Tian Feng, deputy director of the technology research and development center at the Innovation Academy for Microsatellites of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said low-Earth orbit satellites act as a space-based information highway, eliminating "information silos" in deserts and oceans.

Li Xiayu, chief engineer at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, said satellite communications are accelerating their expansion into consumer fields like smartphones and smart vehicles, opening new consumer markets.

Consumer integration

While GalaxySpace focuses on infrastructure, other industry players are concentrating on the downstream ecosystem.

Wang Hui, general manager of BeiDou Satellite Communication Co, a subsidiary of China North Industries Group (Norinco Group), has emphasized that applications are being rapidly integrated into consumer life.

Pan Ying, deputy chief engineer of the company, highlighted the integration of the BeiDou short message service into mass-market consumer devices. Unlike standard GPS, BeiDou allows users to send their location and status without ground-based mobile signals.

By forming joint ventures to develop new chips, the company has integrated this capability into standard smartphones. Since 2022, hundreds of millions of such phones have been shipped. Beyond phones, the company is collaborating with outdoor apparel brands like Bosideng and Phoenix to embed satellite communication modules directly into outdoor gear.

Pan believes Chinese companies are carving out a unique market position. While Western competitors like SpaceX employ a "vertical integration" model, controlling everything from chips to rockets, the Chinese system is defined by specialization — a "letting a hundred flowers bloom" approach.

Rocket manufacturers focus on launch vehicles, and satellite makers focus on spacecraft. Pan said this model concentrates resources to achieve high-quality system completion in a short time frame.

This specialized approach has been heavily supported by local governments, with the building of comprehensive industrial clusters.

In Beijing, a dedicated satellite town and Rocket Avenue are under construction. In Haiyang, Shandong province, the Oriental Aerospace Port connects manufacturing facilities directly to launch craft.

A standout example of this local empowerment is the Xixian New Area in Northwest China's Shaanxi province. The recent successful launch of the Xiguang-1 06 satellite, developed by the Xi'an Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace Technology Group, underscores the robust support provided by the local government.

As China's first and only in-orbit commercial hyper-spectral remote-sensing satellite with full-spectrum coverage of the 400-2,500 nanometers band, it ushers in a new era of "full-spectrum precise perception". Covering 26 independent spectral bands, the satellite functions like a CT scanner for the planet.

"It doesn't just look at surface morphology, but can analyze material composition, monitor crop health and predict ecological hidden dangers," said Kou Yimin, chief engineer at Zhongke Xiguang Aerospace.

The satellite is already monitoring the growth of tea and traditional Chinese medicine herbs in Sichuan and Yunnan provinces, and providing early warnings for landslides in northwestern China's mining areas.

Behind this success is a complete commercial aerospace ecosystem cultivated in the Xixian New Area. Hosting 34 enterprises in the aerospace industry chain, the area achieved an output value of 5.69 billion yuan ($835.29 million) in 2025.

"The success of this satellite sets another benchmark for the new area to cultivate a more modernized industrial system with new quality productive forces," a spokesperson for the Xixian New Area said, adding that they aim to contribute the "Xixian experience" to China's high-quality manufacturing development.

'Use it, or lose it'

The realization of these vast commercial ambitions, however, depends heavily on the physical capacity to launch hardware into space.

The International Telecommunication Union's "first come, first served" regulatory principle comes with strict "use it or lose it" deadlines. Once filed, an applicant must launch the first satellite within seven years and deploy 10 percent of the constellation within nine years.

This regulatory clock places immense pressure on China to increase launch capacity and reduce costs.

The industry is aggressively pursuing reusable rocket technology. In 2025, the Zhuque-3 reusable rocket completed its maiden flight, successfully placing its second stage into orbit and verifying core technologies for first-stage reentry and return.

Furthermore, the "Gravity-2" (Yinli-2) carrier rocket is undergoing intensive hot-fire tests for its "Force-110" liquid oxygen kerosene engine, with a maiden flight and recovery technology verification expected in the second half of the year. The "Blue Flame" 220-ton liquid oxygen methane full-flow staged combustion cycle engine has also completed full-system long-duration test runs.

The Tianlong-3 rocket, designed for large-scale constellation deployment with a "one rocket, 36 satellites" configuration, is preparing for upcoming missions. Experts estimate that reusable technology could slash total launch costs by 40 to 60 percent.

As domestic capabilities mature, Chinese companies are also looking abroad. GalaxySpace is expanding its footprint in Southeast Asia, partnering with local operators in Thailand to build ground stations and test satellite internet applications, marking the first time low-Earth-orbit broadband has been utilized there. Similar agreements have been signed in Hong Kong to explore applications in the Middle East and Africa.

Pan, from Norinco, stressed the importance of international compliance, calling for clearer government guidance to help companies navigate the complex legal landscapes of international operations. Services like the BeiDou short message could find widespread use in global search and rescue, Pan said.



A Long March-12 rocket carrying the 19th group of low-orbit internet satellites blasts off from the Hainan Commercial Space Launch Site in Hainan province on Jan 19. YANG GUANYU / XINHUA

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TOP NEWS

Lebanon conflict rages despite partial truce

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

Israeli drone strikes in southern Lebanon on Tuesday killed eight people, including a father and his two children, a day after United States President Donald Trump said that Israel and Hezbollah had agreed to dial back fighting.

Lebanon also announced a partial ceasefire between Hezbollah and Israel, marking limited de-escalation in a conflict that has killed thousands. However, fighting persists, and the flare-up has complicated the wider standoff between the US and Iran, with peace negotiations remaining stalled for weeks.

Hostilities in southern Lebanon, which Israel invaded in March, raged on Tuesday. Lebanon's National News Agency reported Israeli airstrikes targeting multiple places, including a "very violent detonation" in the town of Debbine. The Israel Defense Forces also confirmed that it had intercepted two projectiles launched from Lebanon into northern Israel.

According to Lebanon's embassy in Washington, Hezbollah has accepted a US-proposed "mutual cessation of hostilities", demanding that Israel suspend all strikes targeting Beirut.

Trump said that Hezbollah had pledged via intermediaries to stop attacking Israel. No sitting US president has ever held direct or mediated talks with Hezbollah, which Washington has termed a terrorist organization since 1997.

He added that Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had agreed to pull back troops poised to assault Beirut. However, Netanyahu later said that Israel would resume military operations if Hezbollah failed to halt cross-border assaults.

Israeli National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir also publicly pressed Netanyahu to resist US pressure over the ceasefire in Lebanon. "Time to say no to Trump," he said on X.

At an emergency United Nations Security Council meeting on Monday, all council members except the US urged Israel to withdraw troops from southern Lebanon and avert further escalation, The New York Times reported.

A spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said: "We are deeply alarmed by the escalation in military activities across southern Lebanon and beyond."

The Israel-Hezbollah conflict erupted on March 2 as a spillover of the broader US-Iran war and has remained intertwined with core bilateral negotiations ever since. Iran has made an end to Israeli military assaults in Lebanon a prerequisite for any comprehensive peace accord, while Washington insists that two conflicts should be treated separately.

Lebanon's Ministry of Public Health confirmed that Israeli strikes have so far killed 3,433 and left 10,395 wounded nationwide. Amid the mounting casualties, Iran's Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf warned that continued Israeli "aggression against Lebanon" would prompt Tehran to suspend negotiations with the US and escalate tensions into a direct confrontation.

Iran's Tasnim News Agency reported on Monday that Tehran was putting indirect US peace talks on hold and might end a ceasefire that has largely held since early April, citing Israeli operations in Lebanon.

However, Trump said late on Monday that bilateral negotiations with Iran were advancing at a "rapid pace", predicting a formal accord to prolong the truce and reopen the Strait of Hormuz would be clinched "over the next week".

In Washington, US Congresswoman Ilhan Omar condemned Israel's actions in Lebanon and called for an immediate end to US military aid to Israel. "The lesson Israel has learned, time and again, is that it can commit genocide and other atrocities with near-total impunity. Now it's exporting the Gaza playbook to Lebanon," she said in a post on X.

Since mid-March, Trump has repeatedly claimed that he was on the verge of finalizing a peace deal without delivering on the pledge. Even with the tentative Lebanese ceasefire in place, Iran and the US have traded tit-for-tat strikes multiple times in the past seven days.

Meanwhile, Esmaeil Qaani, head of the Quds Force of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, warned that Tehran may extend its Strait of Hormuz blockade to the Bab el-Mandeb Strait, another vital maritime chokepoint at the Red Sea's entrance, Tasnim reported.

Crude oil futures clung to multimonth highs on Tuesday amid simmering geopolitical risks, with US WTI crude hovering around $92 a barrel and global Brent benchmark near $95 per barrel.

"While markets had hoped to shake off uncertainty on the back of prospective peace talks, oil fundamentals remain unchanged as of this morning," Priyanka Sachdeva, a senior market analyst at Phillip Nova, a financial services company in Singapore, told Al Jazeera.



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with British Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper during the 11th China-UK Strategic Dialogue on Tuesday in Beijing. Cooper arrived in Beijing on Monday for a visit that concludes on Wednesday. YUE YUEWEI / XINHUA

China, UK to enhance relations

Pledges made during Beijing talks on high-level exchanges and strategic communication

By **JI HAISHENG** in Beijing
and **WANG MINGJIE** in London

China and the United Kingdom have vowed to maintain high-level exchanges, enhance strategic communication and consolidate positive momentum in bilateral relations amid growing global uncertainty and economic headwinds.

These pledges were made on Tuesday during UK Foreign Secretary Yvette Cooper's separate meetings in Beijing with senior Chinese officials.

Cooper's three-day trip, starting Monday, follows British Prime Minister Keir Starmer's visit to China in January — the first by a UK leader in eight years — during which both sides agreed on a road map to stabilize and advance ties. Following her stay in the Chinese capital, Cooper is scheduled to visit the southern technology hub of Shenzhen in Guangdong province.

Noting that improving bilateral ties serves the interests of the people of both sides, Vice-President Han Zheng told Cooper that both sides should work together to practice true multilateralism, jointly advance global governance reform, and bring greater stability and certainty to the world.

During the 11th China-UK Strategic Dialogue on Tuesday, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said that bilateral exchanges and cooperation across all sectors have fully resumed and are gradually getting back on track, and that it is all the more important to cherish this momentum.

Wang said China hopes the British side will provide Chinese enterprises with a fair, just and nondiscriminatory business environment and reasonably define the boundaries of security concerns.

Cooper said the UK is willing to work with China to advance institutional dialogues and deepen cooperation in areas such as the economy and trade, finance, energy, artificial intelligence, and addressing climate change.

She said the UK's policy on Taiwan, which has been in place since the establishment of its diplomatic relations with China, has not changed and will not change.

The UK is willing to continue to engage in candid dialogue with China, constructively handle differences, and promote the sound and stable development of UK-China relations, she said.

In 2025, bilateral trade reached $103.73 billion, representing a year-on-year increase of 5.3 percent, according to the Chinese Foreign Ministry. China remains the UK's largest trading partner in Asia, while the UK is one of China's major trade and investment partners in Europe.

Wang Zhanpeng, director of the British Studies Centre at Beijing Foreign Studies University, said the China-UK Strategic Dialogue serves as a broader high-level platform emphasizing the overall development of bilateral relations.

He highlighted that the two sides' mutual commitment to fostering a long-term and consistent comprehensive strategic partnership provides a crucial anchor for stabilizing bilateral ties.

Jim O'Neill, former commercial secretary to the UK Treasury, described the high-level engagement as an important opportunity to further improve bilateral relations.

"Any visit by a British prime minister, chancellor or foreign secretary presents an opportunity to advance bilateral relations," said O'Neill, adding that he believes the UK should continue making long-term efforts to deepen ties with China.

Tom Harper, a lecturer specializing in China's international relations at the University of East London, said the meeting represents "a step in the right direction" and reflects the broader stabilization of China-UK relations in recent years. "As a result, it is possible that the meeting will further build upon that momentum," he added.

Against the backdrop of global economic uncertainty, analysts said that closer China-UK cooperation carries significance beyond bilateral ties. Both countries are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council and share responsibilities in addressing global challenges, including climate change, economic recovery and international security, they said.

Wang, the British studies expert, said that enhanced strategic communication between the two nations is crucial for navigating today's turbulent international situation.

Harper said that recent visits to China by senior officials from various countries reflect a growing recognition of China's role in the global economy and international diplomacy.

"There has been a recognition that China is an important part of the global economy, which means that it cannot be ignored nor shunned," he said. "Cooperation with China will be an imperative for wider global economic stability."

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Jasmine: Flower exported to more than 70 countries

From page 1



People pick jasmines during the opening ceremony of a festival marking the start of the jasmine harvest season on April 30 in Hengzhou, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. LI LIPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

"It was so cool. The workers really put a lot of effort into the whole process. It's also a beautiful location; the environment is so fresh and smells amazing," said O'Farrell.

Diversified products, including jasmine-flavored beverages, had them wanting more. "These taste really delicious, especially the milk tea," he said, adding that despite being coffee lovers, they have been drinking tea and other jasmine-flavored beverages.

Among Chinese entrepreneurs who are elevating Hengzhou's profile to a new level is Wu Yuming. After completing his studies in the United Kingdom in 2023, Wu, who hails from Taiwan, moved to Hengzhou to run a tourism-related farm and factory called Aroma Garden. The mission, as he puts it, is "to build a high-end industry chain for jasmine products, integrating the fragrance of jasmine into people's daily lives — into what they eat, drink and use".

Wu works together with farmers to learn how jasmine grows and to better understand market requirements, and he helps them upgrade their planting techniques in order to extend the flowering season, standardize varieties and increase the yield. The improved quality of the flowers boosts Wu's business in return, as his team develops a range of high-quality products including personal care items and daily necessities.

Wu's Aroma Garden has mapped out a "jasmine fragrance trail" to attract tourists. During the flowering season in spring and summer, visitors can walk through a vast sea of blooming jasmine, pick flowers, and seek a hands-on experience in extracting essential oil and creating their own signature scent.

Data from the local government shows that Hengzhou's jasmine plantation area of around 12,000 hectares produced over 150,000 metric tons of fresh flowers in 2025, with the output value surpassing 19 billion yuan ($2.81 billion).

Most flagship domestic and international beverage brands source their raw materials from Hengzhou. A complete industrial chain centered on jasmine has been established, incorporating potted plants, dining, health and wellness services, and tourism.

Meanwhile, leveraging the China-ASEAN Expo, Hengzhou's jasmine has entered the broader market of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and is exported to more than 70 countries and regions.

"Jasmine embodies the quintessence of Eastern elegance," said Wu, the entrepreneur. "Hengzhou offers one of the finest jasmine resources. We aim to extract and preserve this natural fragrance and create a scent that belongs to China."

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Visit: Education partnership deepening

From page 1

Thanks to the strengthened connectivity, economic and trade cooperation between Laos and China has yielded fruitful results for mutual benefit, and practical cooperation has benefited the people of both countries.

Statistics from China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs show that last year, bilateral trade between Laos and China soared to $9.82 billion, a year-on-year increase of 19.3 percent. In 2017, it was $3.1 billion, according to China's General Administration of Customs.

Furthermore, China remained Laos' largest foreign investor, with cumulative investment exceeding $18 billion, according to the Laos-China Cooperation Committee, highlighting deepening economic ties between the two countries.

Beyond infrastructure, China and Laos have also expanded cooperation in several fields, such as industrial capacity, finance, agriculture, energy, telecommunications and healthcare.

Education is also an example of the deepening cooperation between the two countries.

Every time distinguished visitors arrive at Nongping primary school in Vientiane, Phanthong Khamthongdee, the principal, proudly points to a framed letter hanging prominently on the wall of her office.

Carefully preserved behind glass, the letter bears the personal signature of Xi. It was sent in reply to the school's teachers and students in 2019 — a moment that remains one of the school's proudest memories.

Founded in 1964 with a capacity for about 50 students, the school was rebuilt in 2012 with support from the China Foundation for Peace and Development. Since then, the foundation has provided volunteer teachers and educational materials, and the school was renamed the China-Laos Friendship Nongping Primary School.

In April 2019, teachers and students from the school were invited to attend a subforum of the second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation in Beijing. Before departing, the students wrote a letter to Xi expressing gratitude for China's support in rebuilding their school.

"We gathered thoughts from both teachers and students, and spent several days perfecting every detail," Phanthong recalled, taking out the original four-page handwritten letter.

Just four days after it was sent, Xi replied.

In the reply letter, Xi thanked the Lao students and teachers for writing to him, saying he was impressed by their happiness and aspiration for a good life and moved by the heartfelt feeling toward the Chinese people demonstrated in their letter.

To achieve common development and to make people's lives better in the countries participating in the Belt and Road are what prompted him to propose the initiative, Xi noted in the letter.

Xi welcomed the students to travel to Beijing via the China-Laos Railway, which was then under construction, and expressed his hope that more organizations like the China Foundation for Peace and Development would join efforts to benefit communities participating in the Belt and Road.

Phanthong, the principal, said the school had never imagined that China's top leader would respond to a letter from an obscure primary school in Laos.

"All the teachers and students were incredibly excited," she said. "His words gave us courage. They became like seeds for a brighter future planted in our hearts."

Today, thanks to continued Chinese support, the school serves nearly 200 children between the ages of 3 and 13. Chinese companies have also helped fund a basketball court and donated computers and books.

"Our school is now one of the best-equipped in the district," Phanthong said. "We also have volunteer teachers from China who teach Mandarin, which has attracted many local families to send their children here."

For many students, China is not only a friendly neighbor but also a place tied to their dreams and imagination.

Saengchan Saiyakhom, an 11-year-old student at the school, hopes to visit China one day. "Beijing is at the top of my wish list because I want to try Peking duck," she said with a smile. "I saw it on social media. It looks very different from Lao food and extremely delicious."

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WORLD

Roaring rainbow



Italian Air Force aerobatic demonstration team flies over the Altar of the Fatherland during the 80th anniversary celebrations for Republic Day (Festa della Repubblica) at the Imperial Fora in Rome, Italy, on Tuesday. EPA

Japan's remilitarization slammed

Moves to bolster defense, intelligence 'repeat prewar mistakes', critics warn

By **HOU JUNJIE** in Tokyo and **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong

Japan's recent efforts to strengthen its security and defense capabilities, including plans to expand its intelligence framework and revise key security policies, have sparked concerns at home and abroad over the country's remilitarization.

Critics have urged Japan to uphold the principles of its pacifist constitution and warned against repeating its prewar mistakes.

Within Japan, critics argue that legislation passed last week to establish a national intelligence council and a national intelligence bureau could significantly expand government surveillance powers and return the country to the dangerous path it once followed.

Before and during World War II, Japan's Special Higher Police, known as Tokko, and military police organizations actively suppressed anti-government movements and civil society groups.

The newly passed legislation is aimed at building a national system to centralize intelligence information, the first of its kind since World War II.

With the national intelligence council at its core and the national intelligence bureau serving as its implementing body, the system will coordinate intelligence activities.

Following the law's passage, the Ryukyu Shimpo warned in an editorial that the national intelligence council and related measures, including proposed anti-espionage legislation, could fundamentally alter Japan's political and institutional character and echo the country's prewar system.

The editorial argued that as intelligence and national security bodies continue to expand, government agencies could gain broader powers, potentially threatening citizens' privacy and freedom of expression.

Calling for oversight

The editorial called for stronger oversight of government authority and democratic checks and balances on national intelligence institutions.

At a protest in Tokyo on May 29, two days after the legislation was approved, demonstrators voiced concerns over what they described as Japan's accelerating military buildup.

A protester named Matsuzawa said he strongly felt that the country was moving toward greater militarization.

He said that moves by the administration of Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi to revise Article 9 of the constitution and promote anti-espionage legislation evoke memories of prewar Japan.

"My children are still in elementary school," he said. "If things continue in this direction, I don't believe we will be able to leave them a peaceful Japan."

According to the Shimbun Akahata newspaper, Gyo Ishii, a senior staff writer for Kyodo News, also expressed concerns during deliberations on the legislation.

He noted that prewar Japan steadily strengthened its intelligence and secrecy systems through a series of laws and argued that the current government's efforts to establish a national intelligence council and strengthen anti-espionage legislation bear similarities to that process.

Ishii said the Takaichi administration is seeking to transform Japan into a country capable of waging war by expanding its intelligence apparatus.

He warned that the issue concerns not only the pacifist principles enshrined in Article 9 of the constitution but also the freedoms of speech and the press guaranteed under Article 21.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea recently published a series of articles slamming the rising militarism in Japan.

The attempts by the Japanese government to revise the pacifist constitution, legitimize the "Self-Defence Forces", and even restore the military ranks used by the former imperial Japanese army indicate the current government's attempt to remake Japan into a "war state", the DPRK's state newspaper Rodong Sinmun said in a commentary piece on May 23.

The article said the attempts are an extension of Japan's move toward militarization, including increased military spending, revision of three security-related documents, and discussions of abandoning the three nonnuclear principles.

The article pointed out that Japan, an ally of the United States in Northeast Asia with deep military ties to NATO, fired offensive missiles during a joint military practice in early May for the first time since World War II.

These developments offer no assurance that the island nation will refrain from again attacking neighboring countries despite its loud calls for peace, the article added.

While history gave Japan a chance at rebirth after its defeat in World War II, the Japanese ruling party has instead used the generosity of the international community to revive militarism, it said.

"If Japan rushes madly down the path of remilitarization and attempts a new round of invasion, it will end up in far more severe self-destruction than in the past," the article warned.

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From ping-pong to pickleball, friendships endure

By **SHI GUANG** in Washington
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The Chinese embassy in Washington hosted an evening celebrating youth friendship and "pickleball diplomacy" on Saturday, with the premiere of a documentary following a trip by US students to China during Spring Festival earlier this year.

The event brought together about 200 US students, their families, teachers and guests. In the pre-event warm-up activities, participants tried on traditional Chinese outfits such as *hanfu* and viewed photo exhibitions. They also tried their hand at *zongzi* by carefully folding bamboo leaves and filling them with sticky rice and dates.

Chinese Ambassador to the US Xie Feng delivered remarks at the event emphasizing the role of sports in building connections.

He said that through pickleball, youth in China and the US have developed a sincere friendship. They learned from each other and experienced an open China, connecting with one another and building bridges of communication.

"From ping-pong to pickleball, the paddles have changed. But our peoples' shared wish for friendship remains as strong as ever," Xie said.



Participants share their experiences in China at the Chinese embassy in Washington on Saturday. CHEN MENGTONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

"China and the US are like two players on the same sports court. We play by the rules and respect one another," he said.

Xie noted that half a month ago, Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump held a historic meeting in Beijing and "agreed on a new vision of building 'a constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability'".

That, he said, "provides strategic guidance for our bilateral relationship over the next three years and beyond".

Xie also highlighted President Xi's recent reply to a letter from Chinese and US students taking part in "A Shared Voyage: China-US Youth Friendship Program".

In the letter, Xi noted that the initiative to invite 50,000 US students to China for exchange and study over five years has reached its goal two and a half years ahead of schedule.

Unforgettable trip

The documentary, which premiered at the event, chronicled the February 2026 trip by the youth pickleball delegation from Montgomery, Maryland, to China. The students visited Guangdong, Jiangxi, Henan provinces, and Beijing during Spring Festival.

Jeffrey Sullivan, director of Systemwide Athletics for Montgomery County Public Schools, spoke about the program's growth.

He said the February delegation added an additional layer of student leadership, pointing out that the students "helped prepare for the trip, leading cultural sessions and pickleball practices".

During the story-sharing session, one student described the trip as "a very pleasant experience ... It was definitely a big difference from what we see in the media. It was very nice to see. It was very beautiful."

Coach Stacy Azizirad noted the sport's unique bonding power. "They bond over pickleball or any other sport like ping-pong, and it's really unique in the way that we've had some kids not even play pickleball that came on this trip before, and they learned to love it," she said.

A parent shared the deep personal impact. "The impact of these last two years ... to say life-changing, it truly has been life-changing. The friendships that my children have made ... have truly been heartwarming."

She mentioned her son is now teaching his Chinese friends English on WeChat and recently booked a family trip back to Beijing and Shanghai.

Lychee demand in China drives Vietnam's exports

HANOI — At 1 am local time, while most of the village was still asleep, farmer Tran Van Bon was already in his lychee orchard in Vietnam's northern province of Bac Ninh, moving between rows of trees heavy with ripening fruit.

Working under the glow of headlamps, Bon and his family carefully picked bunches of bright red lychees before dawn, when the fruit is at its freshest.

A few hours later, the fruit would begin its journey to China, Vietnam's largest export market for lychees.

In late May, the first container trucks carrying lychees departed from Bac Ninh, bound for China, marking the start of this year's export season and bringing renewed hope to thousands of growers across the province.

Bac Ninh is Vietnam's largest lychee-producing province, with 29,800 hectares of orchards, according to the Vietnamese Ministry of Agriculture and Environment.

For Bon, who has cultivated lychees for two decades in Nam Duong commune, the Chinese market has become increasingly vital for his family's livelihood.

China has remained the major export destination for Bac Ninh lychees for many years.

According to the provincial Department of Agriculture and Environment, the province currently has 243 lychee-growing area codes covering more than 17,450 hectares that have been approved for export to various international markets.

Of these, over 120 growing area codes, covering over 16,190 hectares, are registered for exports to the Chinese market this year.

Pham Van Thinh, vice-chairman of the Bac Ninh Provincial People's Committee, estimated that lychee exports to China could reach between 40,000 and 50,000 metric tons this year.

Harvest season

Across Nam Duong commune, the harvest season has transformed quiet rural roads into busy trading routes. Trucks line up near collection points while farmers rush to pick, sort and pack fruit for cross-border shipment.

Local farmer Tran Van Binh shares the same optimism.

Binh expects to earn between 200 million and 300 million Vietnamese dong ($7,600 to $11,400) through lychee exports to China this season.

Despite lower yields, growers like Bon and Binh said stable demand from China has helped sustain their incomes and ease concerns over finding buyers.

China has been Vietnam's top trading partner for more than two decades. In 2025, Vietnam's fruit and vegetable exports to China exceeded $5 billion, accounting for more than 64 percent of its total fruit and vegetable exports. Vietnam's durian and fresh coconut are highly sought-after in China.

"Now that Chinese traders are buying lychees in large quantities, we no longer worry about the market for our fruit. We can focus on growing and caring for lychees to meet export standards," Binh said.

XINHUA

Breathing fear



A man hidden behind a wall looks at smoke and flames rising from garages damaged during massive missile and drone strikes, in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. ROMAN PILIPEY / AFP

Bangladesh's Rahman new president of 81st UNGA

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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Bangladesh's Foreign Minister Khalilur Rahman was elected president of the 81st session of the United Nations General Assembly on Tuesday, winning a vote in the 193-member world body.

With 190 UN member states casting votes, Rahman received 99 votes, defeating Andreas S. Kakouris, special envoy of Cyprus' foreign minister for multilateralism, who secured 91 votes.

Following his election, Rahman pledged to rebuild trust among member states and promote consensus-building within the UN.

"As your president, I will dedicate myself to rebuilding trust, nurturing consensus and opening space for good-faith negotiations that will lead to outcomes owned by all," he said.

Rahman said his presidency would focus on six pillars of action: peace and security; the 2030 agenda; climate action and environmental protection; human rights; emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence; and UN reform.

The theme of the 81st session will be "Restoring Trust, Managing Transformation: A United Nations That Delivers for All."

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres congratulated Rahman on his election, saying he would take the reins of the General Assembly "at a moment of deep challenge but also profound possibility" for the United Nations.

"But the hard work of diplomacy, dialogue and collaboration that happens each and every day here at the General Assembly gives me renewed hope that we can transform divisions into determination to work in common purpose," he said.

Annalena Baerbock, president of the 80th session of the General Assembly, said Rahman would serve during what were "certainly not ordinary times", noting that the role of president has evolved in an era when consensus can no longer be taken for granted and defending the UN Charter has become a daily necessity.

She said the Assembly would continue addressing major intergovernmental processes, including implementation of the Pact for the Future and ongoing reform efforts under the UN80 Initiative. Baerbock said Rahman is "more than prepared" for the position, citing his decades of diplomatic and multilateral experience.

Rahman, born in 1954, joined Bangladesh's diplomatic service in 1979 and later served at the country's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in New York.

In 1999, he joined the UN Secretariat as a special adviser at the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development in Geneva. Over the next 25 years, he held senior positions in New York and Geneva and contributed to several major UN flagship publications.

Rahman will assume the presidency for a one-year term when the 81st session of the General Assembly opens on Sept 8.

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WORLD

Zero-tariff policy boosts export power

Experts see Egypt among beneficiaries as measure enhances competitiveness

By SARA EL ASHRAFY in Cairo
For China Daily

China's zero-tariff policy toward African countries marks a shift that goes beyond traditional trade considerations, reshaping global economic relations through deeper integration and stronger links to international value chains, Egyptian analysts say.

With China-Africa trade exceeding $348 billion last year, the policy signals a new phase in the economic repositioning of 53 African countries within the global economy by boosting export competitiveness, attracting investment and promoting export-oriented industrialization, they said.

The move also opens wider prospects for deepening China-Egypt relations at a symbolic moment, coinciding with the 70th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries, they added.

"This policy represents a structural shift in the philosophy of trade relations between China and Africa, moving toward a more long-term economic partnership," said Nermeen Tawfik, coordinator of the Pharos Center for Strategic Studies and Consultations.

The measure underscores Beijing's efforts to further strengthen its relations with Africa, secure supply chains and institutionalize a cooperation model based on mutual benefit and deeper integration into global value chains, Tawfik said.

The elimination of tariffs is expected to enhance the competitiveness of Egyptian and other African goods in the Chinese market, one of the world's largest in terms of both scale and demand, she added.

The decision comes at a time of growing divergence in global trade policies among major countries and stands in contrast to approaches marked by protectionism, reflecting China's commitment to openness and free trade, Tawfik said.

"Egypt is strategically positioned to capitalize on this shift, particularly through its industrial base and geographic advantage as a regional trade gateway," she said.

Tawfik said the policy will boost joint projects, especially the Chinese industrial zone in Ain Sokhna within the Suez Canal Economic Zone. Serving as a key manufacturing and export platform, the zone helps integrate Egypt-based production into Chinese-led supply chains while attracting investment in sectors such as textiles and manufacturing.

The development is expected to further strengthen Egypt's role as a strategic hub linking Africa, Asia and Europe, she added.

"The Ain Sokhna industrial zone is emerging as a key platform for export-oriented manufacturing integrated into Chinese supply chains," she said.

She cautioned, however, that the extent to which African countries benefit from the tariff-free policy will depend on their ability to undertake structural economic upgrades and enhance industrial capacity.

Structural shift

Ghada Kamal, an Egyptian expert in international affairs and African studies, said China's zero-tariff policy, which took effect on May 1, represents a structural transformation in economic relations between Beijing and the Global South.

The decision reflects China's strategic orientation toward deepening economic integration with Africa by fully opening its market to African products, Kamal said.

"China is deliberately repositioning African economies within the global trading system through full and unconditional market access," she said.

Egypt stands out as one of the leading candidates to benefit from this shift because of its unique geoeconomic advantages, she said. "Egypt combines industrial capacity, infrastructure development and strategic location, making it one of the strongest beneficiaries of this policy shift."

On sectoral effects, Kamal highlighted the immediate gains for Egyptian exports. "The removal of tariffs ... creates an immediate and measurable competitive advantage for Egyptian goods in the Chinese market," she said.

The policy also enhances Africa's appeal to foreign direct investment by combining competitive production costs with guaranteed access to the Chinese market, she added.

The initiative complements the African Continental Free Trade Area by strengthening regional value chains and promoting economic integration across Africa, she said.

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.



Customs officers inspect a shipment of fresh Egyptian oranges at Shanghai's Waigaoqiao Port on May 1. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Demonstrators protest a proposed United States-backed Ebola quarantine facility in Nanyuki, Kenya, on Monday, with a sign that reads, "Laikipia is not a dumping site. Take back that money, we do not want Ebola in Kenya." JOHN MUCHUCHA / REUTERS

US-backed Ebola facility in Kenya draws protests

By SHARON NAKOLA
in Nairobi, Kenya
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Hundreds of residents in Kenya's central town of Nanyuki protested on Monday against a proposed Ebola quarantine facility backed by the United States, days after a court temporarily suspended the project amid growing concerns.

The demonstrators marched through parts of the town carrying placards and chanting slogans, opposing the planned facility at Laikipia Air Base, about 200 kilometers north of Nairobi.

Protest organizer Patrick Wahome said two people were killed by gunshot wounds after police opened fire. A security source also said two people had died but did not specify the cause of death, Reuters reported.

Police spokesman Michael Muchiri said he was not aware of the deaths.

Local media reports of increased activity at the base have fueled speculation that preparations are underway, though authorities have not publicly confirmed that construction has begun.

President William Ruto confirmed on Monday that Kenya had agreed in principle to support the initiative following discussions with the US.

The decision reflected decades of cooperation between the two countries in public health and disease control, he said.

Many residents said they feared the facility could expose local communities to Ebola, despite government assurances that the project is intended to strengthen preparedness against potential regional outbreaks.

Others questioned why Kenya should host a quarantine center for individuals potentially exposed to the virus when the country has not recorded any active Ebola cases, while the number of suspected cases in the Democratic Republic of Congo topped 100, with more than 300 confirmed cases.

"We have started seeing planes going that way, and it is like that quarantine area has already been built. We are very angry," Nanyuki resident Nick Karari said during the protests.

The proposal has become politically sensitive as the planned facility would reportedly receive US citizens exposed to Ebola, while Kenya has no active cases. Critics argue that the country's health system should not assume additional risks.

On Friday, Kenya's High Court issued orders temporarily suspending the establishment of the quarantine, isolation or treatment center and blocking the arrival of any foreign patients pending the hearing of a petition filed by civil society groups.

The petitioners argue that the arrangement raises legal and public health concerns and should undergo greater public scrutiny before implementation.

High Court Judge Patricia Nyaundi on Tuesday issued an order barring the government from taking any steps to build or begin operations at the facility before the case is resolved.

The judge also ordered the government to disclose all agreements and operational protocols related to the facility within seven days and scheduled the next hearing for June 23.

The controversy has also drawn criticism from professional bodies. Last week, the Kenya Medical Practitioners, Pharmacists and Dentists Union questioned whether the country's health system is adequately prepared to manage highly infectious diseases.

The Health Ministry has defended the initiative, saying the planned facility is part of broader preparedness measures and would serve public health needs rather than any single nationality.

Health Cabinet Secretary Aden Duale said the center was intended for "everyone" and not exclusively for US citizens.

Duanwu celebration brings cultures together

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
Renali@chinadailyusa.com

The fragrance of freshly wrapped *zongzi* filled the hall as bronze chime music from China's Hubei province echoed through a cultural gathering in Los Angeles, where Chinese and American residents came together to celebrate the traditions of Duanwu Jie, also known as the Dragon Boat Festival.

Decorated with *zongzi*, a sticky rice dumpling, traditional sachets filled with herbs for blessings, and other festive symbols, the venue hosted the launch ceremony for the first California Duanwu Jie on Saturday. The festival is scheduled to be celebrated on June 19 following a resolution adopted by the California State Assembly that recognizes the fifth day of the fifth lunar month on June 19 as the inaugural Duanwu Jie in California. It describes the holiday as having more than 2,000 years of history and deep cultural significance.

"We traveled from the banks of Yangtze River to Los Angeles, aiming to introduce the traditions and cultural heritage of Hubei province to California through the Dragon Boat Festival celebration," Yu Hui, deputy manager of Hubei Cultural and Tourism Group, told China Daily.

Yu described Hubei as the birthplace of the esteemed statesman and patriotic poet Qu Yuan during the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) and an important cradle of Chu culture and Dragon Boat Festival traditions, including dragon boat racing and the eating of *zongzi*.

He introduced cultural and tourism landmarks including the Three Gorges, Mount Wudang, Shennongjia and the Enshi Grand Canyon, while inviting American visitors to experience Hubei's history, cuisine and cultural heritage firsthand.



Guests from Hubei province and California unveil the logo for the inaugural California Duanwu Jie celebration during a cultural exchange event in Los Angeles on Saturday. RENA LI/ CHINA DAILY

Immersed in the festive atmosphere, Bob Weis, former president of Walt Disney Imagineering, said cultural exchanges continue to strengthen people-to-people ties between China and the United States despite geopolitical tensions.

"I think it's great for California. There's such a strong connection between Chinese culture and the people here, and California culture," Weis said. "To have this great Dragon Boat Festival, which is so well known across China, and so important to the culture, brought here — it's great."

Weis said California has long maintained an open environment for cultural exchange and noted that modern travelers are increasingly seeking authentic cultural experiences and meaningful human connections. Weis said the recognition of Duanwu Jie reflected a growing appreciation of Chinese heritage in California.

"This is more than a symbolic gesture," Weis said. "It reflects a growing appreciation for Chinese heritage and an understanding that cultural traditions enrich all of our communities."

According to Phillip Chen, the California assembly member who proposed the resolution, recognizing Dragon Boat Festival helps promote cultural understanding and strengthens community connections across California's diverse population.

"It's significant because it brings culture and understanding," Chen said, adding that the festival highlights the importance of people coming together across cultural backgrounds.

Wang Lei, president of the Jingchu Culture Foundation of America, noted that the California resolution incorporated the Chinese pinyin name "Duanwu" directly into legislative text and explicitly referenced Qu Yuan and the festival's traditional values.

"For more than 2,000 years, the values embodied by Qu Yuan — love of country, cultural confidence, integrity and the pursuit of ideals — have inspired generations of Chinese people around the world," Wang said.

"Today, by launching the first California Duanwu Festival, we are not only celebrating a traditional holiday, but also carrying forward a cultural spirit that transcends time, geography and generations," he added.

Huang Hongjiang, deputy Chinese consul general in Los Angeles, emphasized the importance of cultural and educational exchanges between China and California.

"Our relations require not only government-to-government linkage, but also people-to-people exchanges," Huang said. "Today's event is a good example that we are working together to deepen cultural, educational and people-to-people exchanges."

Zhou Min, a professor of sociology and Asian American studies and director of the UCLA Asia Pacific Center, said the recognition carries broader symbolic significance related to cultural diversity and inclusion.

"I am not surprised that California would recognize the festival," Zhou said. "The symbolism behind it is that California recognizes cultural diversity, and recognizing ethnic holidays is part of that process."

Zhou added that food and festivals often serve as important cultural connections across communities. She noted that many of her students enjoy *zongzi* and view the Dragon Boat Festival as part of a broader celebration of multiculturalism and Asian cultural traditions in California.

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COMMENT

Editorials

To show its sincerity for talks, US should rein in its allies to prevent misjudgment

Representatives from the Chinese and US militaries held a working group meeting of the Military Maritime Consultative Agreement in Hawaii on Thursday and Friday. That was the first formal naval and air force working group exchange since the US president's visit to China from May 13 to May 15.

The two sides had candid and constructive exchanges on the current China-US air and maritime safety and security situation, evaluated the execution of the Rules of Behavior for Safety of Air and Maritime Encounters since the MMCA in 2025, and discussed measures to improve China-US military maritime safety and security, according to a release of the People's Liberation Army.

On Thursday, the Chinese Ministry of Commerce announced that the Chinese and US teams have agreed in principle to discuss, under the trade council, a reciprocal tariff reduction framework arrangement on products of equivalent scale and worth $30 billion or more on each side. Whether it is military communication or progress in the economic and trade fields, both demonstrate the shared willingness of China and the United States to translate the outcomes of the US leader's visit to China into concrete actions and tangible results.

Multiple rounds of China-US economic and trade consultations have already taken place, and bilateral trade relations have shown signs of stabilization in recent months. Yet direct military engagement between the two sides has remained far less frequent. Meanwhile, tensions in the Asia-Pacific region have persisted due to a variety of factors. As a result, the Hawaii meeting has drawn widespread attention. That also reflects the region's broader expectation that China and the US will properly manage their military relationship, as well as the general hope for peace and stability in the region.

As agreed by the two sides in Hawaii, effective communication and exchanges between the two militaries can help frontline troops perform tasks in a more professional manner, deepen mutual understanding and avoid misperception and miscalculation. But apart from that, it is hard to ignore that the PLA stressed in its release on the meeting that China firmly opposes any action that undermines China's sovereignty and security under the pretext of "freedom of navigation and overflight", and opposes any infringement, provocation and close-in reconnaissance and harassment targeting China. It added that China will continue to firmly safeguard national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, and uphold regional peace and prosperity.

The timing of the Hawaii meeting could hardly be starker, which explains the PLA's reiteration of its principled stance. On the day before the Hawaii meeting opened, China's military drove away the Dutch frigate, HNLMS *De Ruyter*, which had illegally entered Chinese waters around the Xisha Islands. While Japan and the Philippines announced on Thursday they will hold talks to "delimit an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf" east of China's Taiwan island. And five days before the meeting, the Canadian frigate, HMCS *Charlottetown*, conducted a spuriously described "routine transit" through the Taiwan Strait.

The Netherlands and Canada have both defended their respective actions as exercises of "freedom of navigation". Meanwhile, Japan and the Philippines are cloaking their provocations against China under the guise of safeguarding a "free and open Indo-Pacific". These narratives are all "intellectual property" of the US, and all such actions are taken within the broader "Indo-Pacific" strategy framework engineered by Washington. This says nothing of the considerable efforts the US has made to revive the Quad, most notably through last month's foreign ministers' meeting in New Delhi.

Thus, China is experiencing an increasingly contradictory approach: a US that professes its desire for communication and de-escalation, as reflected in US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's toned-down remarks at last week's Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore, set against an increasingly reckless and provocative cohort of US allies and partners.

In other words, while Washington has signaled a desire to stabilize ties with China and expand communication channels, some actions by US allies and partners continue to create tensions and complicate efforts to build mutual trust. This divergence between diplomatic messaging and developments on the ground remains a source of concern for regional stability. In the process, Japan has emerged as the most enthusiastic. Under the logic laid out by the US — that the free-riding era is over as Hegseth underscored again in Singapore — Tokyo is buying US missiles and expanding military cooperation in return for US tolerance of its remilitarization. For Washington, this is convenient burden-shifting. But Japan is the real beneficiary, using US support to break free of historical constraints.

If military mutual trust between China and the US is to have any substance, the US is obliged to curb the actions of its regional allies. The repeated harassment and provocative military activities on China's doorstep only serve to raise the risk of misjudgment. The region's most dangerous trigger for conflict might be the US' unwillingness to rein in a Japan that is increasingly acting as a loose cannon. The US cannot on the one hand prepare the table for dialogue, and on the other hand permit its allies and partners to recklessly try to usher its guest away from the table.

New rules to protect overseas investments

In the first four months of this year, China's outbound direct investment across all industries was 429.42 billion yuan ($63.50 billion), an increase of 3.9 percent year-on-year. And the country's total outbound direct investment reached $174.38 billion last year, with over 50,000 enterprises having overseas investments.

But recent events, such as the decision by the Dutch government late last year to take over Nexperia, a Chinese-owned semiconductor company, on the grounds of "national security", and a Panamanian court's ruling earlier this year that annulled Hong Kong-based CK Hutchison's contract to operate two ports at the Panama Canal, highlight the challenges Chinese enterprises are encountering abroad amid rising unilateralism, protectionism and heightened geopolitical tensions.

A new regulation is therefore a timely response to safeguard the legitimate rights of Chinese companies with investments overseas, and help protect the nation's sovereignty, security and development interests. The regulation on outbound investment, issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, and set to take effect on July 1, marks China's first administrative rule specifically targeting the overseas investment activities of Chinese enterprises. The regulation, comprising 34 articles, aims to promote the country's high-standard opening-up and enhance the quality of its outbound investments.

First and foremost, it provides a comprehensive protective shield for Chinese enterprises at various stages of their overseas investments. These include risk assessment and early warning systems based on the security situations in target countries before investments begin, as well as consular protection and assistance during major emergencies.

Additionally, if Chinese investors encounter trade-related investment barriers in the host country or region, the relevant departments of the State Council will conduct investigations and, based on the results of these investigations, may adjust country-specific investment policies and implement measures such as import or export bans or restrictions on certain goods and technologies.

While encouraging enterprises to resolve disputes related to their outbound investments through various means such as negotiation, mediation, arbitration and litigation, the regulation offers an enhanced legal "toolbox" that enables a precise and robust response to any discriminatory measure taken by a foreign government.

Additionally, the new regulation emphasizes service guidance for outbound enterprises. The government will establish a comprehensive overseas service system, coordinating resources across areas such as foreign affairs, law, finance, taxation, logistics, customs and trade promotion to offer comprehensive service guarantees.

The regulation states that China will actively align with international high-standard economic and trade rules, promote high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, participate in the formulation of international investment rules, and foster international cooperation in industry and supply chains. This will be conducive to opposing unilateralism and protectionism, and to the construction of an open world economy.

The new rules mark a milestone in the legal framework for China's outbound investment sector. They are expected to help improve China's foreign investment management system, enhance oversight of direct investments overseas and strengthen risk prevention and control.

The measures markedly elevate the quality of China's outbound investments, paving the way for new opportunities in mutually beneficial international cooperation.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Synergy conducive to unity and development of Global South

The fifth China-Brazil Foreign Ministerial-Level Comprehensive Strategic Dialogue in Beijing on Monday is a reminder that the future international order may depend more on how major developing countries align their interests and actions.

The Chinese Foreign Ministry's readout of the strategic dialogue between Foreign Minister Wang Yi and Brazilian Foreign Minister Mauro Vieira indicates that China and Brazil are seeking to build a partnership that extends well beyond bilateral diplomacy.

The relationship has evolved steadily over the past three decades. China and Brazil established a strategic partnership in 1993, upgraded ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership in 2012, and jointly elevated relations to a China-Brazil community with a shared future for a more just world and a more sustainable planet in 2024.

International institutions face mounting strain as conflicts, trade disputes and geopolitical fragmentation have intensified demands for stability. In an era when hegemony, unilateralism and protectionism are once again on the rise in various parts of the world, the rationale for deeper coordination among major developing countries has never been more compelling.

Vieira said that Brazil looks forward to consolidating strategic mutual trust with China, deepening practical cooperation, cementing public support for bilateral ties and achieving common prosperity, expressing Brazil's readiness to work with China to enhance multilateral coordination, jointly advance the reform of the global governance system, uphold the authority of the United Nations and promote international fairness and justice.

The foundation for the development of relations in that direction is solid. China is Brazil's largest trading partner, while Brazil is China's ninth-largest trading partner. Bilateral trade reached nearly $188 billion in 2025. Chinese exports to Brazil range from machinery, telecommunications equipment and chemical products to transportation equipment and steel. Brazilian exports to China include iron ore, soybeans, crude oil and pulp. Such complementarities provide an important degree of stability for global supply chains.

The signing in 2023 of a memorandum establishing renminbi clearing arrangements in Brazil and the 2024 agreement aligning Belt and Road cooperation with Brazil's Growth Acceleration Program, New Industry Plan, Ecological Transformation Plan and South American Integration Routes Plan point to an increasingly deeper economic partnership featuring development and strategic alignment.

Yet perhaps the most underappreciated dimension of China-Brazil relations lies in people-to-people ties. Exchanges in education, tourism, media, youth affairs and subnational cooperation continue to expand, and the two governments are preparing for the 2026 China-Brazil Cultural Year.

Sport offers a particularly vivid example. For more than three decades, Brazilian footballers have played for Chinese clubs. Chinese football supporters cannot forget that several key members of China's historic 2002 FIFA World Cup squad emerged from a training program in Brazil during the 1990s. Many later became coaches, passing a Brazilian influence to younger generations. When the 2026 World Cup kicks off, many in China will be rooting for Brazil.

Such connections matter because durable international partnerships require public support, not merely governmental agreement.

The broader significance of the dialogue on Monday lies in its recognition that reforming global governance can no longer be postponed. Wang urged the two countries to jointly promote the development of a more just and equitable global governance system.

If major Global South countries such as China and Brazil can maintain strategic mutual trust, deepen practical cooperation and strengthen coordination through mechanisms including the United Nations and BRICS, they will help inject a measure of predictability into an increasingly volatile world. In an age increasingly defined by uncertainty in some parts of the world, that may be one of the most valuable public goods any major-country engagement can provide.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

Ties: Cooperation key for tackling global issues

From page 1

The competition and confrontation between them have been established not merely as an issue for the two countries, but as a key factor having a direct or indirect impact on global economic growth.

The combined nominal GDP of the US and China already accounts for more than 43 percent of the global economy, with the two economies playing a very important role in global economic growth. Furthermore, global supply chain fragmentation and competition for technological leadership are exacerbating global geopolitical and geo-economic uncertainty. Under these circumstances, discussions between the two countries to establish a relationship of "constructive strategic stability" can serve as a foundation for a new vision for US-China relations.

In particular, the stable management of US-China relations and restrained competition are essential for addressing transnational challenges, such as maintaining peace, achieving economic prosperity and responding to climate change in the Asia-Pacific region, which is the hub of the global economy and supply chains.

This is because a conflict between two superpowers would inevitably lead to economic damage and security instability for countries in the region. To realize the vision of the Chinese Dream and MAGA coexisting harmoniously, both countries must expand the scope of cooperation rather than conflict in three major areas of international order and security.

First, the strategic space for global supply chains and economic prosperity must be expanded.

The restructuring of global supply chains and deglobalization have a negative impact on the world economy, as trade conflicts and tariff barriers between the two countries fragment global supply chains and increase production costs. If global supply chains collapse, production and investment in neighboring countries will also continuously shrink. This would inevitably affect the interests of both the US and China. Therefore, the strategic scope for cooperation must be expanded for the sustainable economic growth of the US and China and countries in the Asia-Pacific.

Second, mutual communication channels must be expanded for global geopolitical stability.

Geopolitical conflicts and clashes in the Middle East and Ukraine are inflicting shocking damage on global security and the economy, so responsible risk management by the US and China, which are engaged in strategic competition, is crucial for minimizing global geopolitical conflicts.

Diplomatic compromise and communication between the two countries can play a key role in stabilizing the global economy and mitigating supply chain risks. Furthermore, efforts need to be made to prevent accidental clashes and to establish a relationship of strategic stability, which can also prevent regional instability and foster a peaceful diplomatic environment.

Third, the US and China can play a leading role in jointly responding to global issues such as climate change. Climate change and changes in the marine environment are interconnected — core global issues that cause ecosystem destruction, food insecurity and extreme weather events. Only when the two countries cooperate can such transnational issues be effectively resolved.

While the relationship between the US and China is based on the fundamental axis of "strategic competition", it can also be a relationship of competitive collaboration, in which they can cooperate to avoid unnecessary conflict while pursuing their own interests. It is crucial for the two nations to cooperate for economic interdependence and the resolution of global issues, while simultaneously engaging in strategic competition for national interests.

The author is chairman of the Korea-China Association and a professor of China studies at Yongin University in South Korea. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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VIEWS

Chang Yen-Chiang and Zhou Siyu

Maritime delimitation talks have no legal basis

During the visit of the Philippine President Ferdinand Romualdez Marcos Jr to Japan from May 26 to 29, both nations announced the start of bilateral negotiations on the delimitation of exclusive economic zones and continental shelves, directly targeting the maritime areas east of China's Taiwan Island.

This provocative move violates China's legitimate maritime rights and interests, and runs counter to the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea and basic norms of international relations.

The negotiations signify a deepening maritime security alliance and escalating geopolitical coordination between Japan and the Philippines.

Beneath the diplomatic surface lie clear strategic calculations. Japan is leveraging its alliance with the United States to break free from postwar pacifist constraints and expand its maritime control footprint across the Western Pacific.

The Philippines, meanwhile, is seeking external support to counterbalance China's legal sovereign claims in the South China Sea and the waters off eastern Taiwan.

By negotiating and disposing of maritime areas that are under China's jurisdiction, the two sides are attempting to undermine China's maritime rights and interests. The move is closely linked to the broader geopolitical pattern of the Western Pacific, and poses significant risks.

First, it threatens China's maritime rights and interests. Should Japan and the Philippines reach a formal delimitation agreement, they will unilaterally allocate rights for fishing, oil and gas exploration, marine scientific research and other maritime activities in the targeted waters. Such a deal would establish an illegal status quo, forcing China into a passive position and substantially driving up the cost of future rights protection. It would also undermine China's long-established lawful practices of maritime management, resource development and sustainable utilization in these traditional waters.

Second, the move fuels geopolitical tensions across the Taiwan Strait.

By focusing on the sea areas east of China's Taiwan island, Japan and the Philippines are pushing for the "internationalization" of the Taiwan question.

They aim to fabricate a false perception of maritime separation across the Taiwan Strait, collude with the separatist "Taiwan independence" forces on the island and disrupt China's national reunification process. Their geopolitical manipulation adds volatility to the regional security landscape.

Third, it endangers regional maritime governance. If this backdoor maritime delimitation by Japan and the Philippines is tolerated by the international community, it will set a dangerous precedent.

Other states may follow suit, forming small cliques to privately divide overlapping maritime domains. Such trends would marginalize the dispute settlement mechanisms under UNCLOS and weaken China's regional framework which prioritizes sovereignty and bilateral consultation in maritime disputes.

Fourth, it creates room for external powers to interfere in regional affairs. Both Japan and the Philippines are embedded in the US-led Asia-Pacific alliance system, and have received implicit support from Washington.

The US may try to take advantage of this development to scale up patrolling east of Taiwan and establish a formal trilateral maritime coordination mechanism with Japan and the Philippines to further compress China's strategic space in the Western Pacific.

China has solid legal grounds to reject these illegitimate negotiations. At the domestic level, China's Law on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone and Law on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf explicitly stipulate that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China's territory, with all adjacent maritime areas under China's jurisdiction.

On the international level, China enjoys complete sovereign rights over the exclusive economic zone, as well as inherent jurisdiction over continental shelf exploration, exploitation and governance in these waters.

No third state is entitled to conduct private maritime delimitation, resource distribution or jurisdiction partition negotiations without approval by China.

Thus, the Japan-Philippines negotiations lack legal legitimacy.

Under the natural prolongation doctrine of UNCLOS, China's continental shelf extends to cover the sea areas east of Taiwan. China holds sovereign rights over the seabed, subsoil and natural resources of these waters.

UNCLOS also makes it clear that wherever there are overlapping sovereign claims involving a third party, relevant states shall not bypass the entitled sovereign state to separately finalize delimitation arrangements.

Only adjacent or opposite states can undertake maritime boundary negotiations without any third-party sovereign involvement. Therefore, the Japan-Philippines negotiations violate the core spirit of UNCLOS and have no international legal validity whatsoever.

Above all, national sovereignty is non-negotiable. As an administrative region of China, Taiwan has no independent maritime sovereignty.

Any state handling maritime affairs surrounding Taiwan must recognize the one-China principle and respect China's full sovereignty over Taiwan and its affiliated maritime spaces.

By excluding China and arbitrarily arranging marine affairs east of the Taiwan Strait, Japan and the Philippines are attempting to divide China's territorial and maritime sovereignty.

Their actions cross the red line of the one-China principle and China will never tolerate such infringement upon its core national interests.

Chang Yen-Chiang is a professor at the School of Law at Dalian Maritime University; Zhou Siyu is a postgraduate at the same school.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Amitendu Palit

Innovation fuels investor trust in Asia-Pacific

The year 2026 has so far been marked by turmoil and chaos in the global economy.

The Iran conflict has created an unprecedented energy crisis, driving up prices of commodities and services. Asia has been hit hard because it is heavily dependent on imports from the Middle East. As the crisis deepens and economic difficulties increase, concerns are beginning to arise about investments.

Economic instability is bad news for investors, as uncertainty clouds the economic outlook and undermines investor confidence. Both long-term investors committed to foreign direct investment and short-term investors focusing on gains from the capital market are impacted by uncertainty. For Asian economies, this uncertainty has become a serious issue as investors are hesitating to commit funds.

Global Lens

Investor sentiments can improve significantly if they are convinced that major Asian economies can withstand the current crisis and remain committed to their development plans. Though much depends on the outlook for China, it is not the only economy that matters. China's ability to grow along with the other economies of Southeast Asia is equally important.

Investment decisions are significantly influenced by investor confidence in the resilience of economies. China is actively working to enhance the long-term resilience of its economy by positioning itself as an innovation hub.

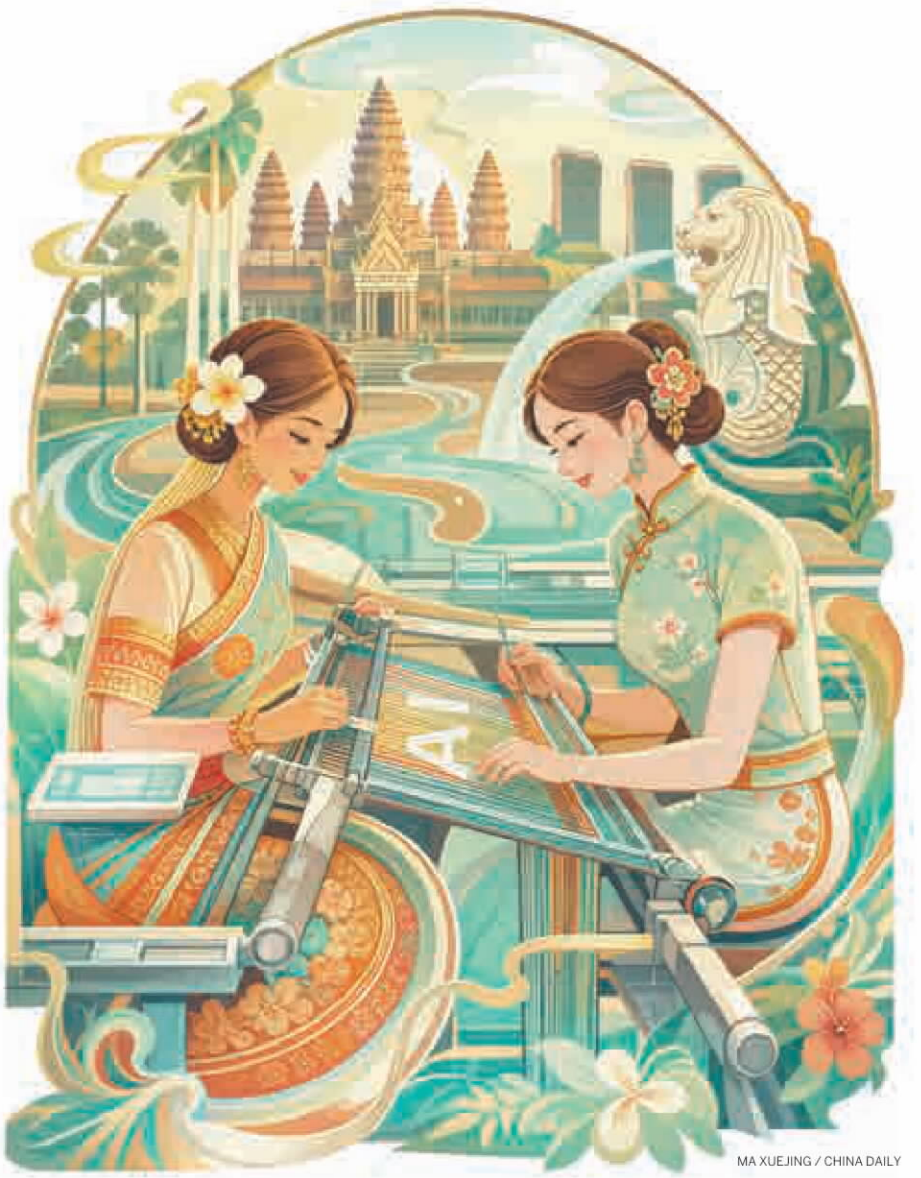
How does becoming an innovation hub improve economic resilience? Innovation provides solutions to complex problems. It does not always have to be path-breaking and phenomenal; incremental progress is equally valuable. An economy's capacity to innovate determines its ability to adapt its industries and institutions to withstand future shocks.

Globally, most economies are using artificial intelligence to transform industrial processes, thereby increasing efficiency and boosting productivity.

However, rapid adoption requires access to AI content, an area dominated by countries that have the edge in foundational and generative AI. Countries that have enterprises owning and running large language models (LLMs) are at the forefront of innovative AI production. The United States and China are global leaders in this regard.

China has invested substantially in both foundational and embodied AI. While the former involves training LLMs to conduct research and propose solutions for new problems, the latter emphasizes the use of robots to raise industrial productivity.

Both contribute to increasing the resilience of the country's economy.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Frontier LLMs, capable of complex reasoning and advanced code generation, offer innovative solutions for potential crises. At the same time, the use of industrial robots, combined with deep learning technologies such as image recognition and automated driving, is not only increasing productivity in traditional industries, such as textiles, chemicals and machinery, but also enabling better management of process logistics.

These improvements help industries to better handle shortages when supply chains are disrupted and overcome logistics challenges caused by pandemics or similar events.

China's innovation capabilities are complemented by its collaboration with the broader region, particularly Southeast Asia. Regional economies such as Vietnam and Malaysia have developed expertise in semiconductor assembly, testing, packaging and fabrication.

These economies, along with others in Southeast Asia, are working on formalizing the digital economy framework agreement, which will establish regional rules for the digital economy.

Coupled with the focus on training workers in AI, including integrating AI into school curricula, this initiative should provide the region with a workforce skilled in AI.

The existing economic synergies between China and the region, as already seen through various industry supply chains, can become more resilient as China's innovation outcomes combine with the region's ability to absorb them.

Understanding the Chinese strategy of becoming an innovation hub, and extending the reach of the hub to Southeast Asia for developing a wider regional innovation ecosystem, is important for investors.

This understanding is likely to generate more confidence among investors as they closely monitor how Asian economies are navigating external shocks.

The military conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza and Iran have created new stress tests for Asian economies. Traditional solutions are no longer enough to build resilience. Innovation outcomes and their collective application can be a game changer.

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Ma Junchi and Sun Yanhong

CEE navigating changes with strategic diversification

In the rapidly shifting geopolitical and geoeconomic landscape, Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) finds itself at a crossroads. Whether the region can defuse the crisis it faces and turn challenges into opportunities will determine the trajectory of its economic development.

Traditionally, the CEE region's economic model has leaned heavily on Europe for investment, Russia for energy and the United States for security.

For decades, CEE nations, such as Hungary, have leveraged their European Union and NATO memberships and access to low-cost Russian energy to attract substantial Western European investments, cementing their position as Europe's backyard of manufacturing.

However, these foundational pillars are now teetering. A sluggish European economy has dampened market demand and investment in Western Europe, and the spillover has hit CEE enterprises that were key suppliers to that market. Surging energy prices have squeezed profit margins for the CEE's energy-intensive industries.

And the US has pulled back from its security commitments, urging CEE countries to shoulder more responsibility.

Faced with these headwinds, CEE countries have adopted a three-pronged strategy: diversifying investment sources, energy supplies and security guarantees to offset the waning role of Western Europe, Russia and the US in driving economic growth.

First, the region is making a concerted push to attract Asian capital to accelerate its integration into the new energy vehicle industry chain.

Traditional automotive manufacturing is the cornerstone of the CEE economy, contributing 7 to 14 percent to the region's GDP. But Western European automakers are grappling with hurdles in their electrification transition, forcing downstream CEE economies to turn to Asian investment in NEV and battery manufacturing.

The Republic of Korea has emerged as a leading non-EU investor in recent years and China has been Hungary's largest source of FDI since 2023.

It was precisely to meet the need for investment diversification that Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic visited China last month, announcing that Chinese enterprises across various sectors — including automotive parts manufacturing, humanoid robotics, energy, and artificial intelligence — will invest €940 million in Serbia.

Second, CEE countries are broadening the sources of their energy imports and boosting domestic supply to safeguard energy security and price stability. Norway, the US, Qatar and Central Asia are new energy suppliers. Most CEE nations have either phased out or drastically cut oil and gas imports from Russia. Although Hungary and Slovakia continue to purchase Russian energy, they are also scaling up imports from Azerbaijan and Central Asia.

Romania, with its Black Sea natural gas reserves, is poised to become energy self-sufficient. Other CEE countries are enhancing the interconnection of energy pipelines or ramping up the development of nuclear energy, wind power and photovoltaic power to increase electricity supply.

Third, the region is bolstering its domestic defense industry to foster new economic growth drivers.

With the Russia-Ukraine conflict continuing to escalate and the US scaling back its strategic presence in Europe, CEE countries have no choice but to strengthen their self-defense capabilities. Czechoslovak Group, a major Czech defense manufacturer, has signed a seven-year ammunition procurement deal worth up to €58 billion ($67 billion) with the Slovak government.

Defense firms from Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Hungary and other CEE states are engaging in joint production with international players such as Germany's Rheinmetall, ROK's Hanwha Aerospace and Hyundai Rotem.

Furthermore, CEE countries are utilizing funds from the EU's Connecting Europe Facility to improve north-south vertical infrastructure interconnection, thereby bolstering the defense capabilities of NATO's eastern flank.

The CEE's diversification strategy not only aims to maintain economic growth, but also to seize the opportunity for structural adjustment to enhance the added value of local industries.

Many CEE countries are linking investment incentives to local production and high-value-added R&D activities. For example, Slovakia requires Gotion High-tech to collaborate with local R&D teams at Inobat and establish a research center in the country.

The Czech Republic has shifted its investment incentives from job creation to high-value-added creation, successfully attracting automation giants such as Japan's Fanuc to set up technical support centers. The Polish government has mandated that ROK defense enterprises conduct production, assembly and post-sales maintenance in the country, and transfer production technologies to local firms.

Given this backdrop, China and CEE countries can strengthen economic cooperation in four major fields.

First, both sides can deepen collaboration in the NEV industry chain, with Chinese NEV manufacturers exploring partnerships with local CEE enterprises for conducting research and training programs with universities and institutions, and investing in local battery recycling and reuse.

Chinese NEV manufacturers can also continue to strengthen cooperation with local suppliers in CEE, leveraging technology spillover effects to facilitate the upgrading of CEE's local automotive industry.

Second, both sides can consolidate cooperation in renewable energy. Chinese enterprises can continue to develop projects with CEE counterparts and provide battery energy storage systems, virtual power plants, and other cost-effective solutions for the region's green economic transition.

Third, China and CEE countries can implement an integrated infrastructure project management model covering investment, financing and construction to promote market-oriented operation and sustainable development of infrastructure projects.

Fourth, scaling up the China-CEE Investment Cooperation Fund can finance green energy, digital economy, logistics and other sectors. By combining syndicated loans with equity financing, the fund can provide full-cycle financial support for major investment projects.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

SAMUEL KOFI DARKWA

Forging a new era

China-Africa cooperation represents a vital partnership that holds great potential for mutual growth and development

The relationship between China and Africa is deeply rooted in a shared historical context marked by struggles against colonialism, neocolonialism and imperialism. This bond has evolved significantly over the years, driven by both historical ties and contemporary needs. Chairman Mao Zedong and Ghana's first president Kwame Nkrumah played pivotal roles in establishing early cooperation, highlighting solidarity that transcends borders. Today, the China-Africa partnership is not merely an extension of historical alliances; it has transformed into a multifaceted and dynamic collaboration aimed at addressing new challenges in development, sustainability and globalization. This modern partnership is characterized by strategic collaborations that focus on sustainable development, industrialization and local empowerment, while navigating the complexities brought about by geopolitical shifts and increasing global interdependence.



In recent years, the China-Africa partnership has increasingly centered on economic development and the urgent need for job creation. According to China's General Administration of Customs, bilateral trade between Africa and China exceeded $348 billion in 2025. Africa is experiencing swift demographic changes, predominantly comprising a youthful demographic eager for employment opportunities. In this context, the necessity for job creation and skills development has never been more critical. China offers a robust model of accelerated industrialization — one that African nations are eager to emulate as they seek to foster their own economic growth. Through initiatives such as the Belt and Road Initiative, China has made substantial investments in infrastructure projects across the continent. These initiatives not only lay the physical groundwork for economic advancement but also enhance regional connectivity, bolstering intra-African trade and encouraging cooperation among nations that face similar developmental challenges.

Moreover, as African nations confront the imperative of enhancing their economic independence, the push for local processing and value addition to raw materials becomes pivotal. Many African countries seek to move from merely exporting raw materials to developing their own production capabilities. This transition is essential for ensuring that they retain a significant share of the value generated from their natural resources. China stands out as a key partner in this endeavor, providing not only capital investment but also expertise in manufacturing and technology. By facilitating joint ventures in diverse industries such as agro-processing, textiles, and renewable energy, both sides can create significant job opportunities and provide essential skills training for local workforces. This collaboration can lead to a more sustainable economic future, where African nations can thrive independently while benefiting from China's industrial expertise.

China's commitment to Africa extends to a shared focus on sustainable development, particularly in light of the pressing environmental challenges faced globally. Both parties recognize the urgent need to address climate change and its repercussions on their respective economies and populations. Investments in renewable energy projects, including solar, wind and hydroelectric facilities, have become focal points of cooperation between China and African nations. These partnerships not only aim to fulfill rising energy demands but also align with global environmental goals. Through concerted efforts to develop clean energy infrastructure, both China and African countries can collaboratively combat climate change while fostering economic resilience, demonstrating that sustainability and economic development can reinforce each other.

Despite advancements in cooperation, many observers have pointed to challenges that could hinder equitable partnerships. Key issues include debt sustainability, contract transparency and fair benefit sharing. While concerns over a potential debt trap related to Chinese financing often dominate discussions in Western-led media, it should be noted that some African nations carry heavy debts to traditional creditors such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank, surpassing the scale of their debts to China. Therefore, it is vital to adopt a balanced view of China's role in Africa's overall indebtedness, acknowledging the broader landscape of external borrowing. Additionally, China's involvement can empower African leaders to negotiate better terms with other partners. Ultimately, sustainable debt management and a focus on developmental outcomes are essential to ensure that cooperation yields real benefits for local communities and ordinary citizens.

As discussions about the future of China-Africa ties continue to evolve, African nations should make use of their collective power to forge agreements that mutually benefit their economic and social development. It is essential to continually update and enhance existing cooperation frameworks, particularly in areas such as technology transfer, promoting people-to-people exchanges and establishing comprehensive dialogue platforms. These platforms should continue to engage a broad range of stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society. By adopting a holistic approach, the partnership can ensure inclusivity and incorporate diverse perspectives, ultimately leading to more equitable outcomes for all parties involved.

Moreover, the ongoing digital revolution provides an unprecedented opportunity for both China and African nations to enhance the effectiveness of their collaboration. Digital technologies, including e-commerce, fintech innovations and digital training initiatives, can pave the way for more inclusive economic growth, particularly in areas where traditional infrastructure may be lacking. By investing in digital infrastructure, China and African countries can unlock new markets and opportunities, further embedding their economic ties. This can also empower local entrepreneurs and promote job creation in sectors where digital solutions can fill existing gaps, thereby driving growth in a manner that is sustainable and equitable.

Looking ahead, a strategic focus on regional integration will be essential for maximizing the benefits of China-Africa cooperation. By strengthening institutions such as the African Union and regional economic communities, African nations can expand their commitments in negotiations with external partners. This cohesive strategy can align with the continent's long-term developmental goals, ensuring that the partnerships formed today serve the interests of future generations. By working together, African countries can realize their potential, enhancing their economic agency and capability to navigate the complexities of global markets.

By emphasizing industrialization, job creation, sustainability and regional integration, both sides can effectively navigate the challenges ahead while building a more resilient economic framework. As Africa seeks to harness its immense potential, it should aim to engage with China and the global community in ways that prioritize local needs of different sides, ensuring that this partnership, built over many years, not only benefits the present but also lays a robust foundation for the future. The pursuit of shared goals, equitable partnerships and a commitment to collective progress will ultimately determine the success of this relationship in the years to come.

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XU GUOQING

Meaningful engagement

China-Africa cultural exchanges are presenting a new paradigm for global civilizational diversity

In an era marked by escalating geopolitical tensions and a widening deficit of trust, humanity confronts complex transnational challenges, from climate change and public health crises to developmental disparities. These global issues necessitate a departure from zero-sum mentalities, urging the international community to forge new pathways for harmonious coexistence.



In this context, China and Africa — pivotal voices of the Global South, representing nearly one-third of the global population — are collectively demonstrating a compelling alternative through their deepening engagement.

The year 2026, commemorating both the 26th anniversary of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation and the inauguration of the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges, provides a unique opportunity to deepen the relations. This dual milestone underscores the two sides' commitment to fostering exchanges rooted in equality, mutual learning and win-win cooperation, thereby making indispensable contributions to global civilizational diversity. Their collaborative practice across three interconnected dimensions — values, public goods and future pathways — shows that civilizations thrive through dialogue and mutual enrichment, not conflict.

Historically, inter-civilizational interactions have often been marred by unequal power dynamics, manifesting as a hierarchical "center-periphery" framework that prioritized one-way cultural export. China-Africa cultural exchanges fundamentally challenge this paradigm. Their engagement is predicated on mutual respect and genuine appreciation, fostering dialogue between equals. This is exemplified by the profound resonance between China's philosophy of "harmony in diversity", which advocates embracing differences while seeking common ground, and Africa's widely cherished spirit of Ubuntu, encapsulated by the principle "I am because we are", underscoring the essential bond of collective coexistence.

The 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges, through its various forums and art festivals, showcases this shared ethos. Together, China and Africa champion a value system that transcends extreme individualism, prioritizing social harmony and collective well-being. This collaborative approach offers invaluable intellectual resources for addressing pressing global challenges such as social fragmentation.

Furthermore, China-Africa exchanges challenge the long-dominant but outdated narrative that conflates modernization with Westernization. Through burgeoning media and audiovisual cooperation, China effectively shares its unique modernization journey with African audiences, while vibrant African cinema, music and literature gain broader exposure via Chinese platforms. This reciprocal showcase powerfully demonstrates that modernization is not a monolithic path but a pluralistic landscape of diverse experiences. The mutual recognition of endogenous development trajectories, deeply rooted in distinct cultural lineages, empowers nations across the Global South to explore models best suited to their specific national conditions, thereby adding new dimensions to the global tapestry of civilizations.

China-Africa cultural exchanges extend beyond theoretical advocacy, actively generating tangible and accessible cultural public goods that significantly enrich the global cultural ecosystem. A prime example is the joint archaeological project in Kenya's Lamu Archipelago. Since the 2005 cooperation agreement, Chinese and Kenyan archaeologists have collaborated extensively, conducting underwater and terrestrial excavations that have unearthed invaluable ancient Chinese blue-and-white porcelain and other artifacts. These discoveries provide concrete evidence of the prosperity of the ancient Maritime Silk Road. The knowledge derived from this two-decade-long collaboration is a shared heritage for all humanity, filling critical gaps in the historical understanding of global maritime trade and China-Africa relations. The digital preservation of African cultural heritage has emerged as a significant new area of cooperation. China is sharing its expertise, honed through projects such as "Digital Dunhuang" with African partners, applying advanced technologies such as 3D scanning, virtual archiving and artificial intelligence-assisted restoration to safeguard Africa's endangered cultural heritage. The global dissemination of these digital achievements allows people worldwide to transcend geographical and temporal barriers, appreciating the splendor of African civilizations.

Moreover, China-Africa media cooperation is actively redressing the long-standing imbalances in global information flows. For too long, Western mainstream media have predominantly shaped narratives concerning China and Africa, often perpetuating prejudice and stereotypes. Initiatives such as the "United in Heart, Path and Action — 2026 China-Africa Partnership Empowerment Action Plan" promote joint interviews, content sharing and personnel training. These efforts significantly amplify the voice of the Global South in the international discursive arena, enabling the world to access more first-hand narratives from diverse perspectives and thereby contributing powerfully to the diversity of the global information ecosystem.

The ultimate significance of civilizational exchange lies in its capacity to shape the future. The most forward-looking contribution of China-Africa cooperation is its proactive cultivation of a new global relational landscape through the empowerment of the younger generation. The 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges places youth at its core, launching flagship programs such as the "Youth Navigator" initiative. Among these, the China-Africa Youth Innovation and Entrepreneurship Competition, which has been successfully held for several editions, is particularly noteworthy. This competition focuses on cutting-edge fields including the digital economy, green technology, modern agriculture and comprehensive health. It encourages Chinese and African youth to form transnational teams and collaboratively develop innovative solutions to real-world problems. The deeper dividends of this initiative extend far beyond mere business partnerships; they foster profound emotional bonds and shared values, shaping a common vision for the future that champions inclusive growth, technology for good and sustainable development. This collaborative and forward-looking approach stands in stark contrast to the obsolete zero-sum and bloc-confrontation mentalities that regrettably persist in certain international quarters.

The 2026 China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges represents far more than a mere collection of scheduled events. It is a milestone that elevates China-Africa relations to a new level. Having successfully navigated stages of political mutual trust and economic mutual benefit, this relationship is now deepening into the highest realm of mutual civilizational appreciation and emotional resonance. Crucially, this resonance does not aim to erase differences. Instead, it embodies the profound vision of renowned sociologist Fei Xiaotong, who urged humanity to "value our own beauty, appreciate the beauty of others and let all beauties coexist in shared harmony".

In a world fraught with multifaceted challenges, China and Africa, two civilizations home to more than 2.8 billion people, are collectively sending a clear and resonant message: civilizational diversity is not a catalyst for conflict but an inexhaustible engine for human progress. Dialogue and exchanges among civilizations are not threats but an essential path toward a safer, more prosperous and more inclusive world. Through their concrete and heartwarming actions, China and Africa are actively translating the vision of a community with a shared future for humanity into tangible reality. It is imperative for the broader international community to observe, understand and draw lessons from this successful model with openness, equality and humility. Only when all civilizations set aside arrogance and prejudice and move toward mutual understanding and learning can humanity truly dispel the shadow of conflict and advance toward a future characterized by rich diversity and lasting peace.

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BUSINESS



New energy vehicles await shipment to overseas markets in Jinhua, East China's Zhejiang province, on Monday.
HU XIAOFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Global green push spurs demand for nation's NEVs

By **LI JIAYING**
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430,000 units
China's NEV exports in April, according to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers

Boosted by the growing global appetite for electrified transportation and a rebound in major overseas markets, China's new energy vehicle exports keep gaining momentum, playing an increasingly important role in accelerating the global automotive transition.

According to data from the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA), new energy passenger vehicles accounted for more than half of China's total passenger vehicle exports for the first time in April, reaching 52.7 percent.

The China Association of Automobile Manufacturers (CAAM) also reported that the country's NEV exports reached 430,000 units during the month, up 110 percent year-on-year.

The strong performance comes as consumers worldwide increasingly embrace electric vehicles amid persistently elevated fuel costs.

"The sustained rise in global oil prices has directly increased fuel costs and, in turn, strengthened consumers' willingness to purchase EVs, thus creating favorable market conditions for China's NEV exports," said Gong Min, head of China auto research at UBS.

Cui Dongshu, secretary-general of the CPCA, also said NEV sales outside China totaled 2.63 million units during the first four months, representing a 25 percent year-on-year increase and approaching the average growth rate recorded over the previous two years.

The rebound has been especially visible in major overseas automotive markets. Data released by the European Automobile Manufacturers' Association at the end of May showed that battery EV deliveries in Europe jumped 38 percent year-on-year in April. Meanwhile, figures from Australia's Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries showed that EVs accounted for a record 16.4 percent of the country's auto market in April, while hybrid and plug-in hybrid vehicles together represented nearly one-third of total sales.

Against this backdrop, Chinese brands are gaining increasing traction among overseas consumers amid the accelerating shift toward automotive electrification.

BYD ranked second in the Australian market with an 8.3 percent market share in April, while Chinese automakers collectively accounted for around 30 percent of total vehicle sales in the country during the month. In Europe, Chinese brands' share of the EV market also exceeded 15 percent for the first time in April, according to market research firm Dataforce.

China's leading role in the global NEV sector also remains intact. Latest CPCA data showed that China accounted for 61 percent of the world's new energy passenger vehicle market during the first four months. The country's share of the global battery EV market stood at 56 percent, while its share of the global plug-in hybrid segment reached 71 percent.

Supported by advantages in batteries, electric powertrain technologies and cost competitiveness, Chinese NEVs are becoming increasingly attractive to overseas consumers while helping drive the international automotive industry's transition toward electrification, Gong said.

"China's NEV exports are not only serving the country's own development needs, but are also helping the global market accelerate its electrification transition and achieve greater energy security and independence," he said.

Looking ahead, the CAAM forecasts that the combined scale of Chinese automakers' exports and overseas production is expected to exceed 10 million vehicles annually by the end of the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), with a compound annual growth of over 10 percent.

Private companies eye larger role in strategic energy

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China is stepping up efforts to integrate private capital into its strategic energy infrastructure, creating a robust ecosystem for innovation that will power the nation's green transition and its booming digital economy.

The National Energy Administration recently announced plans to better formulate investment guidelines for private enterprises in major energy projects, including hydropower and oil and gas pipelines. This push aligns with the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for the energy sector, which aims to roll out landmark projects across new energy bases, power grids and technological initiatives.

Private companies have already become a vital force in energy technology innovation. In 2025, all 10 approved nuclear power units introduced private capital, with private shareholding reaching up to 20 percent.

Furthermore, private firms account for 60 percent of newly approved direct green power projects, 45 percent of the nation's 535 virtual power plants, and operate nine of the country's top 10 electric vehicle charging networks.

The success of this mixed-ownership model was recently cemented by the start of commercial operations at Unit 1 of the San'ao Nuclear Power Plant in Zhejiang province. Managed by China General Nuclear Power Group, the region's first Hualong One reactor marks a historic watershed as the country's first privately backed nuclear power project.

Geely Technology Group holds a 2 percent stake in the megaproject, which has collaborated with approximately 2,000 private enterprises since its inception. This sweeping partnership localized 24 key pieces of core equipment for the first time, including nuclear-grade pressure and temperature switches, demonstrating the fierce competitiveness of China's domestic supply chain, said its operator CGN.

The milestone unit is expected to generate over 9 billion kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, meeting the residential demands of more than 1 million people. Crucially, it provides the zero-carbon baseload power necessary to sustain the Yangtze River Delta's energy-intensive data centers.

"The region has the nation's most vigorous demand for computing power and the most complete industrial supply chain, creating an urgent, sustained need for stable, clean and efficient baseload electricity," said Lin Boqiang, head of the China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy at Xiamen University.

As the region accelerates its shift toward an artificial intelligence-driven economy, intermittent renewables like wind and solar alone cannot sustain the immense, 24/7 power requirements of massive data centers, experts noted.

The San'ao project breaks the traditional model of exclusive State investment in nuclear power, Lin added. It proves that mixed-ownership models can inject new financial vitality into strategic infrastructure while allowing private capital to share in the long-term dividends of the green transition.

Energy investment maintained robust growth in the first quarter, with private enterprises deepening their participation in key national energy research initiatives, said Xing Yiteng, deputy director-general of the department of development and planning at the NEA.

To sustain this momentum, the NEA is accelerating the formulation of standard rules for emerging fields, such as computing power and electricity synergy, to enhance the participation of private enterprises in setting industry standards. Market supervision will also be strengthened in sectors like photovoltaics to guide companies toward fair and orderly competition.

Chagee reaps sweet Q1 gains buoyed by overseas biz

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Chagee Holdings Ltd reported higher first-quarter revenue as rapid growth in overseas markets and an expanding store network helped offset weakness in domestic sales momentum.

The beverage chain operator said its revenue rose 4.7 percent to 3.55 billion yuan ($525 million) in the three months ended March 31, compared with 3.39 billion yuan a year earlier. Operating income fell 33.3 percent to 547.2 million yuan from 820.8 million yuan in the same period last year.

Chagee continues to expand its footprint, with 7,531 teahouses across China and overseas markets including 7,157 in China and 374 overseas as of March 31, up 12.7 percent from a year earlier. The growth reflects the company's push to strengthen its presence both domestically and internationally amid intensifying competition in the beverage sector.

Apart from its presence in Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia, the Philippines, Vietnam and the United States, the company entered the South Korean market in April.

"Our overseas teahouse network maintained a steady growth pace with operating performance in line with our expectations," said Yin Dengfeng, chief operating officer and director of Chagee.

Total gross merchandise value (GMV) generated during the quarter reached 7.92 billion yuan. Overseas markets emerged as a key growth engine, with GMV surging 139 percent year-over-year to 426.4 million yuan. In contrast, GMV in China declined to 7.49 billion yuan from 8.05 billion yuan a year earlier, highlighting increased competition in the company's core market.

Despite the decline in regional GMV, operating metrics in China showed signs of improvement. Average monthly GMV per teahouse climbed to 356,080 yuan during the quarter, a 5.5 percent increase from 337,358 yuan in the fourth quarter of 2025, suggesting stronger sales productivity at existing locations.

The company said the new product launches helped as there were 12 new products that debuted in the first quarter, contributing to sequential growth in both volume and GMV.

In the overseas market, the company launched locally tailored products in different markets, which have played a positive role in improving overall same-store performance. For example, its caramel oolong tea latte in Singapore captured an 18 percent cup share during the campaign period.

Chagee also continued to see growth in memberships. Active members reached 50 million during the quarter, up 11.7 percent from the previous quarter, underscoring the brand's growing customer base and loyalty.

The company's international expansion strategy is beginning to contribute meaningfully to growth. Overseas markets accounted for about 5.4 percent of total GMV during the quarter, compared with a much smaller share a year earlier.

On May 28, the board authorized a $150 million share repurchase program that commenced on Monday.

100 trln yuan govt debt seen as controllable

Nation's 68.2% debt-to-GDP ratio far below Japan's 200%, US' 120%

By **WANG KEJU**
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China's outstanding government debt has likely topped the 100 trillion yuan ($14.8 trillion) mark, though despite the scale, experts said the overall risk remains "safe and controllable" as the debt burden is moderate by global standards and funded projects are mainly quality assets.

According to the People's Bank of China, the country's central bank, the stock of government bonds stood at 99.37 trillion yuan at end-April.

By the end of May, data from Financial China Information and Technology Co showed the figure had climbed to about 101.15 trillion yuan, fueled by years of proactive bond issuance to counter economic headwinds and swap out hidden local debt.

Luo Zhiheng, chief economist at Yuekai Securities, said the country's debt-to-GDP ratio — the most widely used gauge of debt sustainability — stood at 68.2 percent at end-2025, well below that of major developed economies.

Japan's government debt-to-GDP ratio stands at above 200 percent, while the United States' national debt has reached roughly 120 percent of its GDP, said the International Monetary Fund.

"The risk is manageable and sustainable," Luo said. He also pointed out that Chinese government debt is mostly used to build infrastructure such as transport, energy and water conservation infrastructure, creating productive assets that generate long-term returns.

"Those assets both support high-quality development and serve as a source of repayment," he added.

Yuan Haixia, dean of the research institute at China Chengxin International Credit Rating, said China's debt is overwhelmingly domestic, with the household savings rate above 44 percent, providing a stable funding base. Foreign currency debt accounts for only about 5 percent of the total, limiting external vulnerability.

Nevertheless, the experts highlighted region-specific and structural weaknesses that warrant closer attention.

"Some less-developed regions with weak fiscal capacity face liquidity pressure, especially from interest payments," Yuan said. "The resolution of hidden debt is still in a tough phase."

Yuan added that another concern is the diminishing returns on special-purpose bonds, where project revenues often fall short of expectations. "This mismatch reduces the efficiency of debt-financed investment," she said.

Wen Laicheng, a professor at the Central University of Finance and Economics, cautioned that while the current debt level is safe, the rapid growth rate should not be ignored. "We must watch fiscal sustainability," Wen said, adding that China's outstanding government debt has been expanding at an annual rate of more than 10 percent in recent years, outpacing both the country's economic growth and its fiscal revenue growth.

To maintain a balance between economic growth and fiscal health, experts cautioned that the focus must shift from the sheer size of debt to its structure and productivity.

Luo said a reasonable debt scale should be assessed based on three factors: the gap between nominal GDP growth and the interest rate, the returns on the projects funded by debt, and a dynamic fiscal sustainability framework.

"Keeping growth above interest rates is key to preventing a debt spiral," he said.

Yuan called for moving the center of debt management from "adding leverage" to "optimizing leverage". She suggested that the central government should take on more borrowing — through ultra-long term special treasury bonds, for instance — to relieve pressure on local finances.

Within local debt, the share of general bonds should be raised, while special-purpose bonds should be strictly tied to projects with self-sustaining revenues, Yuan said.

Wen emphasized that debt efficiency is equally important. Too much debt has been channeled into physical infrastructure, while spending on health and education — investments in people — has lagged.

"We need to shift from focusing solely on physical assets to a more balanced approach that places equal emphasis on people," Wen said, adding that such a move would boost the multiplier effect of public spending.

Ground-up checks



Employees from the Hudong electric locomotive depot of China Railway Taiyuan Group conduct safety inspections on rail equipment to ensure the safe operation of heavy-haul trains on the Datong-Qinhuangdao Railway as flood season begins. ZHANG LUFEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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BUSINESS



A visitor walks through the international healthcare consumption section of the sixth China International Consumer Products Expo in Qionghai, Hainan province, on April 16. GAO JING / XINHUA

Hainan tropical island hub for global investment

Unique policies, improving infrastructure, coordinated governance and growing openness attracting companies from far and wide

By **MASI** and **CHEN BOWEN**
in Haikou

For Michael Heilig, who is from Germany's federal association for small and medium-sized enterprises, his trip to Hainan province last week felt almost destined.

His Chinese name, "Hai Li Ge", carries a special meaning. "Hai" means sea, "Li" means reason and trust, while "Ge" means character and taste. "I believe these qualities — facing the sea, rationality, character — can be transported to Hainan and reflected in our cooperation," Heilig said.

Heilig was one of more than 100 executives from 19 countries and regions who landed in Hainan on May 25-26 for the International Life and Health Enterprises Hainan Visit event, co-hosted by CITIC Group and the Hainan provincial government. Among them were 80 foreign life-health companies and 105 senior executives from global giants such as Siemens, Pfizer and Novo Nordisk, as well as a host of German "hidden champions".

What brought them here, in the heat of late May, was not the island's famous beaches, though those were a welcome bonus, but the accelerating dividends of the island-wide special customs operations, which kicked off in Hainan Free Trade Port on Dec 18.

For Heilig, the most eye-catching policy is the 30-percent value-added processing rule. "German SMEs are often called 'hidden champions'. The policy we learned about today — 30 percent value-added processing in Hainan allowing tariff-free access to China's mainland — is particularly innovative and appealing," he said.

"Given Hainan's strategic location, it can connect to the huge Chinese mainland market as well as the broader Asia-Pacific and Southeast Asia. This will be very important for German SMEs as they restructure their supply chains under the current economic situation," Heilig added.

More than 20 European companies accompanied Heilig on the trip. "The feedback has been very positive. They are very interested in Hainan, find the policies attractive and are considering the possibility of establishing a presence here — finding their own place in Hainan," he said.

Peter Burnett, chief executive of the China-Britain Business Council, who has visited Hainan several times, put it more bluntly. "Hainan is not just a free trade zone — it's a free trade port, the only one in China. That means the whole island is included, with very low tax rates and low tariffs," Burnett said. "Once you're in Hainan, you're free to operate and you have the ability to access the mainland — it's a launch pad."

Burnett, who led a delegation of British companies, said the 30-percent value-added policy is "of great interest". "Some companies have already set up in Hainan. Success will breed success. I expect more companies to realize the potential."

"For the United Kingdom, 80 percent of our economic output is in services. Many companies in our delegation to Hainan this time are in services — not just financial services, but also engineering, publications, media and creative industries," Burnett added.

The event was not merely a gathering of foreign firms, it was also a demonstration of how Chinese enterprises are facilitating global cooperation. Xi Guohua, chairman of CITIC Group, called Hainan Free Trade Port the highest-level form of China's opening-up.

"The full implementation of Hainan's policies presents historic opportunities for the bio-health industry to integrate into global industrial chains," Xi said. He added that CITIC will leverage its strengths as a multinational conglomerate to serve as a bridge between China and the world, deepening cooperation with Hainan in biomedicine, high-end medical care and wellness services.

To put words into action, CITIC has provided a financing support package exceeding 39 billion yuan ($5.76 billion) to facilitate win-win cooperation during this trip, Xi disclosed.

The success of this event, Xi said, confirms that China is a grand stage and a vast market for investment, Hainan is a new highland and a new gateway for open cooperation, and CITIC is a reliable guide and bridge for global partners.

Xi made three proposals: first, to build an open and win-win island by establishing multi-level cooperation mechanisms; second, to create an innovative and dynamic island by integrating financial resources and strengthening the Hainan-Hong Kong dual-hub linkage; and third, to foster a culturally charming island through publishing, think tanks and media to enhance international cultural exchanges.

While policies attract, execution matters. Li Tao, vice-president of Siemens Healthineers Greater China, said what made this trip different from many others he had attended was the sequencing: site visits first, then discussions.





Middle: Company executives sign contracts at the International Life and Health Enterprises Hainan Visit event in Haikou, Hainan province, on May 26.
Above: Foreign executives talk at the Hainan event in Haikou on May 26. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"In many other events, it is usually meetings first and then site visits. Today, during the discussions, we were able to have very good conversations because we had visited three areas — Haikou, Boao and Sanya — which made the process much more efficient: see first, then discuss," Li said. He summed up Hainan's approach in three words: pragmatic, effective and professional — with an emphasis on efficiency.

On Dec 18, Siemens Energy became the first foreign-invested enterprise to complete registration after receiving its business license at the Yangpu administrative service center in Danzhou, Hainan. The company simultaneously broke ground on a new gas turbine assembly base and service center, a project it described as its first project of its kind in China.

The move marked a milestone manufacturing project demonstrating investor confidence, and came as Hainan launched island-wide special customs operations on the same day.

Joern Schmuecker, senior vice-president, Gas Services Central of Siemens Energy, said: "Establishing a gas turbine assembly base and service center in Hainan aligns perfectly with the free trade port's vision of becoming a new high ground for openness and international cooperation. Together with our partners, we will drive collaborative innovation across the industry value chain, continuously enhance equipment delivery and service capabilities, and build an industrial ecosystem that contributes to energy resilience in China and across the world."

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Meanwhile, French pharmaceutical company Mayoly has also established a presence on the island, while Singapore-based Fullerton Health Group opened Hainan's first wholly foreign-owned hospital.

Companies' enthusiasm is backed by hard data. Since the special customs operations started on Dec 18, Hainan had added 1,004 new foreign firms up to April 29, up 35.86 percent year-on-year.

As of the end of April, Hainan had 12,300 foreign-invested enterprises, with investment sources covering 180 countries and regions.

Feng Fei, Party secretary of Hainan, told a conference last week that the life and health industry is a key pillar of the Hainan Free Trade Port, and the province's excellent ecology, open industrial policies and vast market potential make it uniquely positioned.

"The island province is becoming a new frontier of China's opening-up, a hotbed for mutually beneficial cooperation and a new engine for economic globalization," Feng said. "Choosing Hainan means choosing opportunities. Investing in Hainan means investing in the future."

He emphasized the importance of developing "two bases" — one for Chinese enterprises expanding globally and another for foreign companies seeking access to the Chinese market.

Hainan's negative list for foreign investment is the shortest in the country, Feng said, extending a warm welcome to international investors.

Sean Stein, president of the US-China Business Council, offered a concrete example of how Hainan's new policies are changing investment decisions. "Previously, a major US company that refurbishes used products from Southeast Asia and Japan could not do so in China due to regulations. Now, after the kickoff of island-wide special customs operations, the company is setting up a base in Hainan to renovate and re-export the products globally," Stein said. "That's a big, encouraging change."

Tesla has also seen a surge in activity across its Hainan outlets. A Tesla spokesperson told China Daily that Hainan's ecological advantages and open policy environment make it "an ideal base for promoting green mobility worldwide". Due to the new customs policies and local government subsidies, foot traffic at Tesla's stores in Haikou has risen 20 percent month-on-month.

The influx of foreign businesses is not accidental. Hainan has been systematically improving its business environment. Chen Shuying, an official of the Hainan provincial market supervision administration, said that a series of reform measures have shortened the preparation time for foreign-funded enterprises to invest in Hainan.

The process for foreign enterprises has been changed from "separate handling by different departments" to "integrated processing", compressing the number of procedures from five to one and reducing paperwork by more than 77 percent, Chen said.

In late April, Hainan issued a three-year action plan to improve foreign-related services and the international business environment, introducing 30 specific measures in seven areas. These include extending Hainan's enterprise registration window to Hong Kong and offering customized "one enterprise, one policy" services for key industries.

He Jifeng, deputy director of the Hainan Provincial Department of Business Environment Development, said the action plan aims to create a precise foreign investment service system covering the entire lifecycle of enterprises.

"We will refine annual plans, clarify timelines, strengthen coordinated implementation and put every reform measure and every service scenario into practice — so that more foreign enterprises can invest with confidence, operate with ease and develop with focus in Hainan," said He.

For Heilig, Hainan's progress is still in the early stages, but he is optimistic. "We are watching closely. For German companies, our needs include not only open policies, but also important international infrastructure — education, medical resources and most importantly talent to support business development," he said. "Much work is being done. We believe Hainan will develop well."

When asked whether Hainan could become a new center or model for China-Germany cooperation, Heilig did not hesitate. "I hold a very positive attitude. I believe it will certainly become a new model or benchmark."

That confidence is shared by many. Burnett from the China-Britain Business Council, after a beach walk at sunset, put it simply: "You sometimes forget that you're in an industrial zone. So you can come to work, invest in Hainan and feel like you're on holiday."

Behind that pleasant feeling lies a serious business case. With its unique policies, improving infrastructure, coordinated governance and growing openness, Hainan is steadily transforming from a tropical resort into a genuine hub for global investment, experts said.

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CHINA

HK, Almaty to restore direct air ties in 2027

By **ATLAS SHAO** in Hong Kong and **WU KUNLING** in Astana

The Hong Kong Special Administrative Region will resume direct flights with Almaty, Kazakhstan's largest city, in the first quarter of 2027 and establish a blood purification product manufacturing base in the Central Asian country.

The agreements were among 43 memorandums of understanding and cooperation deals signed by a high-level trade delegation comprising 40 Hong Kong business and professional leaders and 30 representatives from Chinese mainland enterprises.

Led by Hong Kong SAR Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, the delegation arrived on Sunday in Kazakhstan, the first stop on a weeklong Central Asia trip.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, Lee said the 43 MOUs cover the economy and trade, investment, financial services, technology, education, aviation and green finance.

Among the key outcomes was the relaunch of direct flights between Hong Kong and Almaty. Lee said the resumption of flights will make it easier for Hong Kong passengers to travel to Central Asia, the Caucasus region and Eastern European cities via Almaty.

Following Lee's announcement, Hong Kong's flag carrier Cathay Pacific said it plans to launch three flights a week to Almaty in the first quarter of next year.

Lee said the SAR government will also negotiate with Kazakhstan to expand visa-free access for SAR passport holders from the current 14 to 30 days, to facilitate business and tourism.

A Hong Kong capital company and Samruk-Kazyna, Kazakhstan's sovereign wealth fund and national holding company, will jointly invest $100 million to establish a regional blood purification product manufacturing center in Kazakhstan, Lee said.

Hong Kong Exchanges and Clearing Ltd will assist the Astana International Financial Centre, a leading financial hub in Central Asia and Eastern Europe, in exploring cross-border listings and developing its green finance ecosystem.

Kazakhstan has agreed to accelerate consultations with the Hong Kong SAR on a comprehensive double taxation avoidance agreement and will begin formal negotiations on an investment promotion and protection agreement, laying the foundation for long-term cooperation.

On Tuesday afternoon, the delegation attended a business luncheon aimed at strengthening ties.

Serik Zhumangarin, Kazakhstan's deputy prime minister and national economy minister, said the signed documents form an important basis for further cooperation between Kazakhstan and the Hong Kong SAR.

Li Xiaojun, chairman of Guangzhou Pharmaceutical Holdings Limited, said the delegation could serve as a bridge to the Central Asian market, enabling parties to jointly advance economic development through cutting-edge technologies and biomedicine.

Baidaulet, a 37-year-old Astana resident who studied Chinese in China and regularly uses Chinese social media apps such as WeChat, said he has observed increasingly close relations between China and Kazakhstan. He added that the Hong Kong SAR delegation's visit will bring new opportunities for cooperation, particularly in investment.

Lee will lead the delegation on Wednesday to visit the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan and Nazarbayev University. Two Hong Kong universities will sign MOUs with Nazarbayev University to expand exchanges with higher education institutions.

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Wuhan wall wonder



Visitors take photos at the newly unveiled red wall near the Yellow Crane Tower in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Monday. Positioned much closer to the historic landmark tower, the wall, spanning 40 meters, offers picturesque views of the tower through traditional Chinese-style garden frames, attracting numerous tourists and locals. SONG ZHENTAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

SPP cracks down on Yangtze belt pollution

Yearlong public interest litigation drive will support protection and development

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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China's procuratorial organs have launched a yearlong public interest litigation campaign to strengthen water pollution control in the Yangtze River Economic Belt, part of broader efforts to protect the country's most important river basin and support high-quality development.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate said on May 20 that the campaign, running from May 2026 to April 2027, will focus on major pollution risks in areas such as agricultural and aquaculture waste, urban and industrial wastewater, tailings management and illegal disposal of solid waste.

The announcement came as the SPP and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment held a seminar in Yibin, Sichuan province, on procuratorial services for the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt. The SPP also released a white paper reviewing procuratorial work in the region during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Yangtze River Economic Belt development strategy. The belt covers 11 provincial-level regions, accounting for about one-fifth of China's land area and roughly half of the country's population and economic output.

Ying Yong, prosecutor-general of the SPP, said procuratorial organs should help maintain security and stability along the river and support high-quality development with high-level security.

He urged strict punishment for crimes damaging the Yangtze River Basin's ecology, continued enforcement of the 10-year fishing ban and sustained crackdowns on illegal fishing. He also called for stronger use of damage compensation and punitive compensation systems, as well as coordinated ecological restoration.

Ying said procuratorial organs should better integrate into the broader framework of Yangtze River protection, strengthen coordination between law enforcement and judicial authorities, and improve links between administrative law enforcement, criminal justice, public interest litigation and ecological damage compensation.

"Serving the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt is a shared responsibility of law enforcement and judicial organs," Ying said, adding that prosecutors will continue to work with relevant departments and the public to build stronger legal support for Yangtze River protection.

According to the white paper, procuratorial organs handled 274,000 environment and resources cases over the past five years. They approved the arrests of 32,000 people for damaging environmental resources and handled prosecutions involving 169,000 people.

Through specialized case-handling mechanisms and ecological restoration procedures, prosecutors helped protect or restore 23,133 hectares of polluted farmland, forestland, grassland and wetlands, and urged the recovery or cleanup of 15.4 million metric tons of industrial solid waste.

The white paper highlighted that procuratorial organs have increasingly used technology to address difficulties in dealing with tip-offs related to crimes and collecting evidence in river basin cases. A support system combining satellite remote sensing, drones and rapid testing has been improved, while more than 500 rapid-testing laboratories have been built nationwide, basically covering city-level procuratorates in the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

Public participation has also expanded. The SPP's "Yixinweigong" volunteer cloud platform has recruited 126,000 volunteers nationwide, who have submitted 38,000 tip-offs and participated in 40,000 activities, including case consultation, public hearings and follow-up observation.

Focusing on key environmental problems, the SPP has worked with other departments to crack down on illegal fishing in the Yangtze River Basin. It has also carried out special operations with the Ministry of Public Security and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment for five consecutive years against hazardous waste crimes and falsified automatic monitoring data.

Because river basin governance involves multiple regions, departments and regulatory links, prosecutors have strengthened integrated case handling and cross-regional cooperation. The white paper said such efforts have helped form a Chinese approach to cross-regional river basin governance through procuratorial public interest litigation. Related experience has also been presented at international forums, including side events at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, and has won widespread attention and high praise.

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), procuratorial organs will maintain strict enforcement against illegal industrial wastewater discharge, illegal dumping of solid waste and other environmental crimes. They will also continue to support the 10-year fishing ban, strengthen biodiversity protection, prevent invasive species, protect farmland and improve supervision over illegal land occupation along the river.

The SPP said prosecutors will also deepen public interest litigation to support green and low-carbon development, while stepping up case handling on issues affecting people's daily lives, including black and odorous water bodies, noise and light pollution, cooking fumes, unpleasant odors and livestock breeding pollution.

Aviation pioneer behind J-8 fighter jet dies at 96

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Gu Songfen, one of China's leading aircraft designers and a pioneer in the nation's aviation industry, died of illness on Sunday. He was 96.

Born in February 1930 in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, Gu came from a well-educated family as the second child of two intellectual parents.

At age seven, he witnessed Japanese bombers flying over his home to attack nearby Chinese military barracks. He saw flames and smoke billowing after the raid, and the windows of his home were shattered by blast waves.

"After witnessing those scenes, I formed a wish: to learn to design aircraft when I grow up to help defend my motherland's skies," Gu said in an article he wrote and published in People's Daily in November.

He further wrote that his interest in aviation deepened after his older brother, then a middle school student, brought home a cardboard glider. Gu later began making paper planes with him. At age 10, his uncle gave him a model aircraft as a birthday gift, further strengthening his enthusiasm for aviation.

In 1947, after graduating from middle school, Gu was accepted by Tsinghua University in Beijing, Zhejiang University in Hangzhou and Shanghai Jiao Tong University, all of which he had applied to for studying aeronautical engineering. He chose Shanghai Jiao Tong University due to his brother's death in 1939, which made his mother reluctant to see her only son leave Shanghai.

After graduating in 1951, he was assigned to the central government's aviation industry bureau in Shenyang, Liaoning province, beginning his career in aviation.

Initially, he worked on repairing combat jets damaged during the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53), and participated in the reverse engineering and licensed production of Soviet aircraft.

In August 1956, China's first aircraft design organization, the Shenyang Aircraft Design Office, was established. Gu was appointed head of the aerodynamics team, responsible for aerodynamic design of the JJ-1 trainer jet, China's first domestically developed aircraft.

"Before the JJ-1, all Chinese-made aircraft were copies of Soviet models produced under Soviet experts' guidance using original Soviet blueprints with no room for design revisions. Along with veteran aviation experts, I believed that mere replication meant full reliance on foreign technology and the loss of independent initiative. We had to develop China's own aircraft," Gu said in the November article.

However, his university training had focused on propeller aircraft, leaving him with little knowledge of jet design. He had to search for reference materials and teach himself, despite the scarcity of technical publications at the time. Through persistent study, he overcame these challenges and completed his work successfully.

Beginning in 1964, Gu joined the development of the J-8 fighter jet as deputy chief designer and became its chief designer in 1972.

Although the aircraft completed its maiden flight in July 1969, it was plagued by multiple technical problems and was not ready for certification or delivery. One major issue was severe vibration during transonic test flights, posing serious safety risks.



Gu Songfen

When ground tests and simulations failed to identify the cause, Gu flew in the rear cockpit of a chase aircraft, using binoculars and a camera to observe and photograph the J-8 prototype in flight. After three flights, he identified the source of the vibration and proposed targeted fixes. The J-8 was officially approved for production in late 1979.

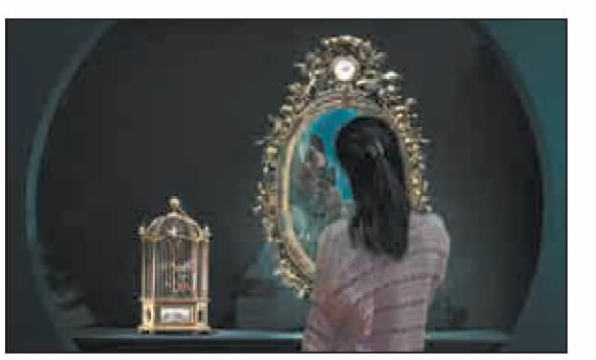
In 1986, Gu stepped down as chief designer of the J-8II fighter and director of the Shenyang Aircraft Design and Research Institute after being transferred to Beijing by the then Ministry of Aviation Industry. He became deputy head of its science and technology commission.

His work shifted toward strategic research in aviation technology development. He contributed to planning for future advanced aircraft, participated in decision-making for major national projects, and served as a technical consultant or chief expert on multiple programs.

In this role, he led conceptual research on advanced stealth fighters, large passenger aircraft and strategic transport aircraft, helping lay the groundwork for the rapid development of China's aviation industry in the 21st century.

In recognition of his contributions, Gu was elected an academician of both the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering in the 1990s. In 2021, he received the State Preeminent Science and Technology Award, China's highest honor for scientists and engineers.

Art treasures



A visitor previews artifacts during a special exhibition at the Hong Kong Palace Museum on Tuesday. The exhibition showcases collections from the Palace Museum, the Hong Kong Palace Museum and the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha. ANDY CHONG / CHINA DAILY

Study maps how human organs form

By **ZHOU WENTING** in Shanghai
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Chinese researchers have mapped the world's first complete, time-lapse genetic map of human embryos during a critical one-month window of development. The breakthrough allows scientists to move past limited, localized observations to a comprehensive, moving picture of how human organs form.

The study, published recently in the journal Nature, focuses on the period between four and eight weeks after fertilization. Researchers say this data will provide a vital guide for pinpointing the exact origins of birth defects.

The project was a joint effort by Fudan University in Shanghai, Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, and the BGI Life Science Research Institution in Shenzhen, Guangdong province.

Experts have long considered the four-to-eight-week window a research "blind spot". It is notoriously difficult to sustain embryos in a lab at this stage, and standard medical imaging cannot capture precise developmental details.

Yet, the genetic instructions sent during this phase dictate the entire trajectory of human development. Mistakes during this time can result in congenital heart defects, brain development issues, and other conditions. Thus far, older gene-sequencing technologies could not provide a seamless, complete picture of this crucial timeframe.

By analyzing 13 human embryo samples, the team examined 50 organs or anatomical regions and 198 smaller sub-compartments. They successfully mapped how major organs — including the heart, brain, liver, kidneys, and skeleton — grow from scratch. The map answers fundamental scientific questions about exactly when and where specific cells appear, and what chemical signals trigger them to grow.

When looking closely at the heart's pacemaker — the specialized zone that controls the heartbeat rhythm — the study discovered two previously unknown genes, named RORA and KIAA1324L. Lab tests on zebrafish and mice confirmed that these genes are essential for creating pacemaker cells and keeping the heart beating steadily. This finding opens a new door for researching inherited heart rhythm disorders.

The study also redrew the map of early brain development, revealing that neurons — the brain's signaling cells — develop much earlier than previously taught.

"This is a textbook-changing discovery," said Huang Hefeng, a lead scientist on the team and an expert in reproductive medicine with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"We also identified the genetic communication networks linked to intellectual development issues," Huang said. "This gives us new insights into the microscopic foundation of neurodevelopmental disorders."

In addition, the research mapped out exactly where and when viral receptors — the specific cellular "docking stations" that viruses use to invade cells — appear in the growing embryo. Huang noted this explains why different organs are vulnerable to specific viral infections at different points in a pregnancy, a finding that carries major clinical value for protecting unborn babies.

Jiang Hua, director of the Obstetrics and Gynecology Hospital of Fudan University, compared the study to a high-precision GPS navigation map. He said it provides vital genetic coordinates for understanding early organ growth and the roots of congenital diseases, which will help doctors improve how they monitor early pregnancies.

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CHINA







Left: Members of the public tour the wheelhouse of *Xin Hong Zhuan*, the world's first intelligent ship that integrates remote control, autonomous sailing and teaching experience, in Haikou, Hainan province, in July last year. LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE **Center:** An underwater maintenance robot is hoisted to conduct inspection work on a bridge of the Xinxiang-Yanzhou Railway in Jining, Shandong province, in February. GUO XULEI / XINHUA **Right:** A train driver practices in a simulator at a depot in Beijing in December 2024. JIA TIANYONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Testing out the future of transport

Chinese research teams use digital tools to develop new era of movement

By **LUO WANGSHU**
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After decades of rapid infrastructure expansion, China is placing greater emphasis on making its vast transport network safer, more efficient and more intelligent through the application of digital technologies.

These developments, including those in the research stage and those already rolled out in the real world, are causing major operational shifts in how things are moved via land, sea and air.

From highways and ports to waterways and deep-sea equipment, researchers are working to solve how to better manage large-scale traffic flows, how to identify risks earlier, how to support safer navigation in complex waters, and how to make critical equipment more reliable and self-dependent.

Roads reading traffic

At the State Key Laboratory of Intelligent Transportation Systems in Beijing's Tongzhou district, researchers are exploring how roads can be made safer, more efficient and less congested.

By using sensing networks and cloud platforms, the researchers are able to enable roads themselves to become an active, responsive participant in the transport network. Via these sensors, roads can provide instant updates to connected vehicles and drivers informing them of accidents, traffic, weather conditions and detours.

"Road to vehicle coordination is not simply about connecting vehicles and roads," said Wang Lin, deputy director of the laboratory and director of the intelligent transport research center at the Ministry of Transport's highways research institute. "It is about changing the way people travel."

Wang said the goal is to make "vehicles understand roads, and roads remind vehicles", so that common bottlenecks in road transport can be mitigated and even avoided altogether.

"In the past, roads were mainly 'read' by people," Wang said. "Now, we are using machines and automated systems to read roads, so that vehicles, roads and cloud platforms can work together."

Another major factor in connecting roads and vehicles together is the reduction of risks caused by human error.

"Human factors are involved in about 95 percent of all traffic accidents," Wang said.

He gave the example of vehicle platooning — "The distance between vehicles may be reduced from the current level of around 200 meters to 20 meters or even 10 meters, which could greatly increase the capacity of a single lane," he said.

Despite China having built one of the world's largest road networks, congestion hot spots are an inevitability, so researchers are working on a shift from building roads to managing them better.

At the Tongzhou laboratory, researchers are testing out these intelligent transport systems to make them reliable enough for real-world use.

In a 250-meter tunnel, rain can be made to fall at the push of a button, while fog, low visibility and water-covered road surfaces can be repeatedly recreated.

Li Zhenhua, a senior engineer at the laboratory, said the facility allows researchers to bring dangerous weather conditions indoors, instead of waiting for them to appear on real roads.

"Extreme weather on real roads is difficult to predict and even more difficult to test safely," Li said. "Here, we can reproduce the same scenario again and again, compare the data and improve the system step by step."

An eight-degree-of-freedom traffic safety simulator with a 360-degree panoramic projection system, surround sound and a motion platform, is used to recreate different vehicle types, roads and weather conditions, including rain, snow, fog and wind. This system allows the researchers to test driving behavior and intelligent transport technologies without exposing vehicles or people to real danger.

The lab also has an automated driving test track covering road scenarios including expressways, urban roads, national and provincial highways, and rural roads. It includes intersections, ramps, toll stations, bus stops and a simulated tunnel, supporting the research, evaluation and demonstration of automated driving technologies.



A robot directs traffic at a crowded crossroad near the West Lake in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, last month. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Predicting the way of water

In the port city of Tianjin, researchers are applying a similar logic to water transport by making risks visible before they potentially turn into accidents.

At the Ministry of Transport's Tianjin Research Institute for Water Transport Engineering, a huge wave flume stretches 450 meters long and 5 meters wide. With a water depth of 8 to 12 meters, the flume can produce waves as high as 3.5 meters, simulating some of the most extreme sea conditions.

The flume is used to study coastal engineering disaster prevention, sediment transport, wave-structure interaction and the dynamic response of large floating structures.

Chen Hanbao, chief scientist at the institute, said the flume is useful because coastal engineering projects can develop unexpected problems that can be avoided with wave impact testing.

"Large-scale tests allow researchers to better understand how ports, breakwaters and offshore structures behave under real wave conditions," Chen said.

The same facility also supports the development of intelligent dredging robots.

In the past, dredging often meant removing sediment after it had already accumulated. With a better understanding of tides, currents and sediment transport, precise preventive measures can be enacted.

Dangerous goods

Another lab at the Tianjin institute is looking into ways that the transport of dangerous goods can be handled more safely.

China transports more than 1.4 billion metric tons of dangerous goods through its waterways each year, accounting for about 40 percent of the country's total dangerous goods transport volume.

While they are essential for industrial production and economic activities, these goods also bring risks, especially when cargo is falsely reported, concealed or transported under unsuitable conditions.

According to Lu Linlin, an associate researcher on the institute's safety team, the lab has built a full-process technical support system covering material properties, transport conditions, risk warning and emergency response.

Researchers can simulate temperatures ranging from -40 C to 80 C to test the strength and sealing performance of dangerous goods packaging. A handheld identification device can determine the identity of a liquid within seconds, helping inspectors screen risks earlier.

For port safety, the key is not to find out what a dangerous material is after something goes wrong. Rather, it is to know before the cargo enters the transport chain what it is, whether it can be transported, how it should be packed and under what conditions it may become unsafe.

At the Tianjin institute's navigation safety lab, data on adjacent Bohai Bay's wind, waves, currents and tides are displayed in real time. An intelligent platform supports safe port entry for fully loaded 400,000-ton vessels, night navigation for 200,000-ton vessels and emergency night entry for liquefied natural gas carriers.

Smart technologies are steering waterway management from experience-based judgment to data-driven coordination.

Ship to shore

At Dalian Maritime University in Dalian, Liaoning province, this focus has extended from ports and waterways to intelligent shipping and deep-sea equipment.

The university and China COSCO Shipping have co-developed the *Xin Hong Zhuan*, the world's first intelligent ship that integrates remote control, autonomous sailing and teaching practice.

In June last year, the vessel embarked on a landmark 4,000-nautical-mile mission to test its smart systems, as well as the university's shore-based digital platform.

The platform serves as a "shore-based cockpit" for intelligent vessels. In open waters, ships can rely more on autonomous systems; in narrow waterways, bad weather or emergencies, shore-based operators can provide remote support or take control.

Yin Yong, a professor at Dalian Maritime University's Navigation College, said the system can give captains real-time advice on speed and course, while also supporting autonomous navigation in open seas.

"It is not just a system on shore," Yin said. "The laboratory has one set, and the vessel has one set as well. The two sides can work together. The system can advise the captain what speed to take, what course to follow and, when the ship reaches the open ocean, support autonomous navigation."

Yin said intelligent shipping is not simply about installing sensors on vessels or removing crews overnight. Instead, it is about building coordination among ships, shore-based platforms, AI systems and human operators.

In deeper waters, Chinese researchers are also pushing forward with domestically developed deep-sea equipment. A full-ocean-depth winch system developed by a team led by Li Wenhua, a professor at Dalian Maritime University, is providing a "lifeline" connecting scientific research vessels with deep-sea equipment.

"Lowering equipment into the deep sea is like flying a kite at a depth of 10,000 meters," Li said. The cable must be light, strong, stable and orderly, while also transmitting power, control signals and images, and safely retrieving samples.

The technologies seen in these laboratories are not confined to research papers or demonstration screens. Many have already been applied in highways, ports, waterways, ship operations and deep-sea exploration, offering practical solutions to real challenges facing China's transport system.

As AI, intelligent sensing, digital platforms and advanced equipment move into real transport scenarios, China's transport development is entering a stage focused on extending infrastructure networks and improving the intelligence, safety and resilience of the entire system.

Dalian university trials latest marine technology

By **LUO WANGSHU**
in Dalian, Liaoning

In waters near Zhangzi Island in Dalian, Northeast China's Liaoning province, a yellow underwater robot moves steadily beneath the surface. With 12 thrusters, binocular cameras and a flexible robotic arm, it identifies sea cucumbers, sea urchins and scallops, then completes a grab within seconds.

The experiment, supported by Dalian Maritime University's smart ocean information technology innovation platform, shows how laboratory research is being applied to real production scenarios.

For marine ranches, such machines could change a long-standing model that relies heavily on divers, who are constrained by depth, weather and safety risks.

Researchers said one vessel equipped with several robots could support round-the-clock operations with fewer workers, reducing both labor intensity and operational risk.

"Pain points in marine production are exactly where new quality productive forces can play a role," said Yuan Guoliang, a faculty member at the university's School of Information Science and Technology.

The team is developing underwater optical communication technology, using LED light to transmit data and video over short distances — a system researchers describe as a form of "underwater Wi-Fi". Such technology could help underwater robots work together more efficiently and reduce their dependence on heavy cables.

The same push toward practical application is being seen in intelligent shipping.

At the university's shore-based digital operation and control center for intelligent ships, the navigation status, engine data and surrounding sea conditions of China's *Xin Hong Zhuan* are displayed in real time. The vessel is the world's first intelligent ship designed for both research and maritime teaching practice.

Yin Yong, a professor at the university's Navigation College, said the system is not meant to replace captains, but to provide an additional layer of support.

"It can advise the captain on speed and course in real time," Yin said. "In open waters, it can also support autonomous navigation. The shore side and the ship side each have a system, and the two can work together."

This model of ship-to-shore coordination is viewed as a practical step toward intelligent shipping.

For ship operators, the value lies not only in remote control but also in better information. A vessel's operating condition could be monitored continuously, its route could be optimized, and risks could be assessed before they developed into emergencies.

Beyond intelligent ships, Chinese researchers are also working to reach deeper waters.

Li Wenhua, a professor at the university's Marine Engineering College, leads the development of full-ocean-depth winch systems that have already been used in China's deep-sea scientific research. The systems support seabed sampling, deep-sea towing and remotely operated underwater vehicle operations — tasks that are essential for marine research but difficult to carry out reliably in extreme conditions.

A winch system that his team has developed has retrieved samples from 7,762 meters below the sea surface. The team has also developed a full-ocean-depth electro-optical cable winch system and a full-ocean-depth trace metal CTD winch system, which have been tested in deep-sea and polar missions.



The *Xin Hong Zhuan* ship is delivered to Dalian Maritime University at a shipyard in Dalian, Liaoning province, in July 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

During one Arctic operation, the cable froze in temperatures of around -30 C, and the equipment jammed. Li and his team worked in wind and snow for nearly two hours before the system was fixed. He later wrote a few words in his log: "Polar verification passed".

The note was brief, but captured the larger meaning of the work. Testing advanced maritime equipment not only in laboratories, but also in real conditions where it is expected to operate.

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All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

From smart port to shared future

Young representatives from more than 10 countries explore Rizhao's maritime development, cultural heritage and industrial innovation.



Students and media professionals from more than 10 countries take part in the 2026 China-Overseas Gen Z Dialogue and Exchange Event, held in Rizhao, Shandong province, from May 26 to 29. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By ZHAO RUIXUE
in Rizhao, Shandong
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Before visiting Rizhao Port in Shandong province, Yoosadiang Thamonwan from Thailand had imagined a typical industrial port: noisy, gritty and dominated by steel and heavy machinery.

But what she saw instead was a fully automated container terminal operating in near silence: driverless trucks moved steadily across the wharf while remote-controlled cranes loaded and unloaded containers with precision.

Yoosadiang, an economics student at Zhejiang University, was one of the young representatives, journalists and content creators who joined the 2026 China-Overseas Gen Z Dialogue and Exchange Event, held in Rizhao from May 26 to 29. Participants came from more than 10 countries, including Germany, Russia, the United States, Myanmar, Mongolia, Madagascar and South Africa.

Co-hosted by China Daily 21st Century Media and the Rizhao municipal authorities, the four-day program took participants to the city's port, coastline, sports venues, tea gardens and factories. Through these visits, they explored how Rizhao is trying to turn its maritime resources into a platform for trade, ecological restoration, cultural exchange and youth dialogue.

"May global youth share Rizhao's inspiring journey of maritime development from their own generational perspective and let cross-cultural exchanges take root and flourish along this blue coast," said Zeng Qingkai, secretary-general of China Daily, at the opening ceremony.

That ambition came into focus at Rizhao Port, where participants watched containers being lifted, transferred and sorted with little visible human intervention.

"In textbooks, I often learn terms like tariffs and supply chains. But standing here today at the port, I finally see how it connects people's daily lives with global trade," said Ye Kyaw Thu from Myanmar, an international trade student in China.

From the port, the group cycled along the Rizhao Sunshine Coast Greenway, a 28-kilometer coastal path running between beaches, pine forests and wetlands. Along the way, they saw residents collecting seafood, camping and playing beach volleyball.

It was hard to imagine that just five years ago the area had been a barren stretch of saline-alkali wasteland, scarred by gullies.

"During construction of the greenway, local builders worked with great care, following the principles of not disturbing a single pine tree, polluting the beach, damaging the reefs or disrupting the surrounding waters," said Wang Yaping, a young resident who took part in the project.

Today, Zhangbei Bay, which adjoins the greenway, maintains excellent nearshore water quality year-round. The local population of the critically endangered Chinese crested tern has grown to 46, while more than 2,000 fishing families have shifted from traditional fishing to tourism-related businesses such as guesthouses, turning the restored bay into a source of sustainable income.

> "In textbooks, I often learn terms like tariffs and supply chains. But standing here today at the port, I finally see how it connects people's daily lives with global trade."
>
> **Ye Kyaw Thu,** a Myanmar student in China

The same coastline has also helped shape Rizhao's identity as a city of water sports. At the Rizhao Olympic Water Sports Town, the group tried dragon boat rowing, an activity that quickly became a lesson in coordination.

As the drumbeats quickened, participants from different cultural backgrounds gripped their oars and paddled across the lagoon. Their strokes were uneven at first, and the boat rocked from side to side. But they soon found their rhythm under the drummer's command.

"Although we come from different countries, rowing the dragon boat made us feel like family in an instant," Yoosadiang said.

Rizhao is also expanding its wider sports calendar. According to the city government, it plans to host more than 100 provincial- and national-level sporting events this year, spanning ball games, track and field, cycling, road running, water sports, and ice and snow sports. The goal, officials said, is to build a year-round sports scene that involves residents of all ages.

The cultural part of the program took participants to a local tea garden, where they walked through terraced fields and tried their hand at picking "one bud and one leaf" — the standard for high-quality green tea.

They also watched the hand-frying technique used to make Rizhao Green Tea, a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage practice, and learned how young tea artists are presenting traditional tea culture in new forms, including charcoal-stove brewing and tea-based mixed drinks.

"From picking to frying to drinking, the intangible cultural heritage of Chinese tea gardens reflects long-term cultural, ecological and social sustainability," said Veldesen Yaputra from Indonesia. He noted that it offers a model of sustainable development worth further exploration.

The group also visited one factory of Wuzheng Group, a manufacturing company. There, they watched industrial robots carry out precision welding, saw intelligent assembly lines in operation and viewed products including high-horsepower tractors.

"I truly admire how 'Made in China' can satisfy so many people," said Sophie Steinecke from Germany. "Chinese manufacturing gives many people the opportunity to buy the products they need."

By the end of the trip, Rizhao was no longer just a stop on an exchange program, but a living example of how a coastal city can connect industry, nature, culture and people across borders.

Deep Dive

As AI companions become increasingly common worldwide, their emotional and social implications have drawn growing public concern.

In China, the recent release of the Interim Measures for the Administration of Anthropomorphic AI Interactive Services (2026) marks a national effort to regulate AI companions and protect users, especially minors and older adults.

This commentary introduces the Human-Machine Sociality Quadrants, a digital literacy framework designed to help young people identify the differences between humans and AI in providing social connection, and to navigate a healthy digital life with AI companions.

Teaching youth to navigate AI companionship

AI companions have become part of daily life worldwide. Platforms such as Replika and Character.AI, as well as Chinese apps including Doubao, Xingye and Maoxiang, are popular among young users seeking emotional support amid digital loneliness.

Unlike social media, AI companions offer direct, round-the-clock support and constant affirmation, creating a form of seemingly conflict-free and unconditional companionship.

It is against this backdrop that China recently issued the Interim Measures for the Administration of Anthropomorphic AI Interactive Services (2026). The document aims to balance regulation and innovation by advocating an inclusive and prudent approach, with categorized and tiered rules to guide anthropomorphic AI interactive services toward healthy and positive development.

For both administrators and educators, the boundary between the benefits and risks of AI companions remains under discussion.

Our ongoing research on human-AI relationships reveals distinct relational patterns with both clear benefits and hidden costs. For young people facing mental distress, loneliness or family conflicts, AI companions can help them through moments of crisis. One user noted, "The love I received from AI is actually the love from all humankind," seeing AI as a product of human civilization rather than something alien.

Yet long-term reliance also brings risks. Users may make one-sided emotional investments, develop unrealistic feelings of safety while overlooking data privacy concerns and apply impossibly high AI standards to human relationships.

Globally, some extreme cases involving youth suicide linked to AI interactions have also emerged, highlighting dangers that cannot be ignored.



Jindong Liu

Regulation is vital, but it is not enough. Education must complement regulation by helping young people relate to AI with awareness and critical understanding. Schools and families need to cultivate a new form of AI literacy that goes beyond technical competence and focuses on social competence.

In our latest study, we introduced the Human-Machine Sociality Quadrants (HMSQ), which can be a useful tool for educators and regulators in developing AI literacy and addressing AI-related risks.

The framework maps social capabilities across four categories: what both humans and AI can do socially; what humans can do but AI cannot; what neither humans nor AI can do; and what AI can do socially while humans cannot.

For example, in our study of mainstream chatbot companions, including ChatGPT and Doubao, we found that social capabilities can be classified as human-only, AI-only or shared by humans and AI.

Human-only capabilities include reciprocity, shared life experiences and physical intimacy. AI-only capabilities include unlimited availability, endless patience and constant affirmation. Shared capabilities include active listening, understanding and conflict resolution.

These categories can be clearly mapped in the HMSQ diagram to show the differences and similarities between humans and machines.

This framework helps educators, regulators and young people think through several critical questions: How do humans and AI overlap in areas where they share similar social functions? How can educators highlight what makes human relationships unique? And how should AI-only capabilities be regulated?

Educational initiatives should also expose the commercial motives behind these platforms. Many AI companions are designed to maximize engagement, not well-being. Schools and families should therefore create spaces where young people can practice essential relational skills: navigating disagreement, tolerating uncertainty and sustaining mutual effort. These are capacities no algorithm can teach and no meaningful relationship should lack.

Written by Jindong Liu, assistant professor, and Liang Cao, postdoctoral fellow, at The Education University of Hong Kong; Shuyi Pan, lecturer at Shanghai International Studies University; Bibo Lin, assistant professor at Texas A&M International University; and Angel M. Y. Lin, chair professor at The Education University of Hong Kong.

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Z WEEKLY

Editor's note:

From exploring the depth of Chinese history at the Great Wall to discovering the flavors of Cantonese cuisine in Guangdong province, young Americans have captured their impressions of China through their own eyes.

These moments are part of the second "My Trip to China" Short Video Contest, hosted by the Chinese Consulate General in San Francisco. The contest attracted more than 400 teachers and students from schools across the United States, with over 50 videos submitted.

The five stories featured here offer a glimpse into young Americans' firsthand observations, personal connections and the growing influence of China-US youth exchanges.

Seeing China through young eyes

Young Americans share firsthand impressions of China through videos highlighting culture, history and people-to-people exchanges, **Gui Qian** reports.

Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

A book comes alive

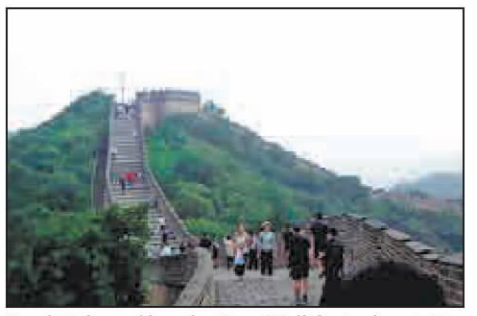
For Sarah Golovey, her journey to China began not only with a plane ticket, but also with a book.

Her video opens with a volume about China, filled with pictures and descriptions of famous landmarks and cultural landscapes. But the story soon moves beyond the printed page and into real life: Golovey, an Asian studies major, travels to China herself and sees what she had previously only learned from textbooks.

"To study a place and to know it intimately are two different things," she said in the video. She explained that people are often warned not to meet the things they have long admired, for fear that reality may disappoint them. But for her, China proved the opposite.

Her video presents China through a lens that is both academic and emotional. She visits a *hanfu* shop, enjoys a *guzheng* performance, walks through the high-rise streets of Beijing's CBD and climbs the Great Wall. She also takes in mountains, rivers and a multi-arch stone bridge that reflects the elegance of classical Chinese bridge-building.

After experiencing what she describes as "magic" moments in China, Golovey concludes her video by saying the country exceeded her expectations. The more China revealed itself, she said, the more she felt that seeing it in person had deepened rather than diminished her admiration.



Sarah Golovey films the Great Wall during her visit to Beijing.

Between worlds, finding home

Samantha Tsang was invited to China through a youth exchange program inspired by the legacy of the Flying Tigers.

During World War II, the Flying Tigers, formally known as the American Volunteer Group, became a powerful symbol of China-US cooperation in the face of shared adversity. Today, youth programs seek to carry that spirit forward through people-to-people exchanges.

Tsang's video traces an emotional journey. As a first-generation Chinese American, she used the two-week trip to explore what it means to live "between worlds". Her reflection centers on identity, capturing both the excitement and nostalgia of encountering a country that felt at once familiar and unfamiliar.

For her, China was not just a destination but also a mirror. From traditional folk dances to an advanced suspended monorail, she saw how "the past, present and future can coexist in a single moment".

"In a reality that often feels intangible and ever-changing, people-to-people exchanges rooted in our shared humanity matter more than ever," she said in the video.



Samantha Tsang visits the Guishan TV Tower in Wuhan, Hubei province.



Jonah Tan (center) spends Christmas with friends in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Winter deepens cultural roots

At the end of 2024, Jonah Tan took part in a camp program at Tsinghua University that combined academic study with travel. Looking back on the experience, Tan described the trip as "nothing short of amazing".

The program gave him a close look at academic life at one of China's top universities. At Tsinghua, he attended a dozen lectures on subjects ranging from artificial intelligence to psychology. He also had the chance to speak with senior Tsinghua students, who shared advice on future plans and academic paths — guidance that proved valuable to him.

The experience extended far beyond the classroom. Tan traveled to Northeast China and visited Changbai Mountain in Jilin province, where the winter scenery left a deep impression. In his video, the snowy landscape is paired with a poetic lyric: "After drinking from the Songhua River and witnessing the beauty of rime ice, I long for that dazzling world of pure white."

Tan also spent Christmas in Beijing, celebrating with local friends, a moment that made the trip feel even more personal.

As someone who is half-Chinese, he said the journey deepened his connection to Chinese culture "in ways he had never imagined".

Contact the writer at guiqian@i21st.cn

A city full of surprises

For Liam Wilcox, Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong province, was once little more than a mysterious name. But after spending a summer there, the young American was surprised to discover what he described as "an indispensable metropolis" — and a place he would "never forget".

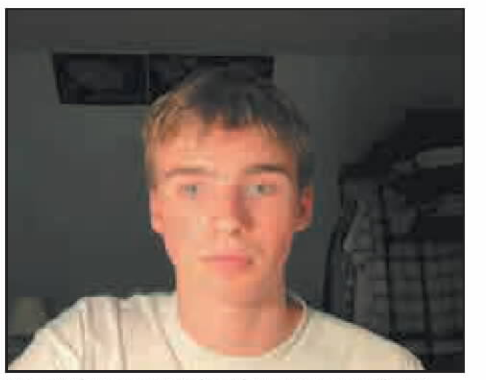
Wilcox joined an international exchange program at South China University of Technology in Guangzhou. In his video, he recounts his trip in fluent Chinese, making the language itself one of the most impressive parts of his story.

Reflecting on Guangzhou's history, he highlights the city's location along the Pearl River and its long-standing role as a center of trade. He also learned that many Cantonese people migrated to the US during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), helping shape the Chinese cuisine that many Americans know today.

"I had not expected Guangzhou to be so deeply connected with my own country," Wilcox said in the video.

Food became one of the strongest threads running through his memories of the city — from hot soy milk in the morning to afternoon tea with friends and late-night snacks.

"Guangzhou is full of surprises around every corner," he said.



Liam Wilcox recounts his China journey in fluent Chinese on camera.

Reading China through motion

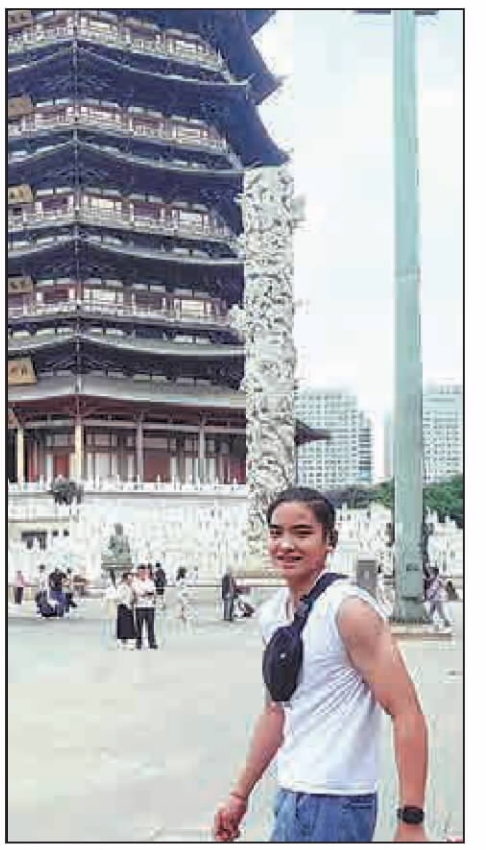
While many travelers remember a trip through food, sightseeing or shopping, Joshua Saul found himself recording China through movement. Rather than treating exercise as separate from travel, he used walking, stretching and brief pauses for reflection as a way to feel the rhythm of each city.

In Suzhou, Jiangsu province, for example, he moved slowly through classical gardens and along slightly wet stone-paved paths. At quiet moments during the visit, he added simple movements such as push-ups and stretching, using them less as a workout than as a way to stay present in the setting.

In Shanghai, he chose to meditate near the Oriental Pearl Tower by the Huangpu River, closing his eyes amid skyscrapers and the energy of the modern city.

"This trip to China made me understand fitness isn't limited to the gym," Saul said.

For him, every step became part of the journey, helping him remember "the temperature of each city, its heights and its story". He came to see that movement could be another way of reading a place — through its landscapes, history and everyday pace.



Joshua Saul exercises at scenic spots during his trip across China.

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Z WEEKLY



Lin Yu-chi (left) sits outside the bakery he runs with his wife, Tao Jiabao, in Wuhan, Hubei province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Baking becomes belonging

Through Taiwan-style bread and local Wuhan flavors, a baker creates quiet connections across the Taiwan Strait.

By LIU KUN in Wuhan
and **XIONG XINYI**

At around 4:30 am, while much of the city is still asleep, Lin Yu-chi, a baker from Tainan, Taiwan, begins his day alongside his wife, Tao Jiabao. Together, they run a small bakery in Wuhan, Hubei province. Over the years, Lin's life has come to revolve around flour and yeast.

At the bakery, Lin takes on the most physically demanding tasks: mixing, kneading and controlling fermentation. Tao prepares ingredients, manages orders and bakes. With no employees, the couple handles every step themselves, from flour to shelf, each task tightly linked, leaving little room for pause.

The rhythm now feels natural to Lin, though it was not what he had expected when he first arrived on the Chinese mainland in 2015.

Lin landed in Shanghai with only 900 yuan ($130.41) and many misconceptions shaped by media reports, imagining the mainland as underdeveloped and inconvenient. But his first impression quickly challenged those assumptions.

"The city was filled with skyscrapers, and mobile payments and ride-hailing services were incredibly convenient," he recalled.

Lin eventually chose to settle in Wuhan because of love. His relationship with Tao, a Wuhan native, gave him a reason to stay and build a life there.

The bakery began in a community garage. The first loaf they sold was a simple toast, and their earliest customers were neighbors. It was that support, Lin said, that gave him the confidence to carry on.

Later, Lin and Tao scraped together savings and borrowed money to move the business into a proper commercial storefront. In 2025, they opened their shop on Taibei Road.

For Lin, the location held a special familiarity. As someone from Taiwan, the street name — written with the same Chinese characters as Taipei — felt close to home. The surrounding neighborhood, where many Taiwan residents live, also had the kind of community atmosphere he wanted for the bakery.

That sense of familiarity also shaped what he baked. The shop's best-sellers include Taiwan-style crispy chicken and sausage bread, rice bread and shrimp roll bread made with ingredients brought from Taiwan.

Lin also tried to combine Taiwan flavors with local Wuhan tastes, but not every experiment succeeded. In one early attempt, he followed a popular trend and turned Wuhan's *reganmian* (hot dry noodles) and crayfish into bread. But the dough absorbed too much oil from the noodles, and the crayfish filling fell out of place.



> "Seeing them bring their children in to buy bread, catching up on their lives, and feeling that sense of human connection — that is the warmest motivation that keeps me going every day."
>
> **Lin Yu-chi,** a baker from Taiwan

Tao's local palate also helped guide him. She often encouraged Lin to tone down the sweetness he was used to.

After testing many versions with regular customers, Lin gradually found a more balanced approach, using Taiwan ingredients as a foundation while incorporating the salty, savory and mildly spicy flavors preferred by local tastes.

One standout success was his tomato, cumin and pineapple bread, paired with cuttlefish and shrimp cakes sourced from Taiwan — a combination that quickly became a favorite.

Yet for Lin, the most meaningful part of the day is not the business itself.

"The moment I look forward to most is running into familiar faces who stop by to chat," he said. "Seeing them bring their children in to buy bread, catching up on their lives, and feeling that sense of human connection — that is the warmest motivation that keeps me going every day."

Over the years, Lin has built lasting relationships with many of the people who walk through his bakery doors.

One longtime customer, a Wuhan local who has supported the bakery since its early days, still visits every week or two after its move to Taibei Road. When things get busy, she even helps with packing, sales and checkout.

Another story that stays with him is that of a woman who works in Kenya. Whenever she returns to China, she makes a special trip to the bakery and buys bread to have it shipped to Kenya via Guangzhou. She once told Lin that the familiar taste was her greatest comfort whenever she felt homesick.

Through his years in Wuhan, Lin has witnessed not only the development of the city's infrastructure and innovation capacity, but also its growing support for young entrepreneurs from Taiwan. He has also felt its cultural atmosphere become more open and welcoming.

"I have gone from being a stranger to feeling that this place is truly home," he said.

For Lin, that feeling extends beyond his own experience. Taiwan residents often visit his bakery, finding the taste of home in his bread while sharing stories of their own lives on the Chinese mainland. In those conversations, Lin sees a quiet sense of mutual support among people living far away from where they began.

He often thinks of Wuhan in the early morning: steaming bowls of hot dry noodles, people hurrying through the streets, ordinary scenes filled with purpose.

To young people from Taiwan considering opportunities on the mainland, Lin's message is simple. "Don't overthink it — just come and do it," he said. "Set aside any sense of superiority and immerse yourself in local life. With your own two hands, you can build a future here."

Contact the writers at liukun@chinadaily.com.cn

Young performers celebrate Children's Day at Beijing gala

By MENG WENJIE
mengwenjie@i21st.cn

On the evening of May 31, 13-year-old Yang Guangyu lifted a *lusheng*, a traditional Miao reed-pipe instrument, and took a deep breath. Moments later, those clear, resonant notes echoed through the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing.

"The cultures of China's ethnic groups are all beautiful," Yang said. "I'm proud to share the traditions of my own with more people."

Yang was among the young performers at the eighth annual "We Grow Together: My Country and Me" gala celebrating International Children's Day.

Jointly organized by the China Soong Ching Ling Foundation, the China Welfare Institute and the NCPA, the program brought together more than 1,000 children and teenagers.

Yang was one of 10 students from Zhouxi Primary School in Kaili in the Qiandongnan Miao and Dong autonomous prefecture, Guizhou province. They performed the Miao Lusheng Dance, a practice listed as part of China's national intangible cultural heritage in 2006.

Though only 13, Yang has spent the past two years learning the instrument. To prepare for the gala, he and his classmates rehearsed for nearly six months.

"The venue is so large and impressive," he said. "The moment I arrived, I felt all the hard work had been worthwhile."

At Zhouxi Primary School, the Lusheng Club has been running for 11 years, said instructor Pan Fujian.

"Students begin learning the instrument and the dance in first grade. Even their between-class exercises include the distinctive dance steps," Pan said.

Among the youngest performers was 10-year-old Wu Xingqiao, who said she initially found practice difficult.

"The movements must be bold and energetic, otherwise the dance loses its natural beauty," she said.

When Wu learned she would perform in Beijing, she was "both surprised and excited". It was her first time away from her hometown and parents.

Pointing to her costume, she said the embroidery was hand-stitched, the phoenix-shaped headdress was made of silver ornaments, and the fabric was dyed using traditional techniques.

"These crafts are not easy to make. I hope more people can see the effort behind them," she said.

The gala also featured children from Uygur, Kazak, Tujia and other ethnic groups. Through music and dance, they showcased ethnic traditions, revolutionary heritage, cultural diversity and China's modern achievements.



Students from Fu Luen School in Macao perform a space-inspired dance during the "We Grow Together: My Country and Me" gala at the National Center for the Performing Arts in Beijing on May 31. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In the final chapter, the performance turned toward the future, as children from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan presented technology-themed performances.

Among them were 22 dancers from Fu Luen School in Macao. Aged 8 to 12, they performed a modern dance inspired by space exploration. Nine-year-old Chan Puicheng played a curious girl traveling through space, while 12-year-old Lao Chi-kei portrayed an astronaut accompanying her across the solar system.

For Lao, it was her second appearance in the gala. "The last time I came, I was being taken care of by older students," she said. "This year, I'm helping younger teammates. I feel I've become more independent."

Eighteen-year-old breakdancer Oscar Kwok, born in Hong Kong and raised in Beijing for nine years, attended with eight dancers from Youth Outreach, a Hong Kong youth service organization.

"My mother is from Beijing. This event gave me a chance to return to my hometown, so I'm very excited," Kwok said.

During rehearsals, he met two 11-year-old dancers from a mainland troupe who had already trained for five years. He was struck by their dedication.

"The communication really brought us closer," Kwok said. "I couldn't believe children much younger than me were already so experienced."

Chen Yan, an 18-year-old breakdancer from Hong Kong, agreed. In Hong Kong, she usually measures her progress against familiar peers. "But coming to Beijing gave me a much broader stage," she said. "I've seen more dancers and styles, which helped me understand where I can keep improving."

Beyond rehearsals, the young performers also visited cultural, technological and historical landmarks in Beijing, including the Palace Museum, tech company Tencent and the Former Residence of Soong Ching Ling.

Chan Ka-ling, executive director of Youth Outreach, said the Beijing trip went far beyond the performances themselves.

"Back in Hong Kong, students learn about history from textbooks, but here they experienced it firsthand," she said. "The event also gave them an opportunity to express their love for the motherland through shared dance and music, creating memories that will become a meaningful part of their growth."

Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

10 TO WATCH AT WORLD CUP

Two of soccer's all-time greats will likely make their final bows on the sport's biggest stage at the 2026 World Cup. Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo can finally pass the baton on to a new generation including Spain's Lamine Yamal. Kylian Mbappe — who was only 19 when he won the World Cup with France in 2018 — will be hoping to confirm his place as the heir-apparent to Messi and Ronaldo. Here are 10 players to watch at this year's World Cup.



Lionel Messi

The magnificent Messi finally achieved his career ambition in Qatar four years ago by leading Argentina to World Cup glory and emulating national icon Diego Maradona.

With it, Messi effectively completed the soccer grand slam, winning the top titles for club, country and individually. Since Qatar, he has moved to the United States to make Inter Miami the dominant force in MLS, winning the MLS Cup last year.

His status as the greatest player of all time is still debated, with Maradona and Pele considered his main rivals for that title. But back-to-back World Cups — which Pele achieved in 1958 and '62 —would further strengthen his case.

Messi, however, has given Argentina a scare just two weeks ahead of the World Cup. The 38-year-old was substituted in an Inter Miami game and diagnosed with "an overload associated with muscle fatigue in his left hamstring". No timeline was given for his recovery.

Cristiano Ronaldo

Ronaldo is still waiting for the one trophy that has eluded him in his glittering, record-breaking career.

The Portugal star heads to the World Cup after leading Saudi club Al Nassr to the domestic league title this season. That trophy adds to league titles with Manchester United in England, Real Madrid in Spain and Juventus in Italy, along with five Champions League trophies (four with Madrid, one with United).

He has also won the European Championship with Portugal and two UEFA Nations League titles. His 143 goals is a record in men's international soccer and nobody has scored more than his 41 in World Cup qualifiers.

Even at the age of 41, his hunger for trophies and records shows no sign of relenting.



Kylian Mbappe



Ousmane Dembele



Erling Haaland



Lamine Yamal

Kylian Mbappe

Mbappe has long been considered the player to take over the title as the best player on the planet after Messi and Ronaldo.

Some would say the Real Madrid striker has already done that as a World Cup and multiple title-winner, but the fact that he has yet to win the Champions League or Ballon d'Or leaves a big question mark hanging over his career.

He should have a good shot at this year's Ballon d'Or — awarded annually to the best player in the world — if he can lead France to another World Cup title after topping the scoring charts in Spain and leading the way in the Champions League.

Mbappe is often judged on what he hasn't won, rather than what he has. In two years at Madrid, he is still waiting for major titles in Spain.

Ousmane Dembele

The current Ballon d'Or holder and a two-time Champions League winner.

The France forward has reignited his career since joining Paris Saint-Germain three years ago, helping it secure its first Champions League title last season and clinch a back-to-back trophy this year.

Having been touted as one of the brightest prospects in Europe earlier in his career, Barcelona bought Dembele for $173 million in 2017. An underwhelming time in Spain led many to think he would never realize his potential.

No one is saying that now.

Erling Haaland

The Manchester City striker is playing in his first major international tournament after smashing records at club level.

Haaland, 25, is well on his way breaking scoring records in the Champions League and Premier League and has already surpassed benchmarks set by Messi in terms of the speed with which he's amassing goals.

Norway is an outsider at this year's World Cup, but in Haaland it has arguably the most lethal forward at the tournament.

Lamine Yamal

Spain's teenaged sensation was the star of its triumph at the European Championship in 2024 despite not turning 17 until the eve of the final.

He was the youngest-ever scorer at a men's Euros and with mesmerizing speed and footwork. Yamal is earning comparisons to Messi, with whom he was once photographed when he was still a baby.

Yamal has arguably overtaken Mbappe as the man most likely to fill void when Messi and Ronaldo retire and an impressive World Cup could strengthen that argument.

Jude Bellingham

He's the midfielder virtually every top team wanted when Real Madrid sealed his signature in 2023. He went on to lead the club to its 15th Champions League title and the Spanish title in his first season at the club before driving England to the final of the Euros with one of the goals of the tournament on the way.

Bellingham is a match-winner capable of unforgettable moments on the biggest stage and despite an underwhelming season at Madrid, he will be one of England's biggest hopes as it aims to win a major title for the first time since 1966.

Neymar

Brazil's all-time record goalscorer has carried the weight of a nation on his shoulders throughout his career.

Despite winning the biggest honors as a player, he is yet to lead Brazil to a record-extending sixth World Cup title.

Neymar, now 34, has been called up by Brazil coach Carlo Ancelotti for his fourth World Cup after enduring injuries and an underwhelming move to Saudi Arabia since the last edition in Qatar four years ago.

Mohamed Salah

The Egyptian icon is leaving Liverpool after a disappointing campaign, but remains his country's talisman.

Egypt will just have to hope the 33-year-old striker has saved his best for the World Cup.

Salah scored 257 goals in 442 matches and won a full set of trophies with Liverpool — including the Champions League and two Premier League titles.

With Egypt he has been runner-up in two African Cup of Nations.

Christian Pulisic

From an early age Pulisic was seen as capable of becoming American soccer's biggest overseas star.

He has gone on to play for some of Europe's biggest clubs in Germany, England and Italy, winning top honors along the way and none bigger than the Champions League with Chelsea.

Now at AC Milan the forward has discovered some of his most consistent form and will be an important part of Mauricio Pochettino's hopes to go far with the US Men's National Team in its home World Cup.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Jude Bellingham



Neymar



Mohamed Salah



Christian Pulisic

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Amazing spectacle
Smart eyeglasses boost efficiency of police force
BUSINESS, PAGE 10



Friendship across decades grows in desert
TOP NEWS, PAGE 3



From fan to champ
Liu Yujie, 16, once spectator, wins Beijing Women's Open golf title
SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, MAY 26, 2026



President Xi Jinping awards Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic the Friendship Medal of the People's Republic of China in Beijing on Monday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Xi hails Sino-Serbian bond

President calls for stronger alignment of growth strategies, enhanced cooperation

By **MO JINGXI**
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President Xi Jinping called on China and Serbia, bonded by their unique ironclad friendship, to strengthen the alignment of development strategies, expand cooperation in emerging sectors, enhance youth and people-to-people exchanges, and step up coordination in international affairs, as he held talks with visiting Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic in Beijing on Monday.

Xi awarded Vucic the Friendship Medal of the People's Republic of China, the country's highest state honor for foreigners.

The two sides also issued a joint statement on Monday on continuously promoting the building of a China-Serbia community with a shared future for the new era, as well as a joint statement on jointly promoting the implementation of the four major global initiatives.

During the meeting, Xi recalled his state visit to Serbia in 2024, when the two countries agreed to build a China-Serbia community with a shared future for the new era, making Serbia the first European country to join China in building such a community.

Xi called on the two countries to strengthen exchanges, consolidate mutual trust, deepen cooperation and support each other, in order to jointly follow a bright path toward a shared future and common prosperity and promote the China-Serbia comprehensive strategic partnership to a new height.

Xi stressed that the ironclad friendship between China and Serbia is unique, with profound historical logic and a strong foundation in reality, and he urged the two sides to continue to firmly support each other.

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China supports Serbia in pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions, and is ready to strengthen exchanges with Serbia on governance experience, Xi said.

Noting that China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) has made comprehensive arrangements for high-quality development goals, Xi said the two sides should implement the midterm action plan for Belt and Road cooperation and continue to advance cooperation in areas including transportation and energy infrastructure.

Facing a new scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, the two sides should expand cooperation in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, the digital economy, green energy and advanced manufacturing to foster new growth drivers, Xi said.

On youth and people-to-people exchanges, Xi said the two sides should make good use of the multidimensional framework of their visa-free policies, free trade agreement and direct flights, expand cooperation across the board in culture, education, sports, tourism and subnational exchanges, and carry forward the traditional friendship between the Chinese and Serbian peoples.

Against the backdrop of a turbulent and changing international situation, China and Serbia should continue to strengthen coordination and cooperation in international affairs, practice true multilateralism, and make joint efforts to promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, as well as the building of a community with a shared future for humanity, Xi said.

Vucic, in his speech, congratulated China on the successful formulation and implementation of its 15th Five-Year Plan.

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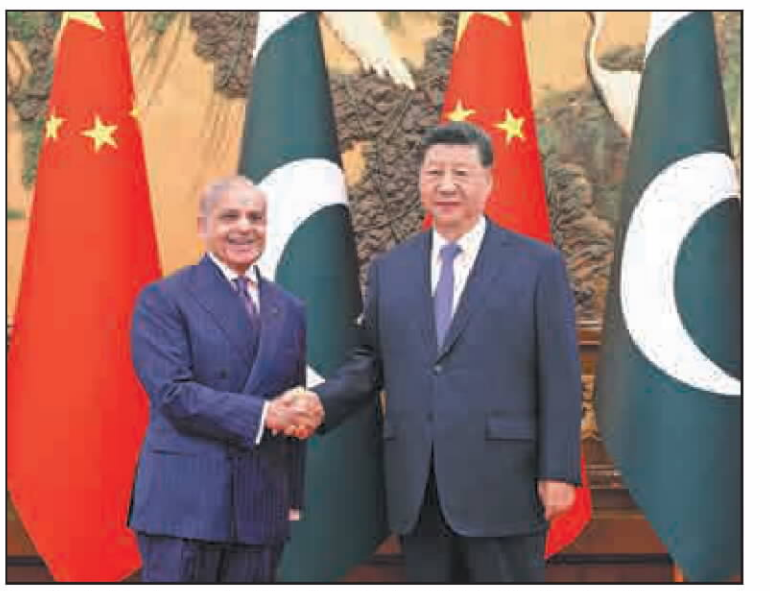

President Xi Jinping meets with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif in Beijing on Monday. Sharif is in China on an official visit that started on Saturday and will run until Tuesday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Closer China-Pakistan ties urged for better outcomes

By **ZHAO JIA**
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President Xi Jinping said on Monday that China and Pakistan should accelerate the development of an even closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future in the new era and deliver more outcomes from their all-weather cooperation to better benefit the two peoples, contribute to regional peace and stability, and set a fine example for building a community with a shared future with neighboring countries.

Xi made the remarks during a meeting in Beijing with Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, who is on a four-day official visit to China, as the two countries mark the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties.

Over the past 75 years, China and Pakistan have enjoyed mutual understanding, trust and support, and forged an unbreakable traditional friendship, Xi said, adding that their strategic mutual trust and practical cooperation have strongly promoted the development of both nations.

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No matter how the international landscape may evolve, Beijing will always place priority on the development of China-Pakistan relations in its diplomacy with neighboring countries, he noted.

Xi emphasized China's firm support for Pakistan in safeguarding its independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, and expressed readiness to maintain high-level exchanges, strengthen strategic communication and steer the relationship forward in the right direction.

The two sides should advance both major signature projects and "small and beautiful" livelihood programs, and deepen all-around cooperation in areas such as agriculture, industry, artificial intelligence and talent cultivation, he said.

Xi also shared his pleasure in receiving a letter from Pakistani students at Tianjin University, in which they expressed their aspiration to become builders of cooperation, promoters of exchanges and guardians of friendship between the two countries.

Xi added that he was truly heartened to see that the cause of China-Pakistan friendship has dedicated young successors.

Sharif described President Xi as a great friend of the Pakistani people and of all peace-loving people around the world, saying that the ironclad friendship between Pakistan and China "is growing ever stronger and is next to none".

Sharif reaffirmed Pakistan's firm commitment to the one-China principle and its support for China's position on all issues concerning its core interests.

He expressed Pakistan's readiness to learn from China's governance experience, deepen Belt and Road cooperation, advance the construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, and further develop bilateral relations for the benefit of the two peoples.

On multilateral affairs, Xi said the two countries should conduct higher-level security cooperation over a broader area and jointly safeguard regional peace and stability.

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OVERSEAS GAMERS BLOWN AWAY BY WUXIA GAME

Where Winds Meet introduces concepts embedded in Chinese storytelling traditions

By **BAI SHUHAO**
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The concepts of *wuxia* and *jianghu* have for centuries carried some of the deepest ideals in Chinese culture.

Wuxia refers to wandering martial heroes who possess otherworldly powers and hone their skills to protect the vulnerable. *Jianghu* — literally "rivers and lakes" — is the world that *wuxia* inhabit, shaped by loyalty, bonds and a belief in justice.

Perhaps the simplest way to understand them is to step inside *Where Winds Meet*, an open-world role-playing game that has became one of China's most unexpected global hits.

Ahead of the overseas launch of *Where Winds Meet* in November, there was concern that without the cultural context, the game might remain a niche historical fantasy.

Instead, it exceeded expectations, becoming a worldwide sensation, climbing into the top three on Steam's global best-seller list and attracting tens of millions of players.

"We thought foreign players would connect with it," said Wen Jie, the game's publishing director, who prefers to go by Eric. "But we never imagined how far it would travel."

Part of the surprise lies in the game's subject matter. Drawing heavily from Chinese history and culture, the game is set during the transition from the Five Dynasties and Ten Kingdoms (907-960) period to the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127) — an era unfamiliar even to many Chinese players, let alone overseas audiences.

However, this historical complexity gives players even more to explore.

One of the game's most beloved characters among overseas players, Tian Ying, was inspired by a real historical episode known as the Qingfeng Post Station Incident, a political assassination that took place during the early years of the Northern Song Dynasty.

In the story, Tian assassinates a Khitan envoy and frames a rival state to stop an alliance that threatens his homeland. Foreign players praised the plot's intrigue and moral ambiguity, with some calling it "an entire game within the game".

To build the world, developers studied historical records, conducted field research and collaborated with scholars and cultural institutions.

Beyond grand quests and heroic sacrifices, players can also slow down and enjoy quieter pleasures such as house decoration or customizing characters.

Eric said he hopes that, by playing the game, overseas players will become curious about *wuxia* and *jianghu* — concepts deeply embedded in Chinese storytelling traditions — and will be encouraged to further explore Chinese culture.

This March, the game held its first fan gathering in the United States. Some attendees carefully peeled posters from the venue walls to take them home as keepsakes.

"*Wuxia* and *jianghu* trace their roots to ancient China," Eric said, "but their values belong everywhere — protecting what you love, staying true to your beliefs, growing through hardship and defending the place you call home."



A poster of the open-world role-playing game *Where Winds Meet*. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Integration of services, production key to future

WORLD WATCH
By Ronnie Lins

China's 2026 Government Work Report introduces a directive that may sound technical but signals a deeper structural development: The country will "press ahead with trials to promote the integrated development of advanced manufacturing and modern services".

In a world shaped by reconfigured supply chains and rapid technological change, this is not just an industrial policy. It reflects the recognition of the broader transformation in how economies generate and capture value.

The line between producing goods and delivering services no longer holds. China is combining both into a coordinated, data-driven system. This shift moves the country beyond scale-based competition toward ecosystem-based competitiveness, whereby production, services and digital intelligence operate together.

For decades, structural change has been framed by some as a trade-off, in which services would expand as manufacturing declined. China's recent trajectory challenges that assumption. In 2025, China's GDP surpassed 140 trillion yuan ($20.6 trillion) for the first time, with growth at 5 percent, and its core digital economy industries contributed more than 10.5 percent of GDP.

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INDEPTH

Chinese varieties of flower in global spotlight after leaders' Beijing meeting

By **CHEN NAN**
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Left: Horticulturist Fu Yinghui prunes roses at the Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing on May 19. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY
Right: A visitor photographs roses at Taoranting Park, Beijing, on May 13. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Even world leaders can be captivated by the simple charm of a rose.

During his recent visit to Beijing, US President Donald Trump paused to admire Chinese roses while walking through Zhongnanhai, the historic leadership compound, alongside President Xi Jinping. The roses — growing in what was once an imperial garden — caught the attention of both leaders.

Xi told Trump that one of the trees they admired during their walk was 490 years old, and that he would send the seeds of the Chinese roses they saw in the garden to Trump as a gift. "I love that; it's great," Trump said.

This fleeting moment of shared appreciation reflects what generations have long known: the Chinese rose, or *yueji*, is more than a decorative plant.

From imperial gardens to neighborhood parks, these resilient, fragrant flowers embellish cultural and urban landscapes around the country, with Beijing the most famous example.

But Chinese roses are not confined to the capital's grand gardens or neighborhood parks. They are widely acknowledged by scientists as the foundation of the modern rose, one of the world's bestselling ornamental plants.

The Chinese rose has a history stretching over 2,000 years, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration and the National Park Administration.

Records date back to the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), but it was during the Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) dynasties that rose cultivation flourished. In those periods, gardeners cultivated a number of ancient, treasured varieties.

When these Chinese roses reached Europe, they sparked a horticultural revolution. European breeders crossed them with local roses, solving long-standing challenges of short flowering seasons and weak fragrances. This exchange set the stage for centuries of hybridization. Today, over 40,000 rose varieties thrive around the world, thanks largely to their Chinese predecessors.

Over the millennia, poets and scholars have celebrated the beauty of Chinese roses. Tang Dynasty poet Bai Juyi wrote, "Late to bloom after spring departs, it alone flourishes in the courtyard's heart."

Song Dynasty writer Su Shi praised the longevity of its flowering: "Peonies are rare in late spring, and peonies bloom too briefly in early summer, yet this flower blooms without end, claiming all four seasons as its own."

Ringed with floral 'necklace'

Early summer in Beijing brings a floral spectacle along the city's ring roads. Chinese roses are now in full bloom along the median strips of the Fourth Ring Road, drawing commuters to admire their vibrant colors and heady fragrance.

Social media is buzzing with posts recommending the best spots, with netizens calling the green belts "May's romantic highlight". One commuter remarked, "I usually rush home after work, but lately I stop to enjoy the flowers. The city feels more romantic."

Landscaping of the Fourth Ring Road is being upgraded this year, the Beijing Municipal Forestry and Parks Bureau said.

New rose varieties now complement the established ones, offering longer blooming cycles and more abundant flowers. The flowering season has been extended from May through late October. When completed in November, the 65.3-kilometer-long project will create a continuous "rose necklace" of an estimated 710,000 plants citywide.

In Beijing's *hutongs*, roses flourish — climbing walls, spilling over fences, and softening the edges of small gardens. For locals, these flowers are not a luxury; they are a familiar presence, a splash of beauty in everyday life.

Wang Meng, 38, was born and raised in the *hutong* area of Hufangqiao, in the southern part of the city. One of her favorite places to enjoy Chinese roses is Taoranting Park near her home.

After obtaining a master's in gardening from China Agricultural University, Wang started working at the park in 2013. She now serves as a senior engineer in landscape architecture.

"Growing up in the *hutongs*, Chinese roses were always around," she recalled. "They're part of the neighborhood, part of our memories. This park lets me see them in full bloom, and it feels like the city itself is celebrating with me."

Established in 1952, Taoranting Park was one of the first large public parks in Beijing after the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949.

Unlike imperial gardens, which were private and formal, Taoranting Park was intended as a place for ordinary citizens to relax, socialize and enjoy nature, earning its reputation as the "People's Park".

Stepping into the rose garden, known as the Shengchun Shan Fang Rose Area, feels like entering a world made entirely of colors and scents.

Wang said with more than 19,000 plants of 20 varieties, the garden is a living tapestry that constantly changes with the seasons, filling the air with layers of fragrance.

"It's not just a garden — it's a space crafted for strolling, lingering and losing oneself amid Beijing's most beloved roses," she said. "Ubiquitous yet essential, Chinese roses are the subtle color running through the heart of Beijing."

Every morning, Zhang Xin walks the paths of the rose garden, his eyes scanning almost every leaf and bud.

Zhang, 38, is a specialist in Chinese rose care. But his work doesn't end in the garden. He also spends hours in the park's greenhouse cultivation area, carefully nurturing roses according to their blooming cycles and monitoring plants. "Each plant has its own schedule, and I have to guide it patiently so that when it reaches the garden, it can shine at its best," he said.

Zhang said the most important part of tending roses isn't watering, fertilizing, or even planting, but pruning. "If you want the plant to flourish, pruning is everything," he said.

The roses are also a bridge between the gardener and visitors. Zhang loves seeing people pause on the paths, lingering over colors or inhaling the fragrant bouquets. Feedback shapes his work: some people prefer traditional blooms, others are drawn to retro or artistic varieties. Each opinion, he said, informs the garden's evolution.

The Temple of Heaven, a short distance from Taoranting Park, boasts a vast Chinese rose garden, where blooms complement centuries-old architecture. Here, roses are not only cultivated for public enjoyment — they are entwined with ceremonial landscapes and imperial heritage.

"I come here almost every week," said Liu Mingfang, 67, who lives nearby.

"After the rain, the roses seem brighter, fresher. The light after the rain is perfect for photos," she said while taking photos of the flowers with her phone. "You can see every color in the petals. It feels alive."

When Liu was a girl, Chinese roses climbed over the courtyard walls of her home, she recalled. Seeing the roses today "feels like coming home", she said.

"Each color has its own charm. The pale pinks are delicate, the reds are bold — it lifts the spirit. Even the soft smell reminds me of my childhood."

Fu Yinghui, the team leader of the Chinese rose section of the historical site's flower center, has worked at the rose garden for nearly 40 years. The story of the Temple of Heaven's rose garden started in the mid-20th century, when city planners sought to bring color and fragrance to the capital's green spaces.

The park introduced Chinese roses from southern China in 1956. In 1960, the rose garden received a significant boost when Jiang Endian, a female horticulturist affectionately known as the "Lady of Roses", returned to China from overseas and was hired as a consultant.

With her expertise, the Temple of Heaven began building a proper rose garden, selecting superior varieties and laying the groundwork for what would become one of the country's premier public rose displays.

By 1963, the rose garden spanned approximately 13,000 square meters, making it the largest open-access rose garden in China at the time. In May of that year, the park welcomed its very first rose season, with the grounds filled with the colors and sweet smells of the carefully cultivated blooms.

By 1966, more than 3,000 Chinese rose varieties had been planted at the Temple of Heaven site.

In 1988, aged just 17, Fu, whose father was a historic building restorer at the Temple of Heaven, joined the rose team. "In 1987, the Chinese rose, along with chrysanthemums, was officially designated one of Beijing's city flowers," he recalled. "Roses were becoming incredibly popular — so many varieties, such vivid colors, and so versatile in how they could be cultivated and displayed. I happened to start my career at the perfect time."

With large-scale promotion and planting in the early 1990s, roses began appearing across the city.

"Before that, roses were considered high-end flowers — too costly for urban landscaping. Streets were mostly lined with pansies or scarlet sage. During the 1990 Asian Games, the streets began to bloom with bright, beautiful roses. Slowly, they became a part of people's everyday lives and even their homes," Fu said.

In harmony with history

Beyond symbolism, the rose is remarkably adaptable. Easy to propagate and resilient to cold, drought, and challenging environments, it thrives across much of China and many parts of the world.

In Beijing, the Chinese rose has found a fitting home. Blooming from late spring to early winter — and sometimes even braving the first snow — the flowers mirror the city's enduring spirit.

Known as *Yueyuehong* (red every month), Chinese roses at the Temple of Heaven bloom in May and repeat at least two times more. Today, thanks to skillful cultivation, they can even thrive through autumn and winter.

Fu makes this possible with precision and patience.

Early bloomers are placed in warmer areas; after leaves appear, they are moved for optimal sunlight. Buds are trimmed to synchronize their growth with others, while overly prolific stems are pared down to concentrate nutrients on the strongest flowers. Every pot receives a balanced water and fertilizer mix, with temperature and humidity closely monitored.

"The secret," Fu said, "is not just care — it's guiding the roses to bloom beautifully, exactly when they should."

Fu said viewing the roses at the Temple of Heaven is a different experience from any other park.

Here, the blooms unfold against a backdrop of towering ancient cypresses and ginkgo trees, some hundreds of years old, their twisted trunks and sweeping branches carrying the weight of history. Beyond the greenery, the crimson and gold roofs of the temple halls rise gracefully, their ornate eaves and carved beams adding a sense of grandeur and timelessness.

Visitors wander along winding paths that curve around these venerable trees and historic structures, pausing to admire not just the roses but the harmony between cultivated beauty and the enduring architecture of imperial China. Here, every bloom seems to carry a story, not only of nature but of centuries of human care and cultural legacy.

Every morning at seven, Fu arrives at the rose garden. He takes a moment to watch the visitors as they wander among the blooms, smiling at their delight.

"It's wonderful to see everyone enjoying them. Flowers like these aren't just for beauty — they make people slow down, breathe, and remember what's good in life," he said.

City of roses brings beauty, joy to people



A staff member transports roses at the Temple of Heaven Park in Beijing on May 19. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY





Roses are seen in bloom near the East Second Ring Road (left) and Sihui Bridge (right) in Chaoyang district, Beijing, on May 7.
PHOTOS BY JU HUANZONG / XINHUA

> "It's wonderful to see everyone enjoying them. Flowers like these aren't just for beauty — they make people slow down, breathe, and remember what's good in life."
>
> **Fu Yinghui,** horticulturist at the Temple of Heaven

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TOP NEWS

Growth: Services embedded in industry

From page 1

Those trends point to convergence rather than substitution.

This approach is quite different from those seen in some advanced economies, where service expansion has often coincided with industrial weakening or stagnant productivity. China is avoiding that outcome by directly embedding services in industrial processes. It now stands among the few major economies maintaining industrial depth while upgrading through service integration.

Manufacturing is no longer a stand-alone activity. It anchors a broader system in which software, logistics, data analytics and after-sales services drive value creation. Services no longer support production from the margins. They tend to shape productivity, differentiation and long-term competitiveness.

The new-energy vehicle sector illustrates this shift with clarity. China produced and sold more than 16 million units in 2025, while its national electric vehicle charging network surpassed 20 million units by the end of 2025, according to the National Energy Administration. The country currently has the world's largest and most rapidly expanding EV charging infrastructure. But scale alone no longer defines leadership. Competitiveness now depends on how effectively enterprises integrate hardware with digital services.

Ultra-fast charging networks, real-time battery monitoring, artificial intelligence-based predictive maintenance and continuous software upgrades turn vehicles into connected platforms. Value moves away from the factory floor and concentrates across the product life cycle.

This transformation is not confined to mobility. It is spreading to sectors such as industrial equipment, consumer electronics and smart infrastructure. As the "AI Plus" initiative advances, companies increasingly treat physical products as service nodes within broader digital ecosystems.

The integration of manufacturing and services is also reshaping industrial entities.

China is moving away from highly vertical structures toward distributed innovation networks. Small and medium-sized enterprises now play specialized roles across the value chain. They deploy computer vision in quality control, design certified testing systems, optimize logistics algorithms, and secure industrial networks.

Competitiveness now depends less on scale concentration and more on coordination across specialized actors. This marks a shift from scale-driven industrialization to coordination-driven competitiveness.

In addition, data has become a core production factor. Digital governance has become a central arena of global governance. China is actively engaging in international digital frameworks, including efforts to join the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement and the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Other Global South countries and emerging markets can draw a clear lesson from this model. Sustainable competitiveness will not come from choosing between industry and services. It will come from integrating both within a coherent institutional framework. Future competitiveness will depend less on where goods are produced and more on how effectively economies connect manufacturing, services and data in unified systems.

In the emerging global landscape, the ability to connect systems will matter more than the ability to scale them.

The author is the director of China-Brazil Center for Research and Business. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, pose for a group photo with Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic and his wife, Tamara Vucic, on Monday in Beijing. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Bond: Serbia grateful for contributions

From page 1

"Esteemed President Xi, dear friend, over the past 10 years since we established the strategic partnership between the People's Republic of China and Serbia, we have achieved major and significant results," Vucic told his host.

He said the Serbian people will never forget China's support for the European country in safeguarding its independence and sovereignty, and in independently exploring a development path suited to its own conditions. Serbia is grateful to Chinese companies for participating in its national development and making important contributions, Vucic said.

According to a social media post of the Serbian president, nearly 40,000 people in his country now work for Chinese companies, and four of the top six exporting enterprises in Serbia are from China.

Serbia attaches great importance to developing relations with China and firmly supports China's core interests, he said. Belgrade looks forward to working with Beijing to deepen high-quality Belt and Road cooperation, advance major projects, enhance people-to-people exchanges and achieve more tangible results in bilateral relations, Vucic said.

He noted that China, as a major country, has always treated small countries with equality and respect and abided by international law, setting an example for the world.

Vucic arrived in Beijing on Sunday for a five-day state visit, his first to China as Serbian president.

Premier Li Qiang and Wang Huning, chairman of the National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, held separate meetings with him on Monday.





Left: Yin Yuzhen speaks with Ronald Sakolsky over phone on May 18.
Above: Yin (center) and Sakolsky (third from right) pose for a group photo during a formal funds donation ceremony in 2000.
PHOTOS BY XINHUA

Desert fighter reconnects after years with 'American friend' who supported her work

By **DUAN JINXIAN** and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

A voice from afar spoke through the cellphone in the hands of 60-year-old Yin Yuzhen in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region: "It's amazing! It's amazing to me! I can't believe we are talking."

The voice belonged to Ronald Sakolsky, 69, a retired high school teacher in the United States.

Yin asked: "When will you return to China to see the green forest that has grown from the $5,000 you contributed years ago?" It had been decades since they last spoke, but like many such conversations between friends, it seemed perfectly natural to be picking up where they had left off. "I will be waiting for you in the desert," she added.

A video of their interaction, which was recently released online by a local media group, has touched the hearts of millions across China.

Yin, a resident of Wushen Banner in Ordos, is a national model worker widely acclaimed as one of China's afforestation heroes. Starting in the mid-1980s, she spent four decades reversing desertification and greening a stretch of Maowusu, the fourth-largest sandy area in China, by planting trees.

Yin had long been searching for her "American friend" who raised money to support her afforestation work. Earlier this month, she sought the help of local media to find him. In an online video post on May 16, she said, "Sakolsky, if you see this, I would like to invite you to come back to China, where your $5,000 has grown into a large forest."

Netizens, including Sakolsky's former students and colleagues, responded enthusiastically, which resulted in their brief reunion over phone on May 18.

As part of a teacher exchange program, Sakolsky taught English at a school in Luoyang, Henan province, from 1999 to 2000. During that time, he saw a television program about Yin's sand control work and was moved by her resilient, unyielding spirit. Hoping to fund her afforestation efforts, Sakolsky wrote to many institutions in the US. An institution in Boston, Massachusetts, agreed to donate $5,000 for Yin's work. The money was sent to her in cash through a Chinese organization.

In 2000, Sakolsky traveled to Maowusu to meet Yin in person. What he saw was inspiring. Yin was planting trees in the desert using just a shovel and traditional shoulder poles. She tied young saplings, which were as thin as fingers, with hemp rope and carried them in bundles to be planted on the uneven ground. Between 1985 and 1999, Yin and her husband planted saplings across nearly 2,667 hectares.

Yin spent most of the money on buying saplings, but kept $1 as a souvenir. When Sakolsky left China after completing his teaching assignment, the two lost touch.

Over the years, Yin stayed in Maowusu, planting trees each day. Her persistent work earned her recognition as a national model worker and national hero of desert prevention and control. In 2017, she shared her experience at the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

Maowusu covers about 42,200 square kilometers. Two-thirds of it is located in Ordos, and the rest extends to Shaanxi province and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region. With the Great Wall lying in the south, the sandy land has long resisted reclamation. Through the efforts made by Yin and others, more than 559,000 hectares are now blanketed in green, and the forest coverage rate is about 33 percent.

Speaking to China Daily, Sakolsky was full of praise for Yin. "She is committed to her dream. She never gave up." He told People's Daily, "It really is a miracle to get back in touch."

Yin told China News Service that Sakolsky helped her buy saplings "at the most difficult time", and that she has "never forgotten and will never forget" his kindness.

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said on Monday that the friendship between Yin and Sakolsky is a microcosm of the positive people-to-people exchanges between China and the US.

"We are confident that the two peoples will keep adding new chapters of friendship and injecting fresh vitality into bilateral ties," Mao said.

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Strengthened China-US AI ties stressed

Nations urged to step up cooperation to better manage technology's potential risks

By **WANG KEJU**
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As China and the United States race to expand their artificial intelligence capabilities, economists said the two countries need closer cooperation on global governance and safety standards in order to better manage the potential risks of the technology.

While the US continues to lead in frontier AI research, large-scale models and computing power, economists said that China is rapidly catching up and has developed strengths in integrating AI into manufacturing, consumer services and other parts of the real economy, reflecting different development priorities in the two countries.

"There are two main players in the development of frontier AI — China and the US," economist and Nobel laureate Michael Spence told China Daily. "There's almost no measurable difference between them now in terms of performance. Whatever difference there was, China has caught up."

According to Stanford University's Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence, US and Chinese AI models have traded places at the top of performance rankings multiple times since early 2025.

As of March, the top US model led by only 2.7 percent, with a marginal gap that fluctuated over the past year while remaining in single digits, according to the institute's 2026 AI Index Report.

"The models of AI innovation pursued by China and the US are actually quite different," said Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

"The US focuses on large models, massive computing power and a strong foundational base, aiming for what we call 'artificial superintelligence'. What the US pursues is the development of intelligence itself," he said.

China, according to Zhu, measures AI development by a different yardstick.

"China, in contrast, emphasizes applying AI to the real economy. When assessing whether AI is good or not, China places greater weight on the benefits and convenience it can bring to the real economy and to people's daily lives," he added.

Spence noted that China's systematic approach to deployment gives it an edge that the West currently lacks.

"China has, in my view, in the context of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), a better set of either plans or intentions to make sure that AI is deployed by and adopted across a wide range of the economy, both in manufacturing and services," Spence said.

"We talk a lot about the diffusion challenge, but we are just talking about it. We are not doing anything," he added.

As both China and the US, along with other economies, are scrambling to scale up their AI capabilities, the risks are increasing too — and not just economic ones.

"AI carries significant uncertainty, including risks related to society, the environment and potential military uses," Zhu warned.

"Therefore, establishing a governance framework and safety 'guardrails' for AI is, I believe, the most critical imperative for China and the US as the two leading players in this field, and it is also what the world expects of them," he added.

"The US tends to favor exogenous governance — building external oversight frameworks for monitoring and compliance," Zhu said. "China emphasizes an endogenous approach, embedding safeguards from the very beginning, even before model deployment, to ensure that AI benefits humanity."

Zhu noted that "both approaches are valid, open to discussion, and could together shape the future of AI governance".

Spence said the US and China "can probably cooperate on certain aspects of regulation, such as not using the technology for highly destructive purposes".

China and the US agreed to launch an intergovernmental dialogue on AI, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Guo Jiakun announced at a news conference earlier this month.

Guo said that China and the US need to work together to promote the development and improve the governance of AI to ensure that it will better contribute to the progress of human civilization and the common welfare of the international community.

Relations: Pakistan's mediating role praised

From page 1

China commends Pakistan for taking the initiative to play a mediating role in restoring peace in the Middle East, Xi said, calling on the two sides to maintain close communication and coordination, jointly oppose unilateralism and Cold War mentality, promote an equal and orderly multipolar world and an economic globalization that is universally beneficial and inclusive.

Sharif thanked China for supporting Pakistan's mediation efforts in talks between the United States and Iran, saying that Xi's four propositions on the Middle East situation offer guidance for achieving peace in the region.

Pakistan is willing to coordinate closely with China to jointly contribute to world peace and stability, he added.

Also on Monday, Premier Li Qiang held talks with Sharif, and said that China is ready to work with Pakistan to further advance the construction of the CPEC, import more high-quality Pakistani products and actively build an upgraded version of the bilateral free trade agreement.

Li expressed the hope that Pakistan will continue to take necessary measures to protect the safety of Chinese personnel, projects and institutions in the country.

Sharif welcomed Chinese companies to invest and thrive in Pakistan, pledging that the country would continue to take strong measures to provide a safer and better business environment.

After the talks, Li and Sharif witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents covering trade, science and technology, agriculture and food, human resources and other areas.

China is Pakistan's largest trading partner and the second-largest destination for Pakistani exports. Statistics show that the CPEC has garnered over $25.9 billion in direct investment and created over 260,000 jobs.

Ahsan Iqbal, Pakistan's minister for planning, development and special initiatives, said on Sunday that Pakistan-China relations are entering a new era of high-quality development, technological cooperation, agricultural and industrial modernization, and deeper regional integration.

He described the CPEC as a symbol of the two countries' shared vision for peace and prosperity, saying that the relationship has never experienced an "autumn" but has always remained in "spring", with new waves of cooperation emerging year after year.

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Trade, investment fuel China-Pakistan ties

Expanding projects and rising volumes reinforce long-term economic cooperation

By HAO NAN
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A stall holder gives a thumbs-up to visitors at the Pakistan exhibition of the ninth China-South Asia Exposition in June 2025. HU CHAO / XINHUA

As all-weather strategic cooperative partners, China and Pakistan have made economy and trade a central pillar of their relationship. Over decades of steady growth, their bilateral cooperation has expanded in scale, broadened in scope, and achieved marked improvements in quality and efficiency.

This year marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Both nations are working to build a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future by enhancing economic and trade interactions and fostering industrial synergy.

China-Pakistan economic and trade cooperation has a long history, supported by a solid foundation and stable institutional frameworks. The two countries established trade relations in the early 1950s and signed their first trade agreement in January 1963, laying the groundwork for regulated development of bilateral trade.

Furthermore, the China-Pakistan Joint Committee of Economy, Trade and Technology was established in 1982. It has convened 15 sessions so far, providing a long-term platform for communication and coordinated advancement.

Driven by joint efforts, bilateral economic and trade cooperation has made remarkable progress with trade volume rising steadily. Data from China's General Administration of Customs showed that bilateral trade reached $23.06 billion in 2024, up 11.1 percent year-on-year. Of this, China's exports to Pakistan stood at $20.23 billion, a 17 percent increase from 2023.

According to Pakistani statistics, China has been the country's largest trading partner, top source of imports, and second-largest export destination since the 2015-16 fiscal year, further cementing the bilateral economic and trade bond.

Core projects

Energy cooperation is a cornerstone of China-Pakistan practical cooperation and has yielded significant outcomes over the decades.

With Chinese investment and technical support, Pakistan has put 46 energy projects into operation, including seven coal-fired power plants, five new energy stations, two hydropower plants and one transmission line, with a combined investment exceeding $13 billion.

This cooperation has not only eased Pakistan's power shortage, but also trained nearly 40,000 technical professionals and more than 7,400 management personnel, establishing a strong talent base for the sustainable growth of Pakistan's energy sector and ongoing economic and trade cooperation.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC, a flagship project under the Belt and Road Initiative, serves as the core engine of bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

Since its launch in 2013, the CPEC has delivered fruitful results. By the end of 2024, 77 cooperation projects had been identified under its framework, 54 of which had been launched or completed. Total investment reached $25.5 billion, directly creating 248,000 jobs, including 188,000 for Pakistani workers.

The two sides are now advancing the CPEC into its upgraded phase, shifting focus to livelihood improvement, agricultural modernization and high-tech sectors, in line with the goal of enhancing bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

New momentum

Zafar Uddin Mahmood, special representative of the prime minister of Pakistan on China affairs, noted that as a major agricultural country, Pakistan has deepened cooperation with China in agricultural technology, seed research and development, and agro-processing in recent years.

He also highlighted the growing momentum in new energy cooperation. For example, Chinese photovoltaic and wind power technologies are widely applied in Pakistan, benefiting numerous households. Additionally, more than 10 Chinese new energy vehicle manufacturers have established presence in Pakistan, bringing cutting-edge technologies and quality products to support industrial upgrading and green transition.

Anwaar-ul-Haq Kakar, a Pakistani senator and former caretaker prime minister, stated that the CPEC has profoundly boosted Pakistan's economic and social development and enhanced the well-being of its people. It has driven progress in infrastructure, livelihood and technology, deepening the friendship between the two nations in the hearts of the Pakistani people.

"In my home province of Balochistan, the CPEC has improved energy supply, transport infrastructure, and the development of Gwadar Port, greatly enhancing connectivity," he said.

Kakar expressed hope that China and Pakistan will further strengthen cooperation in agriculture, climate action, information technology, and other sectors to deliver more benefits to the Pakistani people and make bilateral friendship more tangible and popular.

This year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and it is a critical year for Pakistan to implement its "Uraan Pakistan", the five-year economic strategy for 2024-29 focusing on exports, e-Pakistan, environment, energy, equity and empowerment.

Jiang Zaidong, Chinese ambassador to Pakistan, said China stands ready to align its development strategy with Pakistan, accelerate the building of a closer China-Pakistan community with a shared future, and bring more tangible benefits to the two peoples.

Industrial cooperation, a key pillar of bilateral ties, is at a crucial stage of quality upgrading. China's 15th Five-Year Plan aims to build a modern industrial system oriented toward intelligent, green and integrated development, upgrade traditional industries, expand emerging industries, and plan for future industries. This is highly compatible with "Uraan Pakistan", which prioritizes manufacturing, information technology and digital transformation.

"We are pleased to see more Chinese new energy vehicles on the streets of Pakistan. They help to ease energy shortages and enable Pakistani people to adopt green travel and lower living costs," Jiang said.

As economic and trade cooperation deepens, Chinese enterprises in Pakistan have grown into a major force in bilateral business exchanges. Their operations cover energy development, infrastructure construction, telecommunications, wholesale and retail, and are deeply integrated into Pakistan's economic fabric.

To better support Chinese businesses, the Association of Chinese Enterprises in Pakistan was established in 2004 and now boasts three regional branches, seven industrial chapters and five working committees.

In 2024, guided by the Chinese embassy in Pakistan, the association developed a business climate index system for Chinese enterprises in Pakistan and completed three surveys. Results showed that Pakistan's macroeconomy has been stabilized and improved since 2025.

Chinese enterprises in Pakistan have enjoyed rising confidence in Pakistan's economy, steady operations and stronger investment appetite, injecting stable expectations into bilateral economic and trade cooperation.

"The Pakistani government will fully protect the safety and interests of Chinese citizens and institutions in Pakistan. This is not only due to our extensive cooperation projects and the huge influence of the Chinese market, but also because China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners and iron brothers with decades of unwavering friendship," Kakar said.

Looking forward, China and Pakistan will strive to build a community with a shared future characterized by stronger political mutual trust, closer economic and trade ties, deeper security cooperation, and firmer public support.

The two countries will continue to deepen economic and trade cooperation, expand collaboration areas, scale up investment and enhance industrial synergy, ensuring that the fruits of cooperation better benefit both peoples, officials said.

Copper glows across the desert, forging paths of industry

By YUAN SHENGGAO







Clockwise from top: A flag-raising ceremony ushers in the dawn of 2026 at the Saindak Copper-Gold Project. Molten copper is cast at the mine. The newly operational beneficiation system supports efficient production at the mine. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As a flagship mining project of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, the Saindak Copper-Gold Project operated by MCC Tongsin Resources, or MCCT, is writing a new chapter of high-quality development in the desert of Balochistan Province. As Pakistan's first large-scale nonferrous mine integrating mining, beneficiation and smelting, the project contributes to the high-quality development of the Belt and Road Initiative through full-chain lean operation, systematic management innovation and deepened local integration.

Addressing challenges

MCCT has developed a comprehensive management model with "Safety Integrity System plus Amoeba Management plus 5S Standardization plus Local Talent Development", driving the project from stable production toward optimized efficiency and high-yield output.

In response to challenges including ore grade fluctuations and complex mining conditions, the project has adopted advanced processes such as multilevel mining development, three-stage closed-circuit crushing for mineral processing, and converter heat exchange in smelting.

In addition, intelligent systems for materials management and production scheduling have been implemented to enable scientific control over the entire production chain.

Capacity leap

Through list-based production management, standardized equipment maintenance and cost control underpinned by the Amoeba Management model, the project has achieved steady year-on-year breakthroughs in production efficiency.

Its annual ore processing capacity has risen from 5 million metric tons in the initial stage to 8.9 million tons, representing a 70 percent increase.

In 2025, its output of blister copper hit 25,000 tons, a 30 percent rise compared with that in 2021. The Amoeba Management mechanism has helped to cut annual costs by 1 percent, fostering a virtuous cycle of higher output, greater efficiency and lower costs.

Resource breakthrough

Adhering to the philosophy that "resources are king", the exploration team worked tirelessly in the desert with temperatures of up to 50 C, overturning the judgment of "ineffective exploration" and confirming substantial mineral reserves at the Siah Diq prospect.

The hourly processing capacity of the ball mill in the 275 System of Concentrator has been raised from 364 tons to 446 tons.

By leveraging technological innovation to develop low-grade resources, the Saindak Copper-Gold Project has showcased the overseas brand of "China Intelligent Manufacturing".

Safety first

The Saindak project integrates the safety integrity system and construction related to public security into the entire production process, adhering to the "zero accident" target and achieving consecutive years of safe production, according to the project's management. Its public security prevention work was selected as a pilot unit for overseas project security by a department at the State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council of China. In addition, the project's central laboratory has become the first laboratory in Pakistan accredited by the Pakistan National Accreditation Council in the field of mining analysis.

Local integration

Upholding the philosophy of "teaching people how to fish rather than giving them fish", the project has created more than 2,000 local jobs and trained a large number of local technical and management professionals. It has boosted the coordinated development of upstream and downstream industries, with a total of $720 million paid in taxes and profit shares to the host country. Through concrete actions, the project has won wide recognition and high praise from the Pakistani government and local people, according to MCCT.

As the project enters its next phase, MCCT will continue to optimize the operation of the Saindak project with higher standards, while expanding its presence in Pakistan's mining sector.

It will systematically advance the efficient development and operation of the Duddar Lead-Zinc Mine and the Siah Diq Copper Mine.

The company said it is committed to supporting the growth of Pakistan's nonferrous metal industry and improving local livelihoods. With greater efforts to advance technological innovation and concrete measures to deepen China-Pakistan cooperation, MCCT strives to build a world-class overseas mining enterprise that leads in management, performance and social responsibility.

It will contribute to the steady and sustained development of the BRI and the enduring friendship between China and Pakistan, according to MCCT.

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WORLD

Pivotal breakthrough hangs in the balance

Iran, US play down expectations of quick deal despite some progress

ISLAMABAD/WASHINGTON/TEHRAN — Iran and the United States played down hopes for an imminent breakthrough in the three-month-old conflict on Monday, with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio saying there will either be a good agreement or Washington would deal with the country in "another way".

Rubio told reporters in New Delhi that the US would give diplomacy every chance to succeed before exploring "alternatives", after President Donald Trump said on Sunday he had told his representatives not to rush into any Iran deal.

There was a "pretty solid thing on the table in terms of their ability to open up the strait, get the strait open, enter into a very real, significant, time-limited negotiation on the nuclear matter, and hopefully we can pull it off," Rubio said.

Trump said in a post on Truth Social on Monday that the deal will either be "great and meaningful, or there will be no deal at all".

He also urged Muslim-majority nations including Saudi Arabia, Qatar and Pakistan, to normalize relations with Israel as part of the Iran peace deal.

Iran's foreign ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei said on Monday that Iran was negotiating an end to the conflict and was not currently discussing nuclear issues.

He said a framework had been reached but no one could say an agreement between the United States and Iran was imminent. The potential memorandum of understanding contained no specific details about the management of the Strait of Hormuz, which belongs to the coastal countries, he said.

The ministry also said that Iran would not take tolls for passage through the vital waterway, but added that it was "normal for services provided to require a price".

Before the conflict, the strait had carried a fifth of global shipments of oil and liquefied natural gas.

A day earlier, Trump wrote on Truth Social that the US blockade of Iranian ships in the Strait of Hormuz would "remain in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified, and signed".

He added, "Both sides must take their time and get it right."

Trump raised expectations of an imminent deal on Saturday when he said Washington and Tehran had "largely negotiated" a memorandum of understanding on a peace agreement that would reopen the strait.

Domestically in the US, lawmakers appearing on Sunday morning talk shows split sharply over a potential deal to end the Iran conflict, with Republicans mostly backing the publicly reported contours of an agreement being negotiated by Trump and Democrats dismissing it as accomplishing little.

Still at odds

Washington and Tehran remain at odds on several difficult issues, such as the nuclear issue, Israel's fighting in Lebanon with Hezbollah and Tehran's demands for the lifting of sanctions and the release of tens of billions of dollars of Iranian oil revenues frozen in foreign banks.

Iran's central bank chief Abdolnaser Hemmati traveled to Qatar following talks with a Qatari delegation in Tehran regarding Iran's frozen funds, Iranian media reported on Monday.

Iranian top negotiator Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf and Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi were leading the delegation in Doha.

On Sunday, a senior US official said that the proposed framework would give negotiators 60 days to reach a final deal.

Iranian sources told Reuters that in future stages, "feasible formulas" could be found to resolve the dispute over its highly enriched uranium stockpile, including diluting the material under the supervision of the UN nuclear watchdog.

Any deal reinforcing the current fragile ceasefire, which has held since early April, would bring relief to markets but not immediately defuse a global energy crisis, which has driven up costs of fuel, fertilizer and food.

The US-Israeli bombing of Iran killed thousands of people in Iran before it was suspended in early April. Israel has also killed thousands more and driven hundreds of thousands from their homes in Lebanon, which it invaded in pursuit of Hezbollah. Iranian strikes on Israel and neighboring Gulf states have killed dozens.

Amid the latest developments in US-Iran talks, the Israeli military said it is prepared to resume combat operations against Iran, the army chief said on Sunday.

Chief of the General Staff Eyal Zamir made the remarks during a situational assessment at the military's Northern Command, the military said in a statement.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Fandom and fanfare



Former Mexican national soccer team players pose with certificates for setting the world record for the largest brush-painted mural, in Mexico City, Mexico, on Sunday. Mexican artists put the final touches on the masterpiece as part of activities in the lead-up to the 2026 World Cup. It spans more than 200 square meters, earning a Guinness World Record. DANIEL CARDENAS VIA GETTY IMAGES

Briefly

JAPAN

PM's team accused of smear operation

More details have emerged about allegations that the team of Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi hired individuals to produce online smear videos targeting political rivals, with the weekly magazine Shukan Bunshun reporting on Sunday that it possesses evidence supporting these allegations. According to a report in the online edition of the magazine, Takaichi's camp focused much of its campaign attacks on rival politician Shinjiro Koizumi during last year's ruling Liberal Democratic Party leadership race, portraying him as an "incompetent puppet" through videos online. Numerous videos praising Takaichi were disseminated online during the same period, the report said. Although Takaichi's side has denied involvement, the magazine said it had obtained substantial evidence supporting the allegations. The report identified Takaichi aide Takeshi Kinoshita as a central figure in this operation. Neither the Japanese prime minister's office nor Kinoshita had responded publicly to the latest allegations by press time.

SWITZERLAND

Suspected Ebola cases cross 900 in DRC: WHO

More than 900 suspected Ebola cases have been identified in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the World Health Organization chief has said. "As surveillance efforts have been scaled up in the DRC Ebola response, more than 900 suspected cases have been identified so far, including 101 confirmed cases," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a Sunday social media post that gave no update on the death toll. Ebola is a deadly viral disease that spreads through direct contact with bodily fluids. It can cause severe bleeding and organ failure. The country declared an outbreak on May 15 caused by the Bundibugyo strain, which has no approved vaccine or treatment. Ebola has killed more than 15,000 people across Africa in the past half-century. This round of the outbreak has resulted in 220 suspected deaths, according to the WHO.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Pakistan special

Best of friends: countries deepen bilateral ties via culture and language

By **HAO NAN**
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Over the past 75 years, China and Pakistan have forged increasingly close and institutionalized cultural and educational cooperation, laying a foundation for their all-weather strategic cooperative partnership.

Since establishing diplomatic ties in 1951, the two countries have engaged in frequent people-to-people and cultural exchanges. Early visits by cultural groups and joint exhibitions set the stage for enduring collaboration.

In 1965, the two sides signed a cultural agreement in Rawalpindi, a major city in Pakistan's eastern Punjab province, and launched their annual cultural exchange plan that same year. By late 2025, 14 such plans had been signed, providing an institutional framework for bilateral cultural interactions.

Progress has been steady in building exchange platforms. In 2010, the two countries signed a memorandum of understanding to establish cultural centers, and 2015 was designated as the China-Pakistan Year of Friendly Exchanges.

Furthermore, the China Cultural Center in Pakistan was officially inaugurated in Islamabad in April 2017, serving as a symbol of the friendship and a platform for cultural exchange and mutual understanding between the two peoples.

Recognizing language as a vital bridge for connection, Beijing Language and Culture University and Pakistan's National University of Modern Languages jointly established Pakistan's first Confucius Institute in Islamabad in 2005.

The institute features an impressive statue of Confucius and Chinese cultural elements, such as red papercuttings and posters. It regularly hosts cultural experiences and summer camps, helping Pakistani students appreciate the charm of Chinese culture.

By December, China had set up five Confucius Institutes and two independent Confucius Classrooms across Pakistan. Growing interest in the country has led to a significant increase in institutions offering Chinese language courses.

China began accepting Pakistani students in 1964 and by December 2024 had welcomed approximately 25,000 Pakistani students.

In 2022, China and Pakistan signed an agreement on the mutual recognition of higher education degrees and diplomas, creating a pathway for talent development and deepening cross-cultural understanding.



Pakistani students participate in training at a modern agriculture practice center at Bailie Vocational College in Zhangye city, Gansu province. FAN PEISHEN / XINHUA

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, a flagship project under the Belt and Road Initiative known for its role in infrastructure development, has also helped take educational cooperation to new heights, extending cooperation from higher education to vocational training and industry-education integration.

With Pakistan aiming for 30 percent of its vehicles to be electric by 2030, there is an urgent need for skilled workers in battery manufacturing, management systems and recycling. Pakistani officials have expressed hope for joint training centers and enterprise-led apprenticeships to nurture local talent under the CPEC framework.

People-to-people events have also strengthened bonds. On April 18, a children's gala was held in Islamabad to celebrate the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan. Around 500 people attended, including Pakistani government officials, representatives from Chinese diplomatic missions in Pakistan, leaders of the overseas Chinese community, and children from both countries.

Zafar Uddin Mahmood, special representative on China of the prime minister of Pakistan, said that Chinese culture is profound and unique, and it is worthwhile for Pakistani children to learn about and understand it.

He expressed hope that more Pakistanis would learn Chinese, using language as a bridge to enhance mutual learning and understanding.

Chen Peng, cultural counselor at the Chinese embassy in Pakistan, confirmed that the embassy would continue to deepen cultural and educational exchanges between Chinese and Pakistani youth and support various people-to-people friendship activities.

As the two countries celebrate their 75th diplomatic anniversary, cultural and educational cooperation will keep deepening, fostering greater friendship and supporting the steady growth of China-Pakistan relations.

CSAIL celebrates 75 years of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations

By **YUAN SHENGGAO**

The year 2026 marks the 75th anniversary of China-Pakistan diplomatic relations and the two countries have established an all-weather strategic cooperative partnership. At the forefront of this collaboration stands China Three Gorges South Asia Investment Ltd, or CSAIL, the investment arm of China Three Gorges Corp in Pakistan, aiming to shape a more sustainable and prosperous Pakistan by pioneering clean energy.



An aerial view of the 720-megawatt Karot Hydropower Project in Pakistan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Hydropower project

Commissioned in June 2022, the 720-megawatt Karot Hydropower Project on the Jhelum River is a major facility in the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor that has reached commercial operation. It is also an early large-scale hydropower investment project under the Belt and Road Initiative.

A living symbol of what both countries can build together, the project has generated a cumulative 11 billion kilowatt-hours of clean and green energy so far, with an average of 3,206 gigawatt-hours of clean electricity annually. It meets the annual energy needs of more than five million Pakistanis, and prevented approximately 12 million metric tons of cumulative carbon dioxide emissions — equivalent to roughly 3.5 million tons every year.

Developed under a Build-Own-Operate-Transfer model with a 30-year concession period, Karot will ultimately be handed over to Pakistan as a permanent national asset.

CSAIL also operates three wind farms — TGF, TGS and TGT — in Jhimpir, Sindh, with a combined installed capacity of 148.5 megawatts. Together they deliver approximately 443 GWh of clean electricity to Pakistan each year, meeting the power needs of more than 600,000 people.

Looking ahead, the 1,124 MW Kohala and 640 MW Mahl hydropower projects being developed by CSAIL will consolidate a "Clean Energy Corridor" along the Jhelum River. They will reduce Pakistan's reliance on imported fuels and strengthen long-term energy security, according to the company.

Environment, community

CSAIL's vision extends beyond power generation. At Karot, a biodiversity management plan protects the Jhelum River ecosystem, including monitoring the vulnerable mahseer fish in collaboration with Margalla Hills and Jhelum Valley national parks.

Karot and the wind power projects' community investment plans have delivered new and improved public infrastructure projects spanning roads, bridges, water systems, hospitals, schools, drinking water access, environmental awareness and tree plantation programs.

On the education front, CSAIL supports scholarships at universities such as National University of Sciences and Technology, Multan University of Science and Technology, and University of the Punjab, nurturing the next generation of Pakistani energy professionals.

Iron brothers

The depth of China-Pakistan friendship is most visible in adversity, according to CSAIL. During COVID-19, China Three Gorges Corp donated a substantial amount of essential medical supplies and medical equipment to Pakistan. Following the devastating 2022 floods in the country, which affected over 33 million people, CSAIL contributed $650,000 to the Prime Minister's Flood Relief Fund. In 2025, the company again stepped forward for flood-affected communities in Punjab. These acts reflect the enduring spirit of "iron brotherhood" — a solidarity defined by shared commitment, not convenience, according to CSAIL.

Next 75 years

As both countries mark the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, CSAIL remains steadfast in its commitment to their extraordinary partnership. Its growing pipeline of clean energy projects promises additional sustainable megawatts alongside new employment, skills development, and community advancement.

Seventy-five years ago, diplomatic relations laid the foundation for one of the defining bilateral relationships of the modern era. Today, that foundation has blossomed into a partnership anchored in trust, strengthened by shared purpose, and illuminated by a common vision for a greener future. CSAIL is proud to be a part of its story, according to the company.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Broadening of cooperation will consolidate iron-clad friendship between China, Serbia

The five-day state visit to China by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, which began on Sunday and which he described as "undoubtedly the most important trip abroad" in his political career, stands as a testament to the two countries' commitment to building the China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era and elevating it to a new height.

The ironclad friendship between China and Serbia is rooted in both historical logic and practical realities. Serbia is China's first free trade partner in Central and Eastern Europe and occupies a special place in China's diplomacy toward Europe. Over the years, the mutual support between the two countries has remained steadfast, their cooperation has grown ever closer, and their exchanges and mutual learning have become increasingly substantive, especially after President Xi Jinping's state visit to Serbia in 2024.

The meeting between Xi and Vucic in Beijing on Monday covered a wide range of issues spanning the historical evolution of relations, development strategies, strategic coordination, economic cooperation and people-to-people exchanges. It underscored the solid foundations and great potential of bilateral relations.

That both leaders emphasized deepening bilateral pragmatic economic, trade and technology cooperation during China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period demonstrates a common understanding that the two countries should further align their development strategies, open up new areas of cooperation and strengthen strategic coordination so as to bring greater tangible benefits to the two peoples while jointly safeguarding international fairness and justice.

The two leaders witnessed the signing of more than 20 cooperation documents on Monday that provide a clear road map and institutional framework for transforming their consensus into concrete platforms, projects and outcomes. This will help advance the mid-term action plan for their Belt and Road cooperation, build more flagship projects and further unlock the potential of the China-Serbia free trade agreement.

Thanks to the free trade agreement, which came into force in 2024, trade between the two countries reached $6.49 billion in 2025, up 13 percent year-on-year. Serbian products are gaining broader access to the Chinese market, while Chinese investment continues to support Serbia's industrial modernization and infrastructure development.

China-Serbia cooperation is no longer confined to traditional areas such as transport and energy infrastructure. The two countries are looking to cultivate new growth drivers and expand cooperation into emerging frontiers, including advanced manufacturing, green energy, the digital economy and artificial intelligence. That will be conducive to injecting fresh vitality into bilateral collaboration.

Exchanges in various fields have further strengthened the friendship between the two peoples fostering mutual understanding and reciprocal public goodwill.

Xi called on both countries to leverage visa exemption policies, the free trade agreement and direct flights to expand all-round cooperation in culture, education, sports, tourism and sub-national exchanges.

On Monday, the two sides also issued a joint statement on continuously promoting the building of a China-Serbia community with a shared future in the new era and a joint statement on jointly promoting the implementation of the four global initiatives put forward by Xi.

This reflects the resilience and forward-looking nature of bilateral relations. As iron-clad friends, close economic and trade partners and defenders of world peace, China and Serbia share similar positions on many major international and regional issues. In the face of growing global instability and uncertainty, the two countries should strengthen their coordination and cooperation within the United Nations and other multilateral frameworks, advocate an equal and orderly multipolar world and promote universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

China-Serbia ties demonstrate that countries with different histories, cultures and social systems can respect each other's sovereignty and independently chosen development paths while pursuing common prosperity together. China stands ready to work hand in hand with Serbia to translate their shared aspirations into concrete progress and make the China-Serbia community with a shared future shine even more brightly in the new era.

Quad against regional need for stability

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio is scheduled to meet with his counterparts from India, Australia and Japan in New Delhi on Tuesday. The meeting is intended as preparation for a summit of the Quad leaders in November. However, the prospects of that have diminished due to changing geopolitical dynamics and strained relations stemming from differences among the group's members. The Quad foreign ministers' meeting therefore appears more symbolic than substantive.

Since its inception in 2007, the so-called Quadrilateral Security Dialogue has been much like a choir seeking harmony but never quite achieving it, leaving the group struggling to find its voice. While it operates under the banner of promoting a "free and open Indo-Pacific" — a dubious notion given that the region has been free and open — its core function is often perceived to be containing China. By fostering bloc politics, this exclusionary approach directly contradicts the region's need for openness and inclusiveness.

The Quad's vulnerabilities have become increasingly evident. The United States' unilateral foreign policies, prioritizing US interests, appear to have eroded the political support essential for the Quad's cohesion. The US administration's imposition of high tariffs on India has strained ties between the two countries. This transactional attitude toward allies seems to have destabilized the Quad's already fragile framework.

Additionally, each Quad member's separate economic ties with China further complicate the group's dynamics. The recent visit by the US leader to China helped to stabilize the bilateral relationship. And China has again overtaken the US to become India's largest trading partner, with bilateral trade surpassing $155 billion last year. Moreover, China-Australia trade has entered a renewed growth phase after several years of tension.

Divergences among the four nations on security, economic and geopolitical fronts present challenges to forging a unified strategy within the Quad. Each country has different national interests and priorities, which often lead to conflicting approaches. The US' shifting strategic priorities, including its skepticism toward multilateral institutions and security alliances, have also diluted its commitment to the Quad. Meanwhile, India's emphasis on maintaining its strategic autonomy and its historical nonalignment policy sometimes result in hesitance to fully commit to collective security measures that might compromise its "independent stance". Even if the Quad manages to continue in some form, it risks becoming a symbolic presence.

The very existence of the Quad runs counter to the peace and stability that are in the fundamental interests of regional countries. The peace and prosperity of the region do not require, nor can they rely on, exclusionary mechanisms. Genuine regional development is driven by cooperation and mutual benefit, not confrontation and division. In light of the Quad's dilemma, the international community should recognize that any mechanism attempting to divide the world will ultimately fail.

The Quad is a relic of a bygone era — one that prioritizes geopolitical maneuvering over genuine multilateral engagement. Yet special attention should be paid to Japan, a country eager to promote neo-militarism and skilled at hyping up regional tensions. The Sanae Takaichi government has been actively seeking cooperation with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization and alignment with the Philippines in the South China Sea. It would come as no surprise if Japan attempts to reinvigorate the Quad.

Japan's defense expenditure increased by 9.7 percent in 2025, reaching a record high. Its weapons imports have grown by 76 percent over the past five years. Although Japan's defense budget has been rising for 14 consecutive years, right-wing forces in the country continue to clamor for even greater military spending. This once again reveals that Japan's "nation of peace" mask is slipping, as the country drifts toward neo-militarism.

In this context, the Quad stands as a ready-made zombie — one that the Takaichi government might be interested in reanimating to revive its militarist ghost. Should Tokyo indeed play a major role in breathing life back into this geopolitical tool, its ulterior motives would undoubtedly warrant regional caution.

Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Innovation ecosystem driving rapid battery advancements

In April, the retail penetration rate of new energy passenger vehicles in China surpassed 60 percent for the first time, reaching 61.4 percent. Internal combustion vehicles are increasingly becoming the minority technology in one of the world's largest automobile markets.

This transformation is being driven by simultaneous advances in multiple battery technologies in China. While lithium iron phosphate batteries continue to dominate the sector because of their lower costs and improving safety profile, research is accelerating in solid-state batteries, sodium-ion batteries and iron-based flow batteries for large-scale energy storage.

Over the past five years, the unit cost of power batteries in China has decreased by 30 percent, their lifespan has increased by 40 percent, and charging speeds have more than tripled. The country is transforming the battery — the most expensive and technologically sensitive component of an electric vehicle — into a mass-market commodity with rapidly improving performance. It's a story of scale, chemistry and market selection.

China's power battery output reached 310 gigawatt-hours in the first two months of 2026, up 22 percent year-on-year. Lithium iron phosphate batteries alone accounted for nearly 115 gigawatt-hours of production in February, far exceeding ternary lithium batteries. This reflects the emergence of a manufacturing ecosystem capable of relentless innovation and continuous cost compression.

Meanwhile, researchers at the Chinese Academy of Sciences recently reported progress in iron-based flow batteries that are capable of more than 6,000 charging cycles without measurable degradation. Because iron is far cheaper and more abundant than lithium, such technologies could become important not only for electric vehicles but also for grid-scale electricity storage as renewable energy capacity expands globally.

The consequences for traditional automakers are profound. Many foreign automotive brands have lost their market share in China. The problem is not merely slower adaptation. Many foreign manufacturers are struggling to match the speed of innovation, cost efficiency and software integration achieved by Chinese EV makers. The International Energy Agency expects electric and hybrid vehicles to account for nearly 30 percent of global car sales this year, driven partly by fuel price pressures and falling battery costs.

China's advantage in the sector lies in integration. Chinese companies are competitive in large segments of the industry, including battery materials, cell manufacturing, software systems and vehicle assembly. This vertical integration enables faster iteration cycles, lower marginal costs and quicker commercialization of innovation.

More important, China has embedded the EV industry within a broader national system organized around data, digital infrastructure and industrial coordination. EVs in China are increasingly becoming mobile computing platforms connected to payment systems, mapping services, charging networks, logistics chains and urban management technologies.

This reflects a distinctive combination of government policy and market competition. Industrial policies created the initial conditions through subsidies, charging infrastructure and research funding. What transformed the sector was the interaction between enormous domestic demand and highly competitive companies forced to innovate constantly on cost, efficiency and technology.

China's EV ecosystem also benefits from unmatched industrial clustering; battery makers, software developers, semiconductor suppliers and assembly plants operate within tightly integrated regional supply chains. Data generated by millions of connected vehicles feed directly into the AI-driven optimization of battery management, autonomous driving systems and energy efficiency.

Such system-level integration may ultimately prove even more consequential than low battery prices. For instance, on Monday, Huawei unveiled the Tau Scaling Law — a new semiconductor principle that uses logic-folding technology to continuously compress signal propagation delays. By 2031, high-end chips developed under this breakthrough — which integrates national strategy, enterprise R&D, and industrial clusters — could reportedly achieve a transistor density equivalent to the 1.4-nanometer process.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Computing power a strategic resource in AI era

Editor's note: *Increasing artificial intelligence inference has led to greater demand for computing power than can be supplied. Shen Jianguang, chief economist at major e-commerce platform JD.com, discussed possible solutions to the problem in a commentary in People's Daily. Below are excerpts of the article. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

A severe shortage of computing power has gripped countries and regions across the world. While the crunch is partly linked to physical bottlenecks such as chip manufacturing and power grid capacities, a more important driver is the massive increase in AI demand, which has outpaced the existing supply capabilities.

This surge in demand stems from a fundamental shift in the way AI applications are being used.

First, AI is evolving from a "helpful assistant" into an "autonomous agent". In the past, AI was mainly being used for simple tasks such as text generation and basic question-and-answer interactions. But today, new AI agents can directly operate computers by writing code, organizing files and collaborating across different software programs.

This evolution from merely "suggesting ideas" to "taking action" has drastically increased the computing power required for a single task, sometimes by several orders of magnitude.

Second, top developers are relying on massive computing power to achieve higher levels of intelligence. To make AI more reliable and accurate, leading global models typically use inference-time scaling technology.

Before generating a response, the AI pauses to analyze, reason and check its work in the background, much like a human would. For example, when tasked with researching an industry and writing a comprehensive report, the AI needs to autonomously browse websites, read financial statements and run analysis tools. This single task can run continuously for hours, consuming millions of tokens.

Third, the commercial application of AI has crossed a critical tipping point. Thanks to breakthrough improvements in stability and accuracy, AI is now delivering tangible returns in sectors such as finance, healthcare and core business operations. As a result, companies are more willing to deploy these models on a larger scale, transforming AI demand from experimental tech trials to an absolute business necessity.

Faced with this challenge, tech companies worldwide are actively seeking solutions. In the short term, optimizing allocation is key, with many AI providers focusing their computing resources on business segments that produce direct revenue.

Chinese companies on the other hand are seeking to improve the output efficiency per unit of computing power through technological innovation as an effective way to alleviate the computing power pressure.

In the long run, expanding capacity and exploring innovations will be equally important. Tech giants worldwide are accelerating the construction of data centers and increasingly purchasing high-end chips. At the same time, more efficient model architectures and next-generation storage and interconnect systems are gradually maturing, which will help relieve the pressure on computing resources.

In the AI era, computing power has become a foundational strategic resource, much like water or electricity. Only by balancing short-term optimization with long-term planning, and aligning tech upgrades with capacity building, can the industry ensure steady growth and maintain a competitive edge on the global stage.

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VIEWS

Muhammad Shehbaz Sharif

Closer Pakistan-China ties for a shared future

May 21 marks the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

On behalf of the Government of Pakistan, as well as on my own behalf, I extend my heartfelt felicitations to the peoples of Pakistan and China, on the historic occasion of the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China.

As we commemorate this historic milestone, in a befitting manner, it would enable our peoples, particularly the younger generations, to better appreciate the depth, breadth, vitality, and future-oriented character of Pakistan-China relations.

The people of Pakistan hold the people of China in the highest esteem and affection.

Since the establishment of diplomatic relations on 21 May 1951, the friendship between Pakistan and China has steadily evolved into an All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership.

Built on mutual trust, sovereign equality, and shared aspirations for peace and development, our bilateral relations have continued to grow in strength, substance, and strategic significance, amidst changing regional and global circumstances.

Pakistan highly values the visionary leadership of President Xi Jinping and appreciates China's remarkable achievements in economic development, technological advancement, poverty alleviation, and global connectivity.

From the Karakoram Highway to cooperation in outer space, Pakistan-China friendship continues to demonstrate how enduring strategic trust can be translated into meaningful progress and shared prosperity for our peoples.

Under President Xi's visionary leadership, China has achieved remarkable progress in modernization, innovation, poverty alleviation, and national rejuvenation.

China's progress and transformation continue to inspire the developing world and contribute significantly to global peace and prosperity.

The commitment of the Chinese leadership to strengthen Pakistan-China relations and advance the shared vision of building a closer "Pakistan-China Community of Shared Future in the New Era" is most commendable.

Pakistan deeply appreciates China's cooperation with Pakistan in multifaceted fields. Pakistan remains firmly committed to the one-China principle and will continue to support China on issues concerning its core interests.

China's robust support for Pakistan's socio-economic development and national priorities has played a phenomenal role.

The China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC), as a flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative, has made tremendous contribution toward Pakistan's infrastructure development, energy security, industrial cooperation, and regional connectivity.

Pakistan remains firmly committed to the high-quality development of CPEC as it enters its next phase, with greater emphasis on industrialization, agriculture, information technology, science and technology, green development, and enhanced people-centered cooperation.

It is encouraging to witness Pakistan-China cooperation, expanding into new frontiers including digital economy, innovation, space cooperation, education, and cultural exchanges.

From the Karakoram Highway to cooperation in outer space, Pakistan-China friendship continues to demonstrate how enduring strategic trust can be translated into meaningful progress and shared prosperity for our peoples.

The 75th anniversary of the establishment of Pakistan-China diplomatic relations is not only about remembering the past; it is about shaping the future.

At a time of increasing global uncertainty and transformation, Pakistan and China remain committed to multilateralism, peaceful coexistence, and inclusive development.

Our All-Weather Strategic Cooperative Partnership continues to serve as a positive force for regional stability and international cooperation.

May the enduring friendship between Pakistan and China continue to grow stronger with every generation!

Pakistan-China friendship zindabad.

The author is the prime minister of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Huo Wei and Zhu Detao

Xizang's journey from chains of feudalism to gains of freedom

Seventy-five years ago, Xizang autonomous region experienced a turning point in its history. The peaceful liberation of the region in 1951 marked the beginning of a new era for generations of Tibetan people who had long been trapped under a rigid feudal serfdom, allowing them to reclaim their lives.

Far from championing the masses, the 14th Dalai Lama was the principal serf-owner in a system that enslaved over 95 percent of the Tibetan population, with interests fundamentally at odds with those he supposedly represented.

Before it was liberated, Xizang was governed by a feudal system more oppressive than even medieval Europe. Less than 5 percent of the population — including the aristocracy, senior government officials, and monastery elites — controlled the farmland, pastures, forests and livestock.

Over 95 percent of Tibetan people were serfs or slaves, bound to estates for generations with no freedom, no property and no legal rights.

The 14th Dalai Lama's family epitomized this system. Historical records show they owned 27 estates and 30 pastures, overseeing more than 6,000 serfs.

Each year, they extracted 460 tons of barley, 35 tons of butter, over 2 million taels of silver and 300 cattle and sheep.

The personal wealth of the Dalai Lama included 160,000 taels of gold, 95 million taels of silver, more than 20,000 pieces of jewelry and over 10,000 luxury garments.

Under old Tibetan law, human life was valued by rank.

The value of a top-ranking person was equal to the weight of a corpse in gold, while a low-ranking person was worth only a straw rope. Serfs who infringed the interests of their lords faced barbaric punishments administered by private courts maintained by monasteries and aristocrats.

Serfs were considered no more than "talking livestock". One folk song captured their misery: "Even if snow mountains turned into butter, it belongs to the serf-owners; even if rivers ran with milk, we cannot taste a drop."

For the Dalai Lama and his family, this system was paradise; for the vast majority, it was hell.

Democratic reforms after the Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (17-Article Agreement), ended this oppression. The central government gave Xizang six years to initiate reforms.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

Roads, railways, and air routes now connect the plateau in ways unimaginable in 1959, shrinking the travel time of journeys that once took months into hours.

However, the Dalai Lama and his inner coterie refused and staged an armed rebellion in 1959 to preserve their privileges.

But the revolt was suppressed, and democratic reforms redistributed land, freed over one million serfs, and restored their dignity. More than 187,000 hectares of land were confiscated or purchased from serf-owners and handed to 800,000 serfs and slaves across 200,000 households.

An average of over 0.23 hectares of land was redistributed per capita. Freed serfs received land and livestock for the first time, their debts were waived, and generations of oppression came to an end.

The results were transformative. Xizang's population grew from 1.228 million in 1959 to 3.74 million by 2025, a staggering threefold increase.

Life expectancy doubled from 35.5 to 72 years. Maternal and infant mortality fell dramatically, and severe diseases such as smallpox, poliomyelitis, and diphtheria were eradicated.

Education, once reserved for monks and aristocrats, became universal: Xizang now has over 3,600 schools serving nearly a million students, with compulsory education completion at 97.86 percent.

The GDP of the autonomous region grew from 174 million yuan ($25.6 million) in 1959 to over 303 billion yuan in 2025, a 1,740-fold increase.

Per capita income rose to 33,600 yuan, with both urban and rural income growth rates ranking first in the country. Roads, railways, and air routes now connect the plateau in ways unimaginable in 1959, shrinking the travel time of journeys that once took months into hours.

These numbers are not abstract — they reflect the real lives of over 3.7 million Tibetan people. The era when "a straw rope was worth a human life" is gone forever.

Yet these numbers only tell part of the story. Witnesses vividly recall life under serfdom. Ninety-five-year-old Bai Mu remembers walking barefoot across thorny fields, enduring injury in silence. Ninety-two-year-old Suo Za said, "We did all the work, but the harvest belonged to serf-owners. If there was any displeasure, they beat us at will."

These accounts confirm that democratic reform did more than redistribute land — it restored humanity. Ordinary people, once seen as "talking livestock", became the masters of their own destiny.

The Dalai Lama, in contrast, has never advanced the welfare of ordinary Tibetan people. Since fleeing abroad, he has engaged in separatist activities, inciting unrest while protecting the privileges of the aristocracy he once led. His claim to represent the people is contradicted by both history and living memory.

Xizang's 75-year journey demonstrates that liberation, not feudalism, served the people. The paradise the Dalai Lama sought to preserve rested on the blood and tears of millions of Tibetan people.

Today, Tibetan people are building a prosperous, harmonious, and modern society. The future of Xizang is being written by those who live there, not by figures clinging to the past.

History has clearly chosen its side.

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We need to give new life to old clothes

Winter is over and it is time for families to store heavy winter wear deep in wardrobes and bring out lighter clothes for the warm season ahead.

During this seasonal migration of garments, I found that roughly one in every five garments has not been used for many years — either because it no longer fits, has gone out of fashion or is simply not liked anymore.

Many such clothes had become useless for my family but we hesitated to throw them away. People of my generation, who experienced the hard times of running short of food and clothes, feel guilty when discarding any usable item, be it clothes, packaging boxes or plastic bags.

"Keep them till I can wear them after I lose some weight," my wife has said for the past 20 years whenever I wanted to dispose of some of her dresses. I agreed because I myself have the same arrangement for my tight sweaters, jackets and pants.

As a result, our four wardrobes were packed with clothes, and it took me a whole day to complete the seasonal adjustment.

That's when I decided to clear out some of the old clothes. The timing was just right — my wife was away in Hainan province.

Together with my son, I sorted out more than 40 kilograms of used clothes — a number of down coats, a dozen or more woolen sweaters and several jackets, pants and shirts. After I contacted an online waste collector, a young man came to our house and took away our harvest, paying a symbolic 20 yuan ($2.93).

As a result, used clothes either find their way into trash bins or, as in our case, are taken away by collectors.

We could have simply thrown the clothes away in the trash bins in our apartment compound but I could not bear the thought of my once-beloved garments lying among rotting vegetables and chicken bones.

I prefer to believe that the young collector who took the clothes would sell them to recycling plants or find new owners for them. After all, some of the clothes had hardly been used because they failed to keep pace with our weight gain.

I believe many Chinese families share the same dilemma when it comes to getting rid of used clothes.

About 50 years ago, this was not a problem. In times of scarcity, one would be lucky to have even a second set of clothes. Later, for many years, used clothes were collected by government departments and sent to poor rural families and disaster-hit areas as relief.

Today, the situation is different. Rural areas have eliminated absolute poverty since 2020 and the government has stocked sufficient supplies — tents, down coats and blankets — for emergencies. As a result, the government's collection of used clothes has been suspended. While this is good news and reflects the country's progress, it has blocked an important channel for disposing of old but usable clothes.

The number of shops selling second-hand clothes, once common across the country, has also decreased. Many well-off Chinese consider it beneath their dignity to step into such shops. There are some online second-hand trading platforms, but they mostly deal in luxury goods — ladies bags, Swiss watches and expensive toys. If any clothes change hands, they are usually wedding dresses or branded suits valued at thousands of yuan. You must be joking if you think you can sell your used clothes on such platforms.

Some communities organize weekend flea markets for second-hand goods. Toys, electrical appliances, books, furniture and home ornaments are well-received at such places, but used clothes are the least welcome.

After all, it would be embarrassing if one were seen wearing an overcoat discarded by one's neighbor.

As a result, used clothes either find their way into trash bins or, as in our case, are taken away by collectors. What becomes of them is not entirely clear.

I believe a large portion is sent to recycling plants and turned into new materials. If that is true, it is at least an acceptable destiny for worn-out clothes. However, when I imagine my brand-new clothes being thrown into large pools filled with chemicals, my heart aches.

It would be better if there were some mechanism that separates used clothes that are in good condition, disinfects and irons them, and then gives them a new life in families that truly need them.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

POLINA RYSAKOVA AND IGOR KHODACHEK

From rails to classrooms

The architecture of Sino-Russian educational partnership is adopting more hybrid forms as cooperation deepens

Russia and China are bound by decades of relations in which political and economic interactions have traditionally occupied the leading place. In recent years, however, another dimension of the bilateral dialogue has come into sharper relief — the humanitarian one. This is evidenced by growing Russian interest in Chinese popular culture, literature, music, theater and cinema, as shown by the success of Chinese television series on Russian streaming platforms, translations of contemporary Chinese prose and poetry, and touring performances by Chinese musical and theatrical ensembles. The humanitarian dimension is no longer merely supplementing the traditionally dominant economic and political relationship — it is becoming an independent and significant channel through which the two countries come to know each other.



Polina Rysakova



Igor Khodachek

As national cultures interpenetrate ever more closely, what defines the present moment is the consolidation of hybrid forms of cultural interaction. Productive partnership gives rise to fundamentally new formats that cannot be reduced to either of the originating traditions. Such hybrids are emerging in the sphere of Russian-Chinese cultural contacts as well: one need only think of Russian feature films and literary works set in China, or tourist itineraries that bring together the cultural heritage of both countries.

Hybrids of this kind are taking shape in education too — against the backdrop of intensifying Russian-Chinese humanitarian ties and an accelerating exchange of visits. In 2025, around 21,000 Russians studied at Chinese universities, while Russian universities hosted approximately 66,000 Chinese students. Throughout the 2020s, Russia has been gradually becoming one of China's most important partners in higher education, alongside the traditional leaders from the Western world. This is demonstrated by the growing number of joint educational programs established through the efforts of Russian and Chinese universities. The momentum of Russian engagement is striking. Whereas around 120 new Russian-Chinese programs were launched during the 2010s, today the number of active partnerships has reached 150, involving around 90 Russian and 150 Chinese universities. The geography is expanding too: universities of the Urals, the Volga region, St Petersburg and Moscow are joining the traditionally active institutions of the Russian Far East and Siberia.

Joint educational programs are precisely the kind of cultural hybrids described above. They have absorbed the best of the educational traditions of both countries while remaining oriented toward the future — toward creating the conditions for a sustainable partnership. At the foundation of this partnership lie both a shared humanitarian dimension and a complementarity of skills and competencies. This is reflected in the diversity of Russian-Chinese educational cooperation.

While technical disciplines dominate in most Chinese-foreign joint projects, the Russian-Chinese partnership is distinguished by the way that a technological agenda is organically combined with a humanitarian one. Engineering disciplines occupy a significant place — mechatronics, electrical engineering, and automation — as do programs related to transport infrastructure, above all railways, including railway power supply, transport management and signaling systems. This cooperation carries strategic importance for the development of regional and global connectivity infrastructure. At the same time, the humanities remain an integral part of Russian-Chinese educational projects — Russian language study, musical performance and arts education. It is precisely these programs that transform the educational dialogue into a fully-fledged cultural exchange, extending well beyond applied technological cooperation.

Notably, the hybrid character of the educational partnership is expressed not only in program content but in its physical, spatial embodiment. Russia has become one of the countries — alongside the United States, the United Kingdom and Israel, among others — to have established a joint university on Chinese soil: MSU-BIT in Shenzhen, a non-profit Chinese-foreign cooperative university jointly founded in 2016 by the Shenzhen municipal people's government, Lomonosov Moscow State University and Beijing Institute of Technology. Another unique and remarkable establishment is the international campus of St Petersburg State University and Harbin Institute of Technology (SPbU-HIT) in Harbin. This project reflects the deep historical and cultural ties between the two countries. The educational function here acquires an additional dimension — the preservation and reinterpretation of a shared heritage.

This kind of reading becomes possible through the "city as text" approach, which is gaining ground in urban research today. By treating planning documents, social media posts, real estate advertisements, news archives and topographic inscriptions as a single body of evidence open to computational analysis, the approach allows researchers to trace how the meaning of a place evolves across actors and across time. Applied to Harbin, it makes visible how official, academic, and everyday voices have repositioned shared heritage from a contested footprint to a shared resource, providing the empirical foundation that such a project deserves.

What the Harbin campus demonstrates in concentrated form is true of the partnership more broadly. The China-Russia Years of Education, spanning 2026 to 2027, open genuine opportunities for a qualitative renewal of the partnership. The two sides have a historic chance to build a sustainable model of long-term educational cooperation in which technical and humanitarian directions develop in balance. It is precisely this breadth — from railway technologies to the Russian language, from musical performance to arts education — that makes the Russian-Chinese educational dialogue both unique and full of promise.

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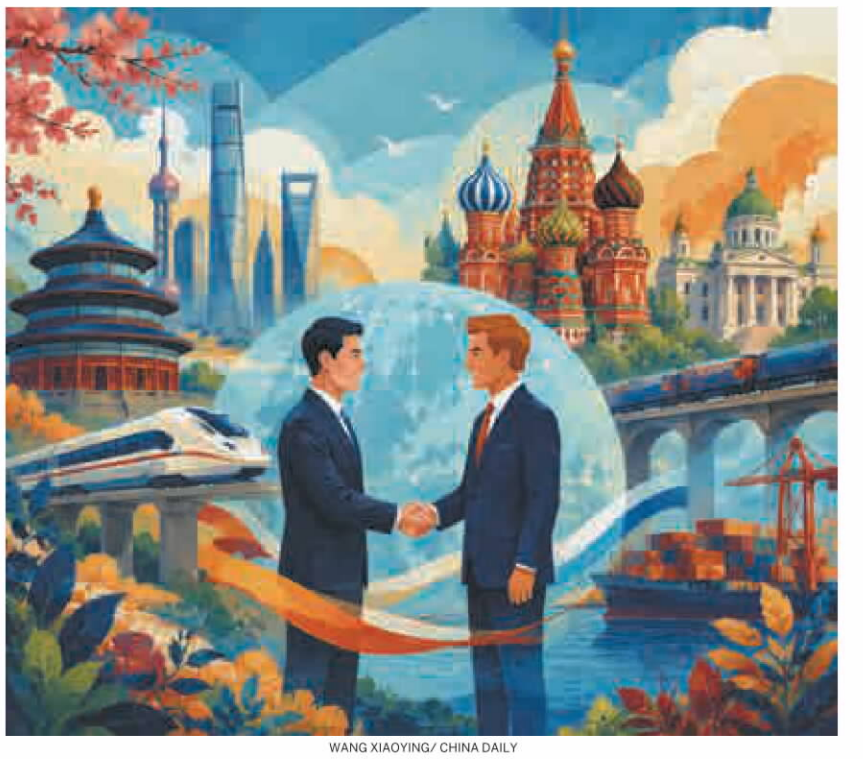

WANG XIAOYING/ CHINA DAILY

LONG CHEN

Mutual supporters

Three ever-broadening 'paths' underpin the consolidation and extension of China-Russia cooperation

At the invitation of President Xi Jinping, Russian President Vladimir Putin paid a state visit to China on May 19 and 20. The deep-seated accumulation of China-Russia cooperation has continued to grow despite the turbulent international landscape. Steadily extended and consolidated, it has become a paradigm for major-country coordination in today's world. Looking back at the highlights of China-Russia cooperation in recent years, the secret to the steady progress in bilateral exchanges lies in three increasingly broadening "paths".



Amid current major issues such as the international energy security, the in-depth communication and coordinated positions between China and Russia are helping to jointly safeguard the authority of the United Nations Charter and international fairness and justice, steadily advancing the building of a more equal and orderly multipolar world.

The path of people-to-people exchanges is becoming increasingly smooth. The thermometer of China-Russia relations is, first and foremost, reflected in the footsteps of ordinary people from both nations. As a major outcome of the strategic guidance by the two heads of state, the trial mutual visa-free policy launched in 2025 responds to the expectations of both peoples.

Data from the Heilongjiang General Station of Exit and Entry Frontier Inspection show that after just over eight months of the trial visa-free policy, ports across Heilongjiang province received over 650,000 Russian travelers, a year-on-year increase of nearly 70 percent. Among them, the number of tourists entering through visa-free channels surged more than twofold. Cross-border weekend visits between Chinese and Russian families and Russian tourists shopping at Chinese markets have become the new normal.

Meanwhile, Chinese tourists' enthusiasm for visiting Russia is equally high. According to the Association of Tour Operators of Russia, the number of Chinese tourists visiting Russia increased by 44 percent in the first quarter of 2026, firmly securing China's leading position in terms of foreign tourist arrivals in Russia. According to forecasts by the Russian Ministry of Economic Development, the number of Chinese tourists to Russia is expected to reach 5.5 million annually by 2030.

The path of physical connectivity is accelerating its extension, making the "steel arteries" of economic and trade exchanges more resilient and robust. If the "heart path" is the underlying emotional bond of China-Russia cooperation, the "hard path" supports the backbone and lifeblood of their economic and trade interactions. According to the Russian Ministry of Transport, the freight volume of trade in goods between China and Russia reached 47 million metric tons in 2025, up 3 percent year-on-year, with vehicles passing through border ports increasing by more than 20 percent compared to 2024.

The accelerated upgrading of cross-border infrastructure and logistics, along with the step-by-step implementation of border port renovations, has emerged as a new highlight in bilateral economic and trade exchanges. Specifically, the Kanikurgan-Heihe highway port has completed its upgrade, increasing daily vehicle clearance capacity to 862 vehicles. The traffic capacity of the Kraskino-Hunchun and Pogranichny-Suifenhe highway ports has also increased to 750 and 1,300 vehicles respectively, upon completion.

Beyond highways, progress is being made in tandem across railways, aviation and maritime shipping. Cross-border waterway passenger transport is becoming increasingly busy. As the terminus of the Pacific Railway, the coal marine terminal at Port Elga and its supporting railway are under intensive construction. Once fully completed, Russia will be able to transport an additional 30 million tons of coal by water annually.

Furthermore, the development of the Russian Far East and Northeast China is not only a regional priority but also a crucial lever to stimulate growth across the entire Eurasian continent. These crisscrossing "hard paths" are tying the economic lifelines of the two countries ever tighter, serving as a powerful engine for the shared development of the region and the continent as a whole.

The path of participating in global governance is widening, providing greater confidence for practical cooperation to counter anti-globalization. The significance of China-Russia cooperation has long transcended the bilateral scope. Through platforms such as BRICS and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China and Russia are providing more diverse international public goods to the Global South.

At the 2024 BRICS Kazan Summit, President Xi put forward five suggestions: building a BRICS committed to peace, innovation, green development, justice and closer people-to-people exchanges. Both China and Russia expressed their readiness along with other BRICS members to promote strategic cooperation across three pillars — politics and security, economy and finance, and people-to-people exchanges — and to strengthen ties with other developing countries through "BRICS Plus" and outreach dialogues.

In recent years, the New Development Bank and alternative payment systems under the BRICS framework have gradually emerged as beneficial complements to the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

In September 2025, President Xi proposed the Global Governance Initiative at the SCO Plus Meeting. President Putin expressed immediate support, saying that the Global Governance Initiative put forward by President Xi is very timely and relevant, and will play an important role in closing the global governance deficit. On May 9, President Putin further pointed out at a news conference after the Victory Day celebrations that China-Russia coordination has become "a key pillar in deterring conflicts and safeguarding global strategic stability".

Amid current major issues such as the international energy security, the in-depth communication and coordinated positions between China and Russia are helping to jointly safeguard the authority of the United Nations Charter and international fairness and justice, steadily advancing the building of a more equal and orderly multipolar world.

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BUSINESS

Report: Firms investing more in Europe

More than an export market, continent seen as a strategic base, say analysts

By **LI JING**
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Chinese corporate investment in Europe surged to its highest level in seven years in 2025, with a sharp rise in factory construction, as Chinese companies accelerated efforts to localize operations amid global supply chain shifts and rising trade protectionism.

Chinese foreign direct investment in Europe, including the United Kingdom, climbed 67 percent year-on-year to 16.8 billion euros ($19.6 billion), the highest level since 2018, according to a recent study by Rhodium Group and other industry trackers.

The automotive sector remained the dominant investment destination, drawing 7.6 billion euros, with 93 percent tied to electric vehicle supply chains.

"The core driver is the globalization push by Chinese automakers," said Ron Zheng, a senior partner at Roland Berger and head of its automotive practice in Asia.

"At the same time, Europe's trade barriers and industrial policies are accelerating the shift toward localized production, as companies seek to mitigate tariff risks and meet local production requirements."

Greenfield investment — where companies build new production facilities rather than acquire existing firms — jumped 51 percent from a year earlier to nearly 9 billion euros, setting a record high, the report found.

Analysts say the rebound highlights that Chinese companies are increasingly turning to Europe not only as an export market, but also as a strategic production base.

"The rise in FDI reflects strong complementary demand on both sides," said Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

"Chinese companies have technology and manufacturing experience, while European markets want investment, especially in sectors linked to industrial upgrading and green transition," Zhou said.

He said greenfield investment has become the dominant model partly because Europe lacks sufficiently mature industrial assets in some emerging sectors that Chinese firms can directly acquire.

Europe's share of China's total global FDI rose from 17 percent to nearly a quarter in 2025, according to the report.

Hungary remained the largest recipient of Chinese FDI, attracting 3.9 billion euros, although its lead narrowed as other major European economies regained momentum, the study found.

Chinese FDI in Germany nearly tripled to 2.5 billion euros, while investment in France quadrupled to 1.9 billion euros, according to the report. Combined, France, Germany and the UK accounted for 34 percent of total Chinese investment in Europe in 2025, up from 23 percent a year earlier.

Spain, Sweden and Cyprus also each attracted more than 1 billion euros, helped by large renewable energy and entertainment deals, including China Three Gorges Corp's acquisition of the Mula solar plant in Spain and Tencent Holdings' purchase of mobile game developer Easybrain in Cyprus.

Zheng from Roland Berger said China's EV sector now possesses the world's most complete supply chain, strong cost-control advantages and fast technology iteration capabilities, making overseas expansion a natural next step as growth in China's domestic auto market moderates.

"Europe is still the global technological center of the combustion engine era and remains a premium, strategically important market. For Chinese automakers to become truly global brands, they must establish themselves in Europe," he said.

Zheng added that localized manufacturing allows companies to move closer to customers, satisfy local content rules and improve brand perception, while reducing exposure to tariffs and antisubsidy probes.

Chinese investment is also reshaping Europe's industrial landscape, Zheng said. While local suppliers may face near-term competitive pressure, deeper integration with Chinese battery and component makers could accelerate Europe's EV transition and strengthen supply chain resilience over the longer term.

"European carmakers including Volkswagen, Mercedes-Benz and BMW are already deepening cooperation with Chinese supply chains to benefit from China's cost advantages and innovation speed," he said.

Zheng added that Chinese automakers are increasingly moving beyond simple vehicle exports toward full-scale localization strategies that include factories, research centers, supplier ecosystems and after-sales networks.

"The model is no longer just about selling cars in Europe. It is about embedding entire industrial chains locally."

Huawei unveils cutting-edge chip-development framework

By **MA SI**
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Huawei Technologies Co expects its premium chips to achieve transistor density equivalent to 1.4-nanometer processes by 2031 under a new semiconductor development framework, the company announced on Monday at a conference in Shanghai.

He Tingbo, Huawei board member and president of its semiconductor business, formally introduced the "Tau Scaling Law" in a keynote speech titled "New Semiconductor Path in Practice".

Unlike traditional approaches that rely on miniaturizing transistors — an industry paradigm increasingly challenged by physical limits and diminishing cost benefits — the new methodology prioritizes reducing signal propagation time across devices, circuits, chips and systems, said He, adding that Huawei has already designed and mass-produced 381 chips based on the Tau Scaling Law over the past six years, covering industries from smartphones to artificial intelligence computing.

This autumn, the company will launch a new Kirin smartphone chip that adopts a multilayer circuit architecture which shortens critical path wiring and improves transistor density and energy efficiency.



A visitor checks out Huawei's computing equipment during a high-tech expo in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The announcement underscores China's push to circumvent US export restrictions that have limited domestic access to advanced lithography tools and cutting-edge semiconductor manufacturing.

China is widely seen as unlikely to reach 1.4 nm capabilities through conventional fabrication alone, but a successful application of the Tau Scaling Law could offer a way to improve performance and chip density despite equipment constraints, experts said.

Huawei's projection places it on a competitive timeline with TSMC, the world's largest advanced chip foundry. TSMC currently produces chips on 2 nm technology and plans to begin mass production of its A14 (1.4 nm) process in 2028.

Beyond Huawei's internal roadmap, Chinese AI developers are increasingly turning to domestic chips. In its DeepSeek-V4 technical report, DeepSeek listed Huawei's Ascend NPU alongside Nvidia GPUs within the same hardware validation framework — the first time the company has positioned a Chinese AI chip on equal footing with Nvidia in an official document. The model has already completed inference adaptation on Huawei's Ascend platform.

Meanwhile, Kimi's recent research paper on cross-data center inference architecture has also hinted at exploring domestic chip-based token cost reduction.

As overseas advanced computing procurement tightens, the shift toward domestic AI chips is accelerating. He from Huawei said the semiconductor industry's future depends on open collaboration, adding that no single company can independently find all the answers.

"With the Tau Scaling Law, we look forward to working closely with scientists, engineers and industry partners around the world to drive the sustainable development of the semiconductor industry," she said.

Huawei's progress comes as a string of Chinese semiconductor companies are making inroads into chip supply chains, including chip materials, packaging, manufacturing processes and chipmaking equipment.

Roger Sheng, vice-president of research at Gartner, said amid mounting challenges, Chinese chip firms are showcasing their resilience and growing innovation capabilities.

Xing Ziqiang, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley, said China is making breakthroughs in technological innovation, driven by three core advantages — industrial clusters, a demographic dividend of science and engineering talent, and an ultra-large market — that are difficult for other economies to replicate.

"My colleagues estimate that by 2027 or 2028, China is expected to achieve a 50 percent localization rate in GPUs, marking a significant leap forward," Xing said.

Stronger green ties key to China, Russia

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Green energy collaboration between Beijing and Moscow holds immense potential, opening a vital strategic frontier as both nations seek to uplift their traditional fossil-fuel business into a high-tech, low-carbon value chain.

This structural complementarity — pairing China's world-leading clean technology with Russia's vast resource endowment — is increasingly viewed by industry experts as a driving force not only for bilateral energy security but for a more balanced global energy transition.

"There is massive room for cooperation in the new energy sector," said Yuan Liuyan, director of the energy strategy research department, China National Petroleum Corp (CNPC) Economics and Technology Research Institute.

Yuan pointed out that while Russia boasts abundant wind and solar resources, local development costs remain roughly five times higher than those in China.

> "There is massive room for cooperation in the new energy sector."
>
> **Yuan Liuyan,** director of energy strategy research department, China National Petroleum Corp Economics and Technology Research Institute

"By leveraging China's world-leading technology, industrial capabilities and cost advantages, the two nations have a vast arena to jointly develop wind and solar power bases," Yuan said, adding that bilateral nuclear cooperation could also extend into cutting-edge fields like small modular reactors, fast-neutron reactors and thermonuclear fusion.

According to Yuan, this clean energy synergy is also accelerating across cross-border manufacturing sectors. China has become the leading supplier of new energy vehicle technologies and components to Russia, bolstering its local electric vehicle engineering and domestic brand development.

Conversely, Russia — a top global producer of low-carbon primary aluminum via inert anode technology — is embedding its ultra-low-carbon metals into China's NEV, electronics and packaging industries, she said.

This "green materials to green manufacturing" synergy is paving the way for deeper cooperation across the broader advanced manufacturing supply chain, Yuan added.

While the green transition accelerates, traditional energy remains the bedrock of bilateral trade, characterized by the continuous optimization of traditional supply lines. Following agreements between CNPC and Russia's natural gas distribution company Gazprom, the Power of Siberia 1 pipeline — which reached its full design capacity of 38 billion cubic meters in 2025 — is undergoing expansion to further elevate long-term natural gas supplies.

Wang Hongzhi, head of the National Energy Administration, stated earlier this year that energy cooperation is a vital component of practical Sino-Russian relations.

It plays a foundational role in promoting high-quality economic and social development for both countries, he said, expressing high expectations for the partnership to scale new heights moving forward.

"Against the backdrop of ongoing Middle East crises, Russia continues to prove its role as a reliable supplier, while China remains a responsible energy consumer."

Keeping it cool



A railway employee inspects a freight train at Taiyuan North Railway Station in North China's Shanxi province, on Sunday. Amid scorching temperatures, maintenance workers conduct round-the-clock inspections to ensure the safe passage of freight trains. The station is a key marshalling hub connecting the Shijiazhuang-Taiyuan and northern Datong-Puzhou trunk lines, handling over 150 freight trains daily. ZHANG ZHIJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

DeepSeek to maintain steep discounts

By **CHENG YU**
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Chinese artificial intelligence startup DeepSeek said it will permanently maintain steep discounts on its DeepSeek-V4-Pro model API pricing, pushing inference costs to new industry lows and escalating a price war across the global AI sector.

DeepSeek said the promotional pricing for its V4-Pro model, previously offered at 25 percent of the standard rate and originally scheduled to end on Sunday, would now become permanent. The company said the revised pricing effectively sets the model's official price at one quarter of the originally planned level.

Under the new pricing structure, input costs for cached requests will fall to 0.025 yuan ($0.0037) per million tokens, while input costs will be 3 yuan per million tokens and output costs 6 yuan per million tokens, according to the company. The pricing ranks among the lowest globally for mainstream large-language-model APIs.

The move comes as AI infrastructure costs are rising worldwide due to what industry experts describe as structural imbalances across the AI supply chain.

DeepSeek's decision to cut prices against that backdrop signals that competition in China's AI market is increasingly shifting from raw computing scale toward efficiency and ecosystem expansion, industry experts said.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said: "DeepSeek's willingness to cut prices against the market trend is absolutely not simple cash-burning subsidization. It is a cost advantage achieved through reconstruction of the underlying technology architecture."

Wang said DeepSeek had adapted its models to domestic Chinese computing platforms including Huawei's Ascend chips, reducing dependence on overseas high-end computing hardware and lowering procurement costs.

"It will create a low price-user growth-ecosystem prosperity, which will further decline cost and form a cycle that strengthens DeepSeek's competitive position," he added.

The move also reflects a broader shift in China's AI industry, where firms are increasingly attempting to differentiate themselves not only through model capability but through deployment efficiency, infrastructure optimization and lower-cost inference.

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BUSINESS

Smart glasses upgrading police efficiency

Technology is used for traffic management, street patrols, urban governance

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Tianjin
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The booth of an AI glasses company draws a large crowd of visitors at the sixth China International Consumer Products Expo in Haikou, Hainan province, in April. LUO YUNFEI / CHINA NEWS SERVICE





Left: Zhao Baoxin (left), a police officer in Tianjin, demonstrates the use of smart glasses to another officer on Friday. YAN DONGJIE / CHINA DAILY
Right: Police officers patrol alongside a humanoid robot and a robot dog in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on Feb 15. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

With the assistance of smart glasses equipped with cameras, recognition systems and real-time internet connectivity, police officers can walk the streets and quickly identify objects, signs, license plates and more. By leveraging big data for real-time comparisons, they can proactively detect anomalies in a way that was once confined to sci-fi movies, but is now unfolding for real on the streets of Tianjin.

"These glasses make our patrols and checks much more efficient, helping us proactively detect and respond to emergencies," said Zhao Baoxin, a police officer at the Jiefang Road police station of the Heping district public security subbureau in Tianjin.

The first made-for-police-use smart glasses in China have been independently developed by the Tianjin public security system — with all software and hardware made domestically. They are changing traffic management, routine patrols and urban governance.

In the past, patrolling relied primarily on visual observation. Today, smart glasses are widely employed in scenarios such as traffic management, street patrols and locating missing people, continually improving urban governance and public services. This technology enables law enforcement to respond with greater precision and speed.

While violent crime is rare in China, the use of smart glasses goes far beyond making arrests — they are often used to serve residents, manage traffic and locate lost elderly people.

Showcasing the city's advances in smart policing equipment, these and other typical examples of intelligent technology empowering social governance and public services will be on display at the 2026 World Intelligence Expo in Tianjin from Thursday to Sunday.

Zhao recalled one patrol experience: "We found an elderly man at an intersection in Heping district. He couldn't speak clearly or tell us his name and address. The glasses quickly identified him and within 20 minutes we had reached his family and got him home safely."

Connected to a networked platform, the smart glasses feature text recognition, voice recognition and voice-command control. They can search and provide feedback information in real time, such as verifying a person's identity or finding family contact details. Officers can complete identity checks and information inquiries on the spot through the glasses, improving response efficiency.

The glasses not only assist officers in their daily work, but also give traffic police a major helping hand.

Traffic congestion around schools during peak drop-off and pick-up hours is a common challenge across China. At Tianjin No 21 Middle School in Heping district, parents can now register through a miniprogram co-developed by the public security system. Their license plate information is linked to the glasses' back-end system.

Wearing the glasses, officers can quickly identify authorized vehicles and guide them to stop briefly and leave promptly, while directing other vehicles away in time.

Sun Yinghua, a police officer of the mobile policing detachment of the science, technology and IT division of the Tianjin Municipal Public Security Bureau, said the glasses achieve a recognition accuracy of over 95 percent and can capture data and return results within milliseconds — faster than the blink of an eye. Powered by OCR visual capabilities and artificial intelligence large model technology, the camera on the glasses can quickly identify objects, signs and license plates.

In terms of battery life, the second-generation glasses last two to three times longer than the first generation, supporting 1.5 to 2 hours of continuous wear — enough to cover a standard patrol shift. The temple arms are equipped with specialized sensors: putting the glasses on activates them automatically, and taking them off switches them to standby mode, effectively reducing power consumption.

Unlike body-worn cameras clipped to the chest, the smart glasses offer a first-person perspective, so the footage does not shift when the officer bends or turns. The device weighs about 40 grams, lighter than an average pair of sunglasses.

The push toward smart policing is accelerating across China. In December, a national public security technology work conference called for in-depth implementation of the strategy of strengthening the police force through technology, and comprehensively advancing the use of digital and intelligent tools to empower police operations. According to a 2026 industry report by Zhiyan Consulting on China's public security IT market, the sector grew from 10.8 billion yuan ($1.59 billion) in 2015 to 25.5 billion yuan in 2025, with a compound annual growth rate of 8.96 percent.

Smart glasses, police robots, drones and other equipment have now entered the multipoint application stage. In Jinyun county, Zhejiang province, traffic police using AI glasses have improved the efficiency of roadside key vehicle checks by about 300 percent. In Haikou, Hainan province, AI glasses deployed by traffic police can complete the whole process from identification to alert within 30 seconds. In Chengdu, Sichuan province, humanoid robots, robotic dogs and smart glasses have been integrated to build a three-dimensional prevention and control system covering "air, ground and individual officers". Shenzhen, Guangdong province, explicitly called for "deepening the practical application of new technologies and equipment such as robots and AI glasses" in its 2026 public security work plan.

Police-use smart glasses are also being added to the equipment lists of law enforcement agencies in other countries.

In January, Delhi police in India deployed AI smart glasses for security during Republic Day celebrations. The Dutch national police force began piloting Vuzix Blade augmented reality glasses in 2020 to provide information support to patrol officers.

Zhao said: "During large-scale security operations or holiday crowd management at scenic spots, the glasses work in coordination with drones. The devices can cover areas that personnel cannot reach."

Yan Jinghao, head of the mobile policing detachment of the science, technology and IT division of the Tianjin Municipal Public Security Bureau, said future plans include linking robotic dogs, smart connected police vehicles, humanoid robots and other terminals to achieve multidevice coordination — "to enhance the intelligence level of policing and urban management".

Zhong Aiyamei contributed to this story.

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Advances in exoskeleton tech may provide answers for enhancing mobility

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Tianjin



A tourist wearing a smart exoskeleton device crosses a bridge in Tianjin earlier this year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

At 60 years of age, Liu Na has always loved sports. However, in recent years, every time she goes hiking, she has increasingly felt that her knees and legs are no longer as strong as when she was younger.

Not long ago, during a trial experience event at Duishan Park in Tianjin, she put on an exoskeleton device for the first time.

"I was a little worried at first. I thought this thing would be particularly heavy," Liu said.

But after she put it on and started climbing, she quickly found that her legs seemed to be gently lifted by a mild force.

"Walking became noticeably easier, as if I had regained the feeling of my youth," she said.

Today, exoskeleton devices that once only appeared in science fiction films are gradually entering ordinary people's outdoor sports and daily lives.

Qiu Xiaoning, general manager of Tianjin Industrial Research Technology Development Co, said the newly developed exoskeleton weighs just 2.4 kilograms and can be folded for storage.

To reduce the burden of wearing the device, the research and development team used 3K carbon fiber to build the force arm structure, allowing the device to maintain stable power output while remaining lightweight.

"When I first saw the device, I thought it would definitely be heavy," Liu said. "But after wearing it for a while, I gradually forgot it was there."

During uphill climbs and long-distance walks, the exoskeleton can automatically adjust its power output according to the body's movements. When the wearer starts to go uphill, lifts a leg or accelerates, the device rapidly senses the change in motion and provides corresponding assistance.

The research and development team at Tianjin Industrial Research Technology Development Co explained that the core lies in an "adaptive system".

"You don't need to consciously coordinate with it; it will actively adapt to your pace," said Li Yue, an electronic control algorithm engineer involved in the exoskeleton's development.

Behind this system is an algorithm framework of "large model with small model" built on the gait data of Chinese people.

The so-called "large model" corresponds to general data on height, stride length and gait patterns of a large number of Chinese people, while the "small model" refines the differences between individuals.

With the help of multidimensional sensors and real-time algorithms, the device can complete motion recognition and gait synchronization within 30 milliseconds.

This exoskeleton device will be showcased at the 2026 World Intelligence Expo in Tianjin, which is scheduled to take place at the National Convention and Exhibition Center (Tianjin) from Thursday to Sunday. The event is expected to attract over 700 exhibitors and will see the unveiling of more than 200 innovative achievements and research reports.

Globally, exoskeleton devices are also gradually moving from laboratories to more everyday application scenarios.

In the past, such equipment was primarily used in military, industrial or medical rehabilitation fields. However, in recent years, with advances in lightweight motors, artificial intelligence recognition and wearable technologies, outdoor assisted movement has emerged as a promising new direction.

Several international brands have begun applying technologies such as artificial intelligence terrain recognition and adaptive power systems to mountaineering and hiking scenarios.

For instance, an outdoor exoskeleton device named Vigx Pi6 can analyze ground conditions in advance via an AI terrain camera and dynamically adjust power assistance accordingly.

Another product, the Hypershell X Ultra, is capable of switching modes to adapt to different environments including snow, sand and uphill climbs.

Meanwhile, the R&D team at Tianjin Industrial Research Technology Development Co focuses more on the core question of whether ordinary people are actually willing to wear such devices on a daily basis.

"Many exoskeletons have powerful functions, but average people won't go out carrying a heavy device every day," said Qiu. "What we aim to create is a product that can truly integrate into daily life."

Currently, this exoskeleton has completed research and finalization and entered small-batch trial production.

The R&D team has conducted tests in settings such as parks and nursing homes, and plans to further open up experience opportunities at Tianjin's Panshan Scenic Area.

For the development team, outdoor sports are just the starting point.

As population aging deepens and rehabilitation demand continues to grow, it is hoped exoskeletons will further expand into senior care, medical treatment and community services in the future.

In clinical rehabilitation applications, exoskeletons have been widely used for gait training of patients with hemiplegia, paraplegia and stroke.

Developed by the Haihe Laboratory of Brain-Computer Interaction and Human-Machine Integration at Tianjin University, the "Shengong" series has become one of the most representative achievements in the field of brain-computer interface exoskeletons both domestically and globally. Among them, "Shengong-Shenxing" was officially launched at the 2024 World Intelligence Expo in June 2024, and its innovative walking assistance technology has broken the long-standing international monopoly in the traditional electromyography-driven exoskeleton sector.

Tianjin University's "Shengong" series of exoskeletons have also creatively integrated noninvasive brain-computer interfaces with exoskeleton technology. The developed devices have provided rehabilitation training for more than 3,000 stroke patients in local hospitals in Tianjin and trial services for the elderly in communities.

According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics, by the end of 2025, the population in China aged 60 and over had reached 323.38 million, accounting for 23 percent of the total population. On Sept 20, 2022, Wang Haidong, director-general of the National Health Commission's department of aging and health, said at a news conference that the population aged 60 and over is expected to exceed 400 million by around 2035, accounting for more than 30 percent of the total population, marking China's entry into the severe aging stage.

A growing number of people are beginning to rethink a fundamental question: Can people continue to walk and move freely as they grow old? Embodied intelligence products such as exoskeletons may offer a new answer.

Meng Jiarui contributed to this story.

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CHINA

Mission head plans to grow petunias in space

Shenzhou XXIII commander's passion for the sky blossoms aboard Tiangong

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Colonel Zhu Yangzhu, commander of the Shenzhou XXIII mission, said he plans to grow petunias in space during his stay aboard the Tiangong space station.

"I will bring some petunia seeds with me. I plan to plant them once I get aboard the space station and see if they can bloom. I hope they will grow into lovely blossoms.

"I picked petunias because they are fairly easy to grow, and their flowers are quite beautiful. What's more, the blooms give off a vibrant and uplifting vibe, which can cheer people up. Just as we feel delighted seeing flowers and plants growing on home balconies, the same pleasure is even stronger in space. The view of green vegetation, along with blossoms and fruits if they grow, can tremendously brighten our spirits," he said in an earlier interview with reporters at the Astronaut Center of China in Beijing before setting out for the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center in northwestern China for the launch on Sunday night.

Zhu, 39, said Chinese astronauts have a "space garden" inside the Tiangong space station. Recalling his participation in the Shenzhou XVI mission, he said he and his crewmates grew plants, mostly lettuce and green onions.

"We ate them after they matured," he added.

According to Zhu, new planting equipment was sent to Tiangong after his flight, enabling astronauts to harvest more vegetables and fruits.

The astronaut noted that the Shenzhou XXI crew has harvested cherry tomatoes three times in orbit. They also planted wheat, which has begun to form ears. In addition, they have grown three generations of mint.

"We will continue to take care of those plants, and will cultivate carrots during our stay," Zhu said.

Earth vistas

Recalling his first and only spacewalk during the Shenzhou XVI mission, Zhu described the eight-hour activity on July 20, 2023, as "an experience that will stay with me for life".

"The awesome vistas of Earth seen outside the space station are very different from those viewed from inside. Floating out into space, anyone would be instantly overwhelmed by the breathtaking scenery. The blue sky and oceans lie directly beneath me. As we orbited above the atmosphere, blue skies spread out both ahead and underfoot, with clusters of white clouds drifting far below.

"I also gazed upon deep blue oceans and lush green lands. When passing over deserts, sharply defined stretches of brown and tan terrain came into my sight. Countless rivers were clearly visible as well," the astronaut said.

What struck Zhu the most was a gigantic typhoon eye he observed when the space station flew across the Atlantic Ocean.

"Suspended amid the endless expanse of space, our home planet appears small, yet breathtakingly beautiful in its blue hue. All these magnificent sights have filled me with even greater reverence for life, nature and the universe," he said.

During the spacewalk, the astronauts also soared over the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau. The landscape unfolded clearly before Zhu's eyes, with towering snowcapped mountains and the estuary of the Yellow River visible from orbit.

"The land of our motherland lay right in front of me. At that moment, I couldn't help wondering what made our space journey possible. It is our great motherland that sent us into space. Countless space industry workers toil behind every space mission, lifting us high toward the stars," he said.

Flight path

As one of the first two members of China's third group of astronauts to take part in a space mission, Zhu said he was destined for flight.

When he was a middle school student, Zhu often used pilot training equipment at his school, which cooperates with the People's Liberation Army Air Force in selecting students for flight school.

In his fifth year in middle school, Zhu planned to apply for an Air Force flight training program. However, his head teacher believed he had great potential for scientific research and persuaded him to reconsider. Still, his passion for the sky never faded.

"I said to myself: 'If I can't fly into the sky myself, I'll dedicate myself to researching flight technologies instead,'" Zhu said.

Before taking the national college entrance examination in 2005, he applied for a major in spacecraft systems and engineering at the National University of Defense Technology. His second choice was aircraft design and engineering at Nanjing University of Aeronautics and Astronautics.

Thanks to his high scores, Zhu was admitted to the College of Aerospace Science and Engineering at the National University of Defense Technology in Changsha in the summer of 2005.

After obtaining a bachelor's degree, he went on to pursue master's and doctoral degrees in fluid mechanics at the same university.

After a decade of study, Zhu graduated in 2015 with the highest academic score in his major.

He was then assigned to an infrastructure construction unit of the PLA, where he assumed his first engineering post. In the position, he led a group of soldiers working at construction sites in remote mountainous areas. He also took part in a postdoctoral program run by the Army Engineering University of PLA in Nanjing, Jiangsu province.

In 2017, Zhu was transferred to the Space Engineering University under the former PLA Strategic Support Force to help establish a mechanics laboratory.

In the summer of 2018, he learned about the selection of China's third-generation astronauts and decided to apply.

"I didn't make it into the Air Force to fly fighter jets in blue skies, but then came this opportunity for me to fly spacecraft outside Earth's atmosphere, so I was determined to try my best to chase it," he said.

After many rigorous tests, Zhu stood out among thousands of applicants and was recruited by the PLA Astronaut Division in October 2020.

Due to his lack of flight experience, Zhu found it difficult at first to learn spacecraft control operations at the Astronaut Center of China.

To master the skills as quickly as possible, he made full use of a desktop simulator for manual rendezvous and docking installed in his apartment, conducting extra training after daily sessions. After thousands of hours of practice, he developed solid muscle memory and eventually achieved precise manual rendezvous and docking operations.

On May 30, 2023, Zhu was launched into space, beginning a five-month orbital mission as the spaceflight engineer for the Shenzhou XVI mission.

"I think the experience of my first mission is very important because it let me know exactly what and how I should work in space," Zhu said before setting out on the Shenzhou XXIII mission.

High spirits





Above: The crew members of the Shenzhou XXI, Zhang Lu (front left), Zhang Hongzhang (left) and Wu Fei (second from left) and those of the Shenzhou XXIII, Zhu Yangzhu (front right), Lai Ka-ying (right) and Zhang Zhiyuan (second from right) meet and pose for a photo aboard the Tiangong space station on Monday. JIN LIWANG / XINHUA

Left: The crew members of the Shenzhou XXIII engage in a training session on March 4. XINHUA

Spaceflight fulfills childhood dream

By **ZHAO LEI**
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Colonel Zhang Zhiyuan, an astronaut of the Shenzhou XXIII mission, grew up fascinated by the wonders of navigating the skies.

"When I was a little boy, my friends and I usually played in the farm fields. Back then, we would often hear military aircraft roaring past overhead. We would run after the planes and shout excitedly. At that time, I held pilots in great admiration and thought this profession was an exceptionally noble calling," said the Gansu province native, who will celebrate his 40th birthday aboard the Tiangong space station next month.

Memories of the astronaut's passion for flying remain vivid in the mind of his father, Zhang Jukun, a retired schoolteacher.

"One day, his mother and I were working in the fields while he played beside the ridge. A plane flew across the sky, and he spotted it and kept chasing after it, running about 400 meters," Zhang Jukun told Gansu Daily. "I pulled him back and told him he could never catch up with an aircraft. Right away he asked me, 'When can I get to fly a plane myself?' And I answered him, 'If you keep working hard, you will make it someday.'"

In the years that followed, Zhang Zhiyuan grew into a caring and sensible young man. He often helped with farm work on the family's land after school.

He studied diligently throughout his primary and middle school years, consistently achieving above-average grades, while never letting go of his dream of flying.

When Zhang Zhiyuan turned 19, a long-awaited opportunity arrived: recruitment officers from the People's Liberation Army Air Force came to his school, Baiyin No 1 High School.

He decided to try and soon stood out among the more than 200 candidates. After passing a series of rigorous tests, he became the only student from his school admitted to the Aviation University of Air Force in Changchun, Jilin province.

Throughout his university years, he trained to high standards, noting that "the path from a flight student to a qualified pilot is filled with tough elimination rounds. To attain outstanding physical fitness, I stuck to extra training every single day".

After graduating, he was assigned to a fighter jet unit and rose through the ranks. He took part in numerous combat exercises, accumulating more than 1,200 hours of flight operations.

In the summer of 2018, Zhang was playing basketball with his comrades when a fellow officer rushed over with news that China was recruiting its third generation of astronauts.

He and his teammates immediately stopped the game. After reviewing the recruitment criteria, he signed up without hesitation.

"I have paid close attention to China's manned space program ever since the Shenzhou V mission. I was deeply impressed by how perfectly every mission concluded. Still, I never dared to dream that I could get the chance to become an astronaut myself before that day," he said.

Zhang advanced through successive selection rounds, undergoing strict medical examinations, psychological evaluations, and an unforgettable first experience in centrifuge training.

"Inside the centrifuge cabin, a massive pressure crashed over me, and my body resisted instinctively. My head swayed back and forth and side to side, yet I had to stay conscious and answer questions at any time," he said.

"Long after that, I grasped the skills for centrifuge training and realized how futile it was to rely on physical strength alone."

Apart from physical conditioning, mastering complex spaceflight theory felt like a long-distance endurance run. He pushed himself to understand and memorize every formula, principle and data set.

As a result of his dedication and perseverance, he was selected for the Shenzhou XXIII mission, finally realizing his dream of flying beyond the atmosphere.

"The dream of flying into space is built upon endless learning, rigorous training and steady accumulation of know-how. There are no shortcuts on this journey.

"Over the past years, I have encountered training bottlenecks and felt disappointed after failing to be selected for previous crews. It is exactly these experiences that have taught me the essence of perseverance. True devotion lies in giving it your all even when you fully understand how tough pursuing a dream can be," he said at the Jiuquan Satellite Launch Center on Saturday, a day before embarking on his maiden space journey.

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Robots in Hubei to get life-cycle tracing ID numbers

By **CHEN MEILING** in Beijing and **LIU KUN** in Wuhan

Some humanoid robots in Hubei province are set to become the first in China to receive their own identity card numbers, allowing their full life-cycle activities to be recorded, in a move aimed at ensuring full traceability and clear accountability amid the rapid development of the industry, experts said.

The number, consisting of 29 numerals and English letters, identifies a robot's brand nationality, company, product model and serial number, covering key information such as the manufacturer, hardware parameters, intelligence level and factory filing records.

Like Chinese citizens' ID card numbers, each robot's number is unique, though it contains 11 additional characters.

Beyond basic static data, the digital ID card enables full life-cycle tracking of information including equipment maintenance records and application scenarios. Real-time data such as joint wear and tear, battery status and operational accuracy can also be accessed at any time through a management platform, said Liu Chuanhou, chief operating officer of the Hubei Humanoid Robotics Innovation Center in Wuhan that is leading the project.

"If the robot breaks down, we can check its operational logs and maintenance records through its unique ID to locate the malfunction, determine liability and carry out efficient maintenance," he said.

A new user can also verify the robot's performance and service records through its ID without repeated testing, which is expected to improve the efficiency of robot reuse, Liu added.

On May 11, the center completed filing applications and coding tests for the first batch of enterprises and products with the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology. The enterprises include leading companies across Hubei's humanoid robot industrial chain, such as Optics Valley Dongzhi, GLRoad, Hubei Qirobotics, Jingchu Humanoid Robot, HandX, Guanggu Haribit and Maxnova.

Liu Jieni, business director at Maxnova, said several of the company's flagship humanoid robots had completed unified coding and filing. The robots are mainly used in industrial manufacturing, commercial services and demonstration training.

She said the company joined the initiative to align with the industry's standardization trend, highlighting the smooth process involved.

"Taking part in this initiative not only helps us address compliance gaps and reduce operation and maintenance costs, but also promotes large-scale market expansion of our products," she said. "Meanwhile, it enables us to accumulate valuable data assets and further strengthens our core competitiveness and brand influence in the industry."

Global shipments of humanoid robots reached about 17,000 units in 2025, with a market size of 2.88 billion yuan ($424 million). Benefiting from advantages in supply chains, technologies and application scenarios, China ranks first globally in the humanoid robot industry, according to a report released in March by Beijing CCID Publishing and Media and China Electronics News.

China has more than 140 humanoid robot manufacturers, with shipments totaling 14,400 units, accounting for 84.7 percent of the global total. Its market size reached 1.55 billion yuan, representing 53.8 percent of the global market, the report said.

Amid the rapid development of China's humanoid robot industry, many enterprises still operate in isolation with incompatible technical standards. There is also a lack of unified norms for product traceability, safety supervision and data circulation, according to Liu.

He said the initiative is expected to promote standardization and strengthen the institutional foundation for large-scale, high-quality development of humanoid robots.

At the same time, as high-end intelligent equipment becomes increasingly integrated into production and daily life, humanoid robots also pose potential risks related to operational safety, data security and ethical compliance.

"In cases involving safety incidents or potential data hazards, the ID number can support rapid traceability and liability confirmation, helping prevent risks such as technology abuse and information leakage," Liu said.

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CHINA

China's cold climb to winter sports peak

Systematic support sends nation's disabled athletes to top of Paralympic table

By **WANG XIAOYU** in Tesero, Italy
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Two decades ago, when Chinese Paralympic athlete Fu Chunshan moved around on his crutches, the national flag on his skiing jacket would often peel at the edges or fall off entirely. With few resources and little funding, his team had no official outfitter and had to stick the flag on with adhesive tape.

"Before each competition, athletes from around the world would gather and gear up together in the preparation tent. We could not help looking on with envy as some European teams arrived with a full army of wax technicians, coaches, guides, team doctors and equipment managers," Fu said.

That memory, from the Turin 2006 Winter Paralympic Games in Italy, has stuck with him for 20 years. In that time, he has transitioned from a para cross-country skiing athlete to a coach, and has witnessed his nation's steady progress in bringing more people with disabilities into winter sports and achieving athletic excellence on the international stage.

At the Milan-Cortina 2026 Winter Paralympics, held from March 6 to 15 in Italy, the Chinese delegation topped the medal table with 15 gold, 13 silver and 16 bronze medals. It was China's best performance at an overseas Winter Paralympics since its debut in Salt Lake City in the United States in 2002.

Chang Zheng, vice-president of the China Disabled Persons' Federation and deputy head of the Chinese delegation, said China sent 70 para athletes to compete in 73 of the 79 events across six sports. "The extensive participation reflects a boom in engagement in ice and snow sports among people with disabilities," he said.

"Behind the team's sporting excellence lies the indomitable spirit of our para athletes, as well as a large group of skilled coaches, support staff, guides, technicians, medical and rehabilitation personnel, and scientific researchers," Chang added.

Of the 15 gold medals, the para cross-country and biathlon team that Fu coaches contributed 11.

"Foreign athletes now acknowledge our arrival with remarks like 'Here comes China'. During races, rival coaches will push their own athletes by pointing out that a Chinese competitor is ahead of them," Fu said. "The team's sporting success this year is beyond my dreams."

Fu, 42, lost his right leg in a childhood accident. He began training as a cross-country skier in the early 2000s and was one of eight athletes on China's delegation at Turin 2006. His best performance as an athlete came at the Vancouver 2010 Winter Paralympics, where he finished ninth.

"At that time, I was shy, intimidated and tended to crouch in a little corner to prepare for the race quietly," he said. "The mere arrival of some foreign teams, slick and well-equipped, was a formidable sight in itself."

What Chinese para athletes relied on, Fu said, was primarily mental toughness. "Regardless of inclement weather or poor snow conditions, we just went out, gave it everything and hoped to demonstrate what we had trained for," he said.

"At the same time, our early experiences overseas enabled us to observe and learn the drills of the world's best athletes firsthand — what equipment they used, how they waxed and how they maneuvered on the snow," he added.

Sometimes, Fu questioned himself: "Is it that we Asian athletes are somehow inherently incapable of rivalling Western athletes?" "But I soon waved off my doubts and concluded that the gap came down to inadequate training and support," he said.

A turning point came in 2015, when Beijing and the neighboring city of Zhangjiakou in Hebei province won the bid to host the 2022 Winter Olympics and Paralympics. "At the time, I set a goal of drafting a batch of athletes and helping them stand on the Paralympic podium," Fu said.

According to the China Disabled Persons' Federation, China's para snow sports entered a rapid development phase in 2016, bolstered by systematic support covering talent cultivation, venue construction, upgrades to training systems and hosting of competitions.

Since then, the number of winter Paralympic athletes nationwide has grown from fewer than 50 to over 1,000, and the number of technical officials has increased from zero to more than 100. The number of categories the delegation participates in has grown from just two to all six major Winter Paralympics events.

A key milestone was the opening of the National Ice Sports Arena for People with Impairments in late 2020, "which ends the longtime embarrassment of training in borrowed facilities during empty time slots".

Training has also become more diverse, integrating summer and winter sessions with both domestic and overseas programs, while a number of domestic para winter sports competitions are now held regularly, according to the federation.

The effort also includes greater public engagement. For instance, a winter sports season for people with disabilities, launched by the federation in 2016, attracts more than 300,000 visits annually.

For para cross-country and biathlon skiers, Fu said that they now have access to two year-round ski centers in the provinces of Jilin and Hebei, as well as overseas venues in Chile and Argentina for out-of-season training.

"My coach used to be in charge of everything — waxing the skis, driving us around, managing recovery and psychological therapy. And as an athlete, my mind wasn't just on the race. I was also preoccupied with tiny details, like whether a screw on my sit-ski might be loose," Fu said.

At the 2026 Winter Paralympics, Fu said China's para cross-country and biathlon team arrived with a support team of more than 40.

"Each athlete wears a heart rate watch or chest strap. Through a monitoring system, we calculate the optimal training heart rate and communicate with them in real time to ensure they can ski within a scientific heart rate zone," he said. "We also conduct blood lactate and morning urine tests regularly and adjust training plans based on their physical condition."

In winter para sports, equipment is essential. It determines whether athletes can navigate rough terrain at high speed, protect themselves in high-impact events, and push their limits.

Fu said the rapid development of China's manufacturing industry and long-term cooperation with a domestic company have turned his vision of equipping athletes with quality, homegrown pieces into reality.

"Taking sit-skis for example, we used to rely on equipment imported from Norway or Russia," he said. "Over the years, we have gradually switched to domestically made ones — first made with stainless steel, then later more advanced materials like aluminum and titanium."

At para biathlon competitions, athletes race different distances around a looped course and stop between laps to shoot. In preparation, Fu said the team trained six days a week. "In the evening, we also arranged for them to handle the rifle to maintain a feel for shooting," he said.

Athletes with visual disabilities use an electronic rifle guided by acoustic signals. To experience what it feels like to aim and shoot based on the pitch of the sound transmitted into their headphones, Fu and other coaches practiced the same way.

"The headphones give off a very noisy sound. After practicing for a long time, my ears will start ringing. This made me truly understand how difficult it is for athletes with visual disabilities," Fu said.

This system of people and programs, combined with the grit and adaptability of the athletes, has removed critical barriers for para athletes and helped them achieve high performances on the international stage.

Cai Jiayun, who won three gold medals in the standing class at the 2026 Winter Paralympics, was trailing in the final stretch of the men's sprint pursuit event but overtook the leading Ukrainian skier to win by 0.2 seconds.

"There seemed to be no way I could catch up given the distance between us and the short time left," Cai said. "But at that moment, I relied on my willpower. I just kept following, kept chasing and did my best."

Beyond willpower, Fu said that the Chinese athletes' explosive sprints at the end of races were partly due to a weekly training session dedicated to improving this specific capability — incorporating lunges for standing-class athletes and hyperextensions for sitting athletes.

Yu Shuang, who finished third in the qualification round of the men's sprint pursuit for the blind and partially sighted, asked the team's wax technician to adjust the wax on his skis according to the snow conditions.

"After getting a feel for the course during the qualification round, I believed that a deficit of over 10 seconds could be made up by changing the wax," he said. He later won the gold medal in the event.

Guo Yujie, 22, left this year's Paralympics with regrets, missing the podium in all her events. Still, she said she learned a valuable lesson in self-confidence and tenacity.

"We Chinese athletes train nearly 11 months each year, and our training is scientifically formulated and supported by high-performance equipment. Despite the relatively warm temperatures and the slushy, grabby snow here in Italy, we have adapted well," she said.

On a personal level, Guo said she has overcome injuries, as well as the frustrations and doubts raised by lackluster results ahead of the Paralympics, just to stand at the starting line.

"The silver lining is that I feel my shooting has become more stable," she said. "More importantly, going through setbacks this time has toughened me up. If I can rise from disappointment on a stage like the Paralympics, then there is no difficulty in life that I cannot overcome."







Clockwise from top: Cai Jiayun celebrates on the finish line after the para biathlon men's sprint standing event during the Milan-Cortina Paralympic Winter Games in Tesero, Italy, on March 7. ELETTRA AZZOLIN / OIS Guo Yujie competes on the shooting range in the para biathlon women's individual standing event during the Games on March 8. JOEL MARKLUND / OIS Fu Chunshan (right) coaches Zheng Peng during a training session in Tesero on March 9. HOU ZHAOKANG / XINHUA

Discovering white-knuckle thrills in an unlikely place



Wang Xiaoyu
Reporter's log

As a sports fan, I grew up watching the Olympics, but I had never paid much attention to the Paralympics. That was probably because I rarely encountered visibly disabled people in my daily life, and I also assumed that Paralympic events lacked the same drama and excitement as able-bodied competitions.

So when I went to the 2026 Milan-Cortina Winter Paralympics in early March as a reporter, I had few expectations for the rivalries, the twists and turns, or the adrenaline-pumping, heart-clutching moments that make live sports so gripping.

However, what I witnessed and experienced on the snow and ice shattered my stereotypes about the athleticism in the Paralympics.

When Chinese para snowboarder Wu Zhongwei was nearly thrown off balance by two colliding competitors ahead of him, I felt my heart leap into my throat and couldn't help clenching my fist tightly in the mixed media zone.

Even more thrilling was watching Wu edge closer and closer to the front-runner, overtaking on the final bump and raising his arms high in triumph. Though we journalists had already been standing and waiting through the long qualification rounds for over three hours that day, we jumped up and down like schoolchildren, clapping and yelling at his success.

In para alpine skiing, athletes hurl themselves down slopes with a gradient as steep as 64 degrees, reaching speeds of up to 130 kilometers per hour. Watching them swoosh down while navigating twists, turns, gates, bumps and dips in less than two minutes kept me on the edge of my seat.

When Zhang Mengqiu, a gold medalist from Beijing 2022, missed a pole and slid off the track in one race, she pounded her thigh with her fists in desperation and regret. Her dismay was felt by all of us on the scene.

At the Cortina Curling Olympic Stadium, the atmosphere during the wheelchair curling semifinals and finals was electric. Loud, raucous fans from competing countries cheered on their teams, responding to every stone with applause when it hit its target or a collective sigh when it missed.

I still remember when Yang Jinqiao threw his stick into the air after winning the mixed doubles gold medal with his teammate Wang Meng, firing up the Chinese spectators gathered in one block, who erupted in thunderous yells.

Thanks to intensified support in recent years, China's para winter sport athletes have access to advanced gear, scientific training regimens and world-class coaches — including some who have transitioned from able-bodied competitions and renowned foreign coaches.

As a result, their performances have improved significantly, adding to their overall competitiveness at the Paralympics.

For any sports fan, I recommend watching the Paralympics above all because it is just as captivating and thrilling as any other sporting event. You'll see all the speed, power, accuracy, stamina, coordination and grit that define mainstream sports, only in a different and maybe less familiar form.

On a personal level, I also find it fascinating to learn the history, rules and tactics of each sport. Why is there no sweeping in wheelchair curling? How is banked slalom in snowboarding different from snowboard cross? How do athletes with visual disabilities manage shooting in biathlon?

As much as I am looking forward to the 2028 Summer Olympics in Los Angeles, I am equally ready to tune in to the 2028 Summer Paralympics — something I have never watched before.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE







Clockwise from above left: Part of the scroll on display by Song Dynasty (960-1279) painter Li Gonglin, which was created as an interpretation of an earlier work by Tang Dynasty (618-907) artist Wei Yan depicting an imperial horse pasture of the Tang era. People view a monumental horse painting by Italian Jesuit missionary Giuseppe Castiglione, created during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911). A painting by Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) court artist Zhao Lin, portraying one of the six favored warhorses of Tang emperor Li Shimin. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Galloping through Chinese history

An exhibition of rare artworks in Beijing explores the long relationship between people and horses, **Wang Ru** reports.

In the ancient Chinese classic *Journey to the West*, the Monkey King is appointed *bimawen*, a title that sounds like "avoiding horse plague" in Chinese and is associated with caring for horses in the heavenly court. Though often treated as comic, the role reflects a genuine ancient belief: keeping monkeys in stables could protect horses from disease.

The custom appears repeatedly in historical texts and ancient brick reliefs. Yet in surviving paintings, it is known from only one work — a massive scroll portraying dozens of grooms tending nearly 100 horses. The painting is now on display at the new exhibition *Divine Steeds: The World of Horses in the Palace Museum's Painting and Calligraphy Collections* at the Palace Museum, the former imperial palace that served Chinese emperors from 1420 to 1911.

Running through June 21, the exhibition brings together 55 horse-themed paintings and calligraphy works from the museum's collection. Among them, 28 are being shown publicly for the first time, while 20 are classified as China's highest-grade cultural relics.

According to Zeng Jun, head of the museum's Department of Paintings and Calligraphy, horse paintings occupy a special place in the history of Chinese art because they reflect not only artistic achievement, but also broader historical and spiritual ideals.

"From the simplicity and vigor of the Qin (221-206 BC) and Han (206 BC-AD 220) dynasties, to the fully developed techniques of Tang (618-907) and Song (960-1279) paintings, and through the inheritance of the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644), and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties, horse painting has remained closely connected to the evolution of the times, the spirit of the nation, and the aspirations of the literati," she says.

For curator Ma Shunping, the exhibition also tells the story of the enduring bond between Chinese people and horses. "Chinese people began domesticating horses in the late Neolithic era," Ma says. "Since then, horses have remained deeply connected to daily life and social development."

From the Qin and Han dynasties, innovations such as saddles and stirrups transformed transportation and mobility. Horse riding gradually replaced carriage travel and spread beyond the aristocracy into broader society, Ma says.

"Officials and scholars traveled on horseback for leisure and duty, while merchants journeyed for their livelihood," Ma says. "With horses beside them, people crossed mountains and rivers and left their footprints across the country."

That close relationship appears throughout the exhibition in paintings depicting seasonal journeys.

One featured work by Ming Dynasty painter Qiu Ying portrays official Tang Yi's imagined return to his hometown in today's Shanxi province after years serving in Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

Unable to return home for a long period, Tang became increasingly homesick. Sympathetic local scholars invited Qiu to paint the homecoming he longed for.

In the painting, Tang rides beside the Fenhe River in a bright red official robe. Ma describes Qiu's technique as both meticulous and fluid, with a refined composition and vivid yet restrained colors that create a peaceful atmosphere.

What makes the work particularly intriguing is that Qiu had never visited Tang's hometown. "Some of the scenery was imagined," Ma explains. "That makes this painting a fascinating blend of reality and imagination."

Beyond personal life, horses also played a decisive role in state power and military preparedness. Maintaining cavalry forces required enormous resources, making horse breeding a major national undertaking in many dynasties.

The exhibition's centerpiece is an authentic scroll painted by Song Dynasty painter Li Gonglin, created as an interpretation of an earlier work by Tang Dynasty painter Wei Yan under the auspices of Emperor Shenzong of the Song Dynasty.

"Wei was a famous horse painter in the Tang era. His authentic work was kept in the Northern Song (960-1127) court. Therefore, the emperor ordered Li, regarded as one of the greatest painters of the Song era, to re-create it," says Ma.

But such imitation was not a mere copy. While Li retained the original subject of official horse pastures containing 1,247 horses, he transformed the artistic style entirely through his own aesthetic vision.

"Unlike the powerful and imposing horses common in Tang painting, Li's horses appear restrained, elegant and introspective, qualities that reflected the Song Dynasty's artistic taste," says Ma.

"The enormous scroll balances hundreds of human and animal figures without descending into visual chaos. The composition remains orderly and harmonious despite its scale," he adds.

"The painter seemed completely immersed in the world of horses," Ma says. "Each horse and each person carries a distinct expression and personality. From the painting, it's easy to see why Li deserved the title of one of the greatest artists in Song painting, as he showed the pinnacle of horse painting in ancient China."







From top: Visitors admire Li Gonglin's scroll at the ongoing exhibition *Divine Steeds: The World of Horses in the Palace Museum's Painting and Calligraphy Collections* at the Palace Museum in Beijing. A painting on display shows a man riding a horse by Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) artist Zhao Mengfu. Another painting by Zhao Lin portrays one of Tang emperor Li Shimin's six favored warhorses. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Ma says that although Li was already famous in the Northern Song Dynasty, he was known for his quiet and introverted nature. Historical accounts describe him as spending long periods observing horses in imperial gardens, sometimes becoming so absorbed that he failed to notice people calling his name.

"That intense observation gave his horses extraordinary vitality," Ma says.

The work also reveals the scale of official horse breeding in ancient China. Historical records suggest that during the height of the Tang Dynasty, the government maintained around 700,000 horses. On average, one groom cared for about 10 animals, meaning tens of thousands of people were involved in horse rearing across the dynasty.

The exhibition also examines horses as symbols of military achievement and imperial legitimacy. Among the highlights are six paintings depicting the favorite warhorses of Tang emperor Li Shimin.

Historical records state that six horses helped save Li during the campaigns that unified the Tang Dynasty. To honor them, he commissioned stone carvings of the animals for his mausoleum in present-day Xianyang in Shaanxi province. The paintings displayed in the exhibition were produced centuries later by Jin Dynasty (1115-1234) court painter Zhao Lin and are the only surviving works attributed to him.

"The basic style of the paintings follows the carvings, but the painter introduced his own artistic interpretation by rendering the horses with softer, fuller forms that make them appear more animated and lifelike," says Ma.

"These paintings show the reverence ancient Chinese society held for horses. Because of their heroics on the battlefield, horses were memorialized in stone, celebrated in literature, and immortalized in art," he adds.

The exhibition also explores the spiritual qualities embodied by horses in ancient China and their rich cultural connotations.

For example, in classical Chinese thought, exceptional people were often compared to fine steeds. Just as a great horse requires a knowledgeable judge to recognize its value, talented individuals also depend on wise leaders who can identify and nurture ability.

Several paintings in the exhibition reflect this metaphor directly.

One portrays a neglected horse filled with frustration at never being appreciated. Another depicts a thin, exhausted horse that is nevertheless recognized by an expert as a rare and valuable steed. Also on display is a calligraphy work by Qing emperor Qianlong encouraging one of his officials to become a perceptive judge of talent and help discover capable individuals for the state.

"Over time, the relationship between the fine horse and the discerning judge became deeply embedded in Chinese culture," Ma says. "It evolved into a metaphor that encouraged rulers to remain open-minded and recognize exceptional talent."

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Ancient climate study reframes origins of millet farming

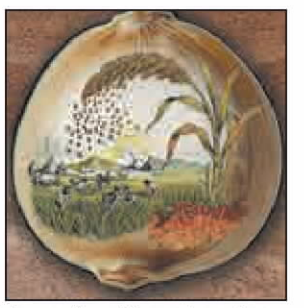
By **WANG QIAN** and **QIN FENG** in Xi'an

A new high-resolution climate study from China's Loess Plateau suggests that soil temperature, not just air temperature or rainfall, played a decisive role in shaping the spread of millet farming during the Neolithic period.

Published earlier this month in the journal Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, the study offers new insight into a long-standing question surrounding early Chinese civilization: why millet agriculture, which emerged about 8,000 years ago, remained limited for nearly two millennia before expanding rapidly around 6,000 years ago.

Researchers from the Institute of Earth Environment of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, in collaboration with Lanzhou University, the Institute of Geology and Geophysics, the British Museum, Washington University, and South Korea's Institute for Basic Science, reconstructed soil temperature fluctuations from 12,300 to 2,800 years ago at Longgugou, a fossil site with a typical loess deposit profile (4 meters deep), near Qingyang in the central Loess Plateau.





Left: Foxtail millet cultivated on the northern Loess Plateau, in present-day northern Shaanxi province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** An illustration shows how soil temperature in Neolithic East Asia helped shape the development of millet-based farming societies. DONG GUANGHUI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Using 18 optically stimulated luminescence dates and 14 bulk organic carbon-14 dates combined with biomarker analysis, the team produced the first high-resolution continuous soil temperature record yet available for East Asia.

According to the study, early Chinese civilization experienced a notable slowdown between its origins around 8,000 years ago and its acceleration about 6,000 years ago. Millet farming followed a similar pattern.

The researchers noted that millet agriculture became an important source of subsistence in the Yanshan-Liaoning region around 8,000 years ago, but it did not expand rapidly until roughly 6,000 years ago, when its center shifted toward the Loess Plateau.

The slowdown puzzled researchers because both temperature and precipitation in northern China were relatively favorable during that period, and the environmental engine behind it remains unclear.

The newly reconstructed record appears to resolve that paradox. Between 8,000 and 7,500 years ago, relatively warm soil conditions created favorable environments for millet cultivation in the Yanshan-Liaoning region, a semiarid area spanning parts of present-day Liaoning and Hebei provinces and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region. In those conditions, communities facing subsistence pressure increasingly adopted millet farming, while populations on the Loess Plateau still relied largely on hunting.

Then came a critical shift. From 7,500 to 6,000 years ago, expanding vegetation cover and soil moisture significantly lowered soil temperatures across the Yanshan-Liaoning region. Simulation models of millet habitat suitability conducted for the study indicate that large areas gradually became unsuitable for millet cultivation during this period. As a result, the center of millet farming shifted southward to the Loess Plateau, where soil temperatures remained warmer and more suitable for agriculture.

Afterward, around 6,000 years ago, a return to relatively warm and stable soil temperatures, coupled with reduced vegetation cover, triggered the rapid expansion and intensification of millet farming across northern China. This agricultural boom, the researchers argue, laid the economic foundation for the flourishing of late Neolithic cultures in the region.

Millet agriculture, dominated by foxtail millet and broomcorn millet, known in Chinese as *su* and *shu*, is widely recognized as the primary economic basis for the emergence and early development of Chinese civilization.

The findings may also contribute to broader research tracing the origins of Chinese civilization. By establishing a direct link between subsurface thermal conditions and agricultural decision-making in prehistory, the study adds a new dimension to paleoenvironmental reconstruction, an area that has traditionally focused more heavily on air temperature and monsoon rainfall.

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LIFE



Above: A stunning night view of the Zhongnanmen historical and cultural tourist area in Tongren city, Guizhou province, with ancient architecture and Jinjiang River. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Below:** The Red Cloud Golden Summit of Fanjing Mountain in Tongren, Guizhou, is crowned by a pair of Buddhist temples perched on two stone pillars connected by an arched stone bridge. QIU YONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Tongren rises as a worthy tourist area for its mountainous heritage preservation, breathtaking landscapes and local matcha products, **Xu Lin** reports.

Fanjing Mountain in Tongren city, Southwest China's Guizhou province, is an ideal place to admire the breathtaking scenery, including the swirling mist of waterfalls and a sea of clouds. The mountain is shrouded in mystical clouds and mist more than 200 days a year. In such weather, hikers often feel as if they are adrift on an endless sea as they trek up its rocky paths to discover this heaven on earth.

As a sacred Buddhist mountain, it preserves several restored ancient temples now open to the public. It is also dotted with ancient villages of ethnic groups such as the Miao and Dong.

Fanjing Mountain received over 44,000 tourist visits during the recent five-day May Day holiday.

"I had to climb on all fours along a narrow, steep mountain trail to reach the summit, but the view made every bit of effort worthwhile," says tourist Wu Ming from Zhengzhou, Henan province.

Such popularity is no accident, as the mountain's global status and ecological uniqueness have long been recognized.

In 2018, Fanjing Mountain was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list.

With 97 percent forest coverage, the mountain is home to a rich biodiversity of flora and fauna, including bears and snakes. Among them is the rare Guizhou snub-nosed monkey, or Guizhou golden monkey, which is protected at the highest level in China. Fanjing Mountain serves as its only habitat in the world.

What attracts visitors most is the mountain's breathtaking beauty, which transforms with every season.

"In spring, it is covered with blooming azaleas, and it serves as an ideal summer destination to escape the heat. In autumn, visitors can enjoy red leaves as well as the spectacular sea of clouds," says Wang Xiaojie, general manager of the Beijing Happy Tour online travel agency.

"During the winter off-season, visitors enjoy a peaceful wonderland of snow-covered peaks and glittering rime. After descending the mountain, they can sample hotpot and soak in Tongren's iconic hot springs," she says.

Thanks to its rich natural and cultural resources, the mountain attracts tourists from home and abroad, making tourism a pillar industry for Tongren city.

Wang notices that visitors have more diverse needs and are seeking in-depth, high-quality experiences on the mountain, including local folk customs and cuisine.

"We take all these needs into account when designing our travel products. Our core products include wellness tour packages for senior travelers and study tours for young people," she says.

Elderly visitors are encouraged to travel at a relaxed pace and enjoy greater comfort and freedom while staying at a single hotel in Tongren city. They can join optional one-day or two-day local in-depth tours and hands-on cultural experiences. Study tours allow young students to observe nature, participate in biodiversity surveys, and explore Fanjing Mountain's local geology.

In addition, to encourage tourists to extend their stays in Tongren, she says the next step is to develop well-connected regional tour packages linking Tongren with neighboring Hunan province and Chongqing municipality.

Matcha products are also a major attraction. Tongren, also known as the "City of Matcha", exported matcha products to over 50 countries and regions, including Japan, the United States, and European countries, in 2025, according to official statistics.

Matcha is made from tender tea leaves that are steamed, refined, and dried. Visitors can sample matcha craft beer, lattes and cookies.

"Both domestic and inbound visitors like to participate in matcha-themed experiences, where they can learn how to make pastries and beverages using local Tongren matcha to fully experience the city's unique food culture and local charm," Wang says.

She says inbound tourists are impressed by the city's magnificent landscapes of cascading peaks and waterfalls, as well as the rich biodiversity and Buddhist culture of Fanjing Mountain. They prefer visiting authentic, unspoiled villages that preserve their original natural charm and intact traditional folkways.

Fanjing Mountain's main inbound tourist countries are Thailand, Singapore, Malaysia, Germany, the United Kingdom, France, and the US, according to Yang Haisha, general manager of Fanjing Mountain Scenic Area Management Co.

"They enjoy hiking in the ecologically preserved mountain, taking photos of the scenery, visiting Buddhist temples, and tasting organic local dishes," he says.

The scenic area provides multilingual tour guides and signage in Chinese, English, Japanese, and Korean, plus foreign currency exchange services to make things more convenient for inbound tourists.

Despite its great fame, Fanjing Mountain has never compromised on conservation. Strict rules ensure that tourism development does not come at the cost of its fragile ecology.

Yang says that tourism development is prohibited in the core zone of Fanjing Mountain's national nature reserve, which is strictly limited to scientific research and conservation.

In tourist areas, visitors must follow designated routes and stay on marked trails. At the foot of the mountain, tourist centers, homestays, commercial facilities, and experience zones are centrally located.

Fanjing Mountain's daily visitors are capped at 9,000 via advance reservations, with real-time visitor counts monitored across all zones. When the number of visitors in any zone exceeds the limit, staff will guide tourists to other areas.

These efforts have laid a solid foundation for sustainable tourism. Looking ahead, Tongren city has set its sights on even higher goals.

In 2026, the city aims to develop ecotourism by focusing on positioning itself as a wellness-oriented extended-stay destination.

It will also fully leverage the 240-hour transit visa exemption policy and steadily enhance the facilitation of inbound tourism services to attract more overnight international visitors.

Besides hiking Fanjing Mountain and then soaking in hot springs, travelers to Tongren can also explore ancient architecture at the Zhongnanmen historical and cultural tourist area and discover the former mercury mine site in the ancient town of Zhusha, which means cinnabar.

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Tea, opera and friendship brew cultural connections in Los Angeles

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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For Ghaffar Pourazar, the legendary Monkey King from the Chinese classic *Journey to the West* is more than a stage character — it is a reflection of his own life journey.

Born with Azerbaijani and Iranian roots and raised in Britain, Pourazar once worked as a computer animator in London. But after watching Peking Opera for the first time in 1993 at the age of 32, he decided to completely change his life.

"I put away my other life. I said goodbye to my friends and my family. I said I want to do this," Pourazar told China Daily during a celebration of International Tea Day hosted by the Chinese Consulate General in Los Angeles on Friday.

"The monkey follows the dream, and so that's why I love this character, but also that is why Chinese people love this character," he said.

For decades, Pourazar has dedicated himself to studying and performing Peking Opera, becoming widely known as the "Western Monkey King". He said Chinese opera combines martial arts philosophy, acrobatics, music and drama in a unique way.

"For hundreds of years, Chinese culture has brought the philosophy of martial arts like tai chi together with opera action," he said. "The actors are not only able to sing and dance, but they're also martial acrobats."

His deep connection with Chinese culture has gradually become part of his identity.

"I am Azerbaijani, Iranian, British, I was raised in England, but I feel more Chinese than others," Pourazar said.

The celebration in Los Angeles brought together officials, artists, experts and local residents to experience Chinese culture through tea ceremonies, traditional performances and cultural demonstrations. Organizers said tea serves as both a cultural symbol and a platform for dialogue and mutual understanding between China and the United States.

Guo Shaochun, Chinese consul general in Los Angeles, highlighted the cultural significance of tea and expressed hope that more Americans could gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture and the Chinese people's pursuit of a better life.



Ghaffar Pourazar, known as the "Western Monkey King", performs an excerpt from the classic Peking Opera production *Uproar in Heaven* during an International Tea Day celebration hosted by the Chinese Consulate General in Los Angeles on Friday. RENA LI /CHINA DAILY

Among the teas served during the event was Pu'er tea from Yunnan province, known for its distinctive aging process in which flavor deepens over time. Guo introduced guests to Yunnan's diverse ethnic cultures and tea traditions.

"The people of China and the United States are both great peoples," Guo said. "Just as the Chinese people love tea and Americans love coffee, we all have our own cultures, lifestyles and feelings."

He added that cultural differences should become a source of mutual appreciation and understanding rather than division.

"It is these differences that make our world rich and colorful, and inspire us to better understand and appreciate one another," he said.

Guo also referred to the recent meeting between Chinese President Xi Jinping and US President Donald Trump during Trump's state visit to China, saying the two sides agreed to promote a "constructive China-US relationship of strategic stability."

Leticia Perez, a member of California's Kern County Board of Supervisors, said she values the role of China in the region's economy.

"I'm a big fan of Chinese culture," Perez said. "I want to reaffirm my own commitment to be part of the ongoing conversation of peace building and mutually beneficial economic cooperation between the United States and China."

Perez praised China's continued calls for peace and cooperation despite global tensions.

The event also featured performances of Peking Opera, Chinese folk songs and traditional instruments including the *pipa* and bamboo flute, alongside demonstrations of Chinese calligraphy and dough figurine art.

Luo Ping, a senior tea master and cultural ambassador for Chinese tea culture, guided guests through a traditional tea ceremony while explaining categories of Chinese tea and their cultural and health significance.

Joshua Goldhaber, vice-dean of graduate research education at Cedars-Sinai Health Sciences University, said he appreciated learning about the cultural meaning of tea and the values of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

"It was a very warm feeling," Goldhaber said. "I look forward to more opportunities to immerse in Chinese culture and educational exchange."

Douglas Smith, a visual effects supervisor who has worked on both Hollywood and Chinese film productions, also expressed optimism about future cultural and creative cooperation between the two countries.

"Communication between countries is always the best thing that can happen," Smith said. "Misunderstandings happen with the lack of communication, so whenever that can happen, it's a very positive thing."

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CULTURE

Pakistani blockbuster hits China

Eighteen years after first experiencing Olympic-era Beijing as a young tourist, Bilal Lashari returns as the filmmaker behind a record-beating movie, **Xu Fan** reports.

During his first trip to Beijing, Bilal Lashari was a 27-year-old Pakistani traveling with his parents. It was the summer of 2008, when the Chinese capital was swept up in the euphoric atmosphere of the 29th Olympic Games.

Late one night, the family wandered onto a broad avenue in search of something to eat. They stumbled into a sea of people gathered beneath giant outdoor screens, cheering wildly as Chinese athletes competed live on television. Lashari remembered the energy as almost cinematic — strangers shouting in unison, waving flags. Caught up in the excitement, he found himself cheering as well.

"It was so emotional to watch so many people feeling proud of their country and celebrating together. And then, within just a few minutes, the street was completely cleared," Lashari recalls in an interview with China Daily, describing the Chinese public as "disciplined".

Now, 18 years later, Lashari has returned to Beijing for his fourth visit to China. This time, he arrived not as a tourist, but as the director of *The Legend of Maula Jatt*, Pakistan's highest-grossing blockbuster of all time.

The film was released across the Chinese mainland on Thursday, a date carrying symbolic significance as it marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Pakistan.

At the Beijing premiere on May 19, Pakistani Ambassador to China Khalil Hashmi said that the movie's release, coinciding with the anniversary, is a testament to the enduring ties and gives Chinese audiences a unique opportunity to experience the richness of Pakistani cinema.

He said that Pakistan boasts a vast film market and advanced cinema facilities, which not only provide a solid foundation for the production of high-quality content but also reflect a growing demand for diverse films. He added that he looks forward to seeing more films enter each other's markets.

A reboot of the 1979 Lollywood classic *Maula Jatt*, the 133-minute epic is set in medieval Punjab. The story follows Maula Jatt, a fierce prizefighter haunted by childhood trauma after a rival clan massacres his family. When he uncovers the truth about his lineage and reclaims his ancestral weapon, he embarks on a quest for revenge against Noori Natt, the clan's most feared warrior, ultimately leading to a deadly final confrontation.

Lashari says the original 1979 film has become deeply embedded in Pakistani popular culture. "The original movie was a huge hit in the 1970s. Since then, many films have been made around the character of Jatt," he adds.

Like Arnold Schwarzenegger's iconic "I'll be back" line in the sci-fi classic *The Terminator*, the characters of Jatt and Natt are well-known in Pakistan, evidenced by their most famous catchphrases repeated by audiences for decades. As a result, some of those lines have been re-created in the new movie with a few twists, adds Lashari.

"What interests me most is the dubbed Mandarin version," he says, explaining that he has been curious about whether the Chinese translation could preserve the power and charm of the original Punjabi dialogue.

The influence of Jatt also gave rise to what became known as "*gandasa* cinema", a hyper-violent Punjabi subgenre built around rural honor codes, bloody vendettas and the *gandasa* — an ax-like agricultural tool that became the defining weapon of many films during the 1980s and 1990s.

However, Pakistani audiences grew weary of the genre, much as American viewers drifted away from traditional Westerns. That decline, Lashari admits, has made rebooting the Jatt film a daunting proposition. Raising the budget for a large-scale reboot meant persuading investors that a genre once dismissed as outdated could still resonate with modern audiences.

"But we had a revival," he says. "It's similar to Chinese kung fu films. They continue evolving and modernizing while still staying connected to tradition and their roots."

As an admirer of action cinema like that of Bruce Lee, Lashari says his favorite Chinese-language film is director Zhang Yimou's 2002 martial arts epic *Hero* — which he first watched while attending college in the United States.

"I remember everyone was talking about the film. Someone played it in our dormitory, and all the students gathered to watch it," he recalls. "It transported us, especially the cinematography. We were used to a certain kind of Hollywood action, but *Hero* felt poetic in a completely different way. It had a huge impact on me."

When asked whether he hopes to collaborate with Chinese filmmakers in the future, Lashari pauses for a moment before answering carefully. "People often talk about coproductions as if they're simply about sharing resources or facilities. But a true coproduction should come from story and culture."

China and Pakistan, he observes, are both ancient civilizations shaped by long histories, trade routes, and layered traditions. Given the opportunity, he says he would like to imagine creating a fantasy epic inspired by the Silk Road — a story in which characters from both countries meet not as symbols, but as fully realized people inhabiting the same cinematic world.

Having already learned Punjabi while making *The Legend of Maula Jatt*, Lashari adds that he would gladly attempt to learn some Chinese for such a project. The real challenge, he believes, lies not in basic conversation, but in understanding the subtleties hidden within language itself.

"Learning basic communication is different from learning the deeper meanings. Each community, each city, each area will have slight differences. Even in China — because it's so big — if you keep moving to different areas, the culture and language start to mean something else. So, it would be interesting to learn those nuances," says the director.

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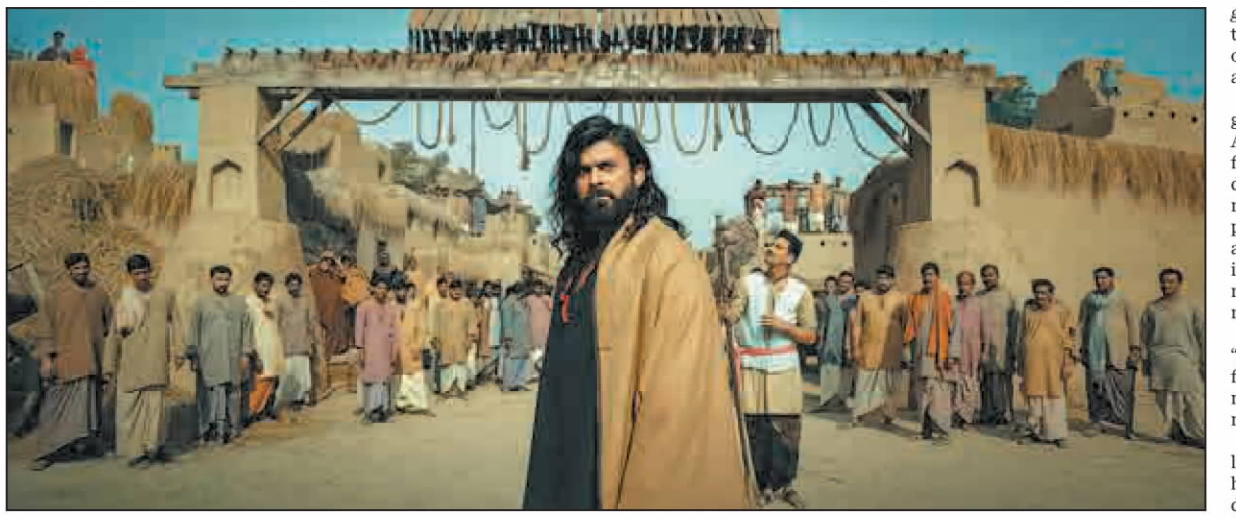



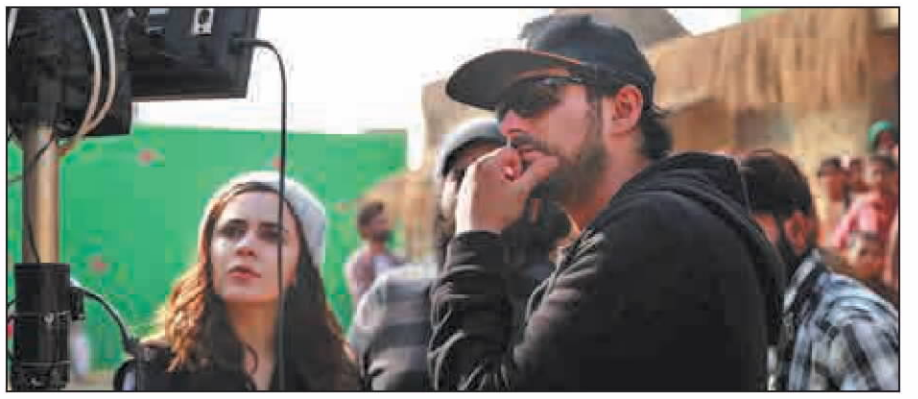

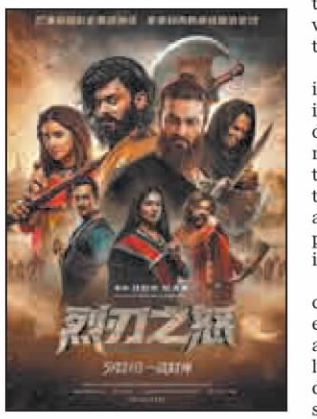

Top: *The Legend of Maula Jatt*, Pakistan's highest-grossing blockbuster of all time, features the titular hero, portrayed by Fawad Khan.
Middle left: Director Bilal Lashari shares behind-the-scenes stories during the blockbuster's China premiere held in Beijing on May 19.
Above: A poster of the film.
Bottom left: Lashari at work on the set of the film.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "People often talk about coproductions as if they're simply about sharing resources or facilities. But a true coproduction should come from story and culture."
> **Bilal Lashari,** Pakistani director

365 days to achieve a dream for Vietnamese singer

By **XING WEN**
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"You have 365 days."

That was the deal Trang Phap's parents made with her after she graduated from the University Lumiere Lyon 2 in France in 2011.

Only one year to prove that music, which they had always called "just a hobby", could be something more.

After that, she would go back to pursuing a master's degree in economics in Brussels, where her parents live, and then follow an established career path.

For years, every time the deadline approached, she would call them and ask for another 365 days, like applying for a visa to stay in her own dream.

But it wasn't until 2023, when the Vietnamese adaptation of the Chinese music reality show *Ride the Wind* — which brings together female celebrities aged over 30 to perform in groups and win votes — called *Chi Dep*, reached out to her, that she finally stopped having to renew that visa.

The first season of *Chi Dep* was a hit in Vietnam. After airing on VTV3, it ranked first in its time slot among variety shows and set a record for the most sponsors — 33 in total — in Vietnamese television variety show history. Phap claimed the winner's title, which earned her a spot in the five-girl pop group Lunas.

"The first season was very impactful. I felt like *Chi Dep* was something completely new in Vietnam," says Phap, adding that the show appeals to viewers of all ages, from grandparents to young children.

That audience includes her own parents, a professor and a diplomat living in Europe. "When they watched the show, they could actually see what I do every day, how I work to make a performance, write songs, and work with the sisters. They could see the friendships in the field.

"The show actually helped me bridge the generational gap between my parents and me by showing how show business works and how the music industry operates," Phap says.

Phap started playing the piano at 6 and tried her hand at writing some melodies on her keyboard at 9. At that time she had to leave Vietnam, where she had grown up, leaving all her childhood friends on a Christmas night.

"Writing songs was something so natural for me, something that always helped me deal with my emotions."

After graduating from university, instead of following her parents' wishes to continue studying economics, she chose to return alone to Ho Chi Minh City, where she broke into the music industry as a soloist.





Above: (From left) Uygur host Vinina Ahmet, Vietnamese singer Trang Phap and Taiwan singer-actress Jessie Chiang perform together in *Ride the Wind 2026*. **Above right:** Vietnamese singer Trang Phap wins the Vietnamese adaptation of *Ride the Wind* in 2023. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

After five years of negotiations with her parents, both sides made concessions. She could stay in the industry, but not as a singer on stage — instead, as a behind-the-scenes songwriter, which in her parents' view offered a safer work environment and a healthier lifestyle.

So from 2017 until 2023, when she received the invitation from *Chi Dep*, she was in the studio writing songs for movies or for other artists.

"I think the invitation was a sign from the universe in some way, because I wanted to go back on stage. I wanted to perform for people, I wanted to sing my songs for the audience, and I said yes right away," she recalls.

"There was never a show where we had 30-plus artists come together, a show that sends a message about strong women, sisterhood, and women collaborating to work toward the same goal. It's actually very inspiring for people."

Recently, she appeared as the only Vietnamese singer on *Ride the Wind 2026*, debuting with a powerful 90-second performance that combined multilingual singing, piano playing and dancing.

Growing up, she listened to Jay Chou's songs and says he is the Chinese artist who has influenced her the most.

She also expresses hope that one day she will have the chance to collaborate, write or sing a Chinese-Vietnamese song, to make even the smallest contribution to the cultural exchange between the two countries.

"I feel like music and art in general have no borders. It's a universal language. If we can use that to connect people, connect families, connect people from different nations — that's a beautiful thing. That's something I will try hard to do."

She started with 365 days. Now, she has a lifetime to pursue her passion.

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SPORTS







GOLF

Liu proves that CLPGA is on the right path

From 8-year-old spectator to Beijing Open champion, teen embodies Tour's vision of long-term talent development

From top: Feng Shanshan, Lin Xiyu and Yin Ruoning all started on the China LPGA Tour, before finding success representing China on professional tours in the US and Europe. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **LI YINGXUE**
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Eight years ago, Liu Yujie sat in the gallery at Beijing Orient Pearl Golf Club as an eight-year-old spectator, watching Shi Yuting hold her nerve in a playoff to win the Beijing Women's Open.

Back then, Liu excitedly posed for photos with older players such as Yin Ruoning and Du Mohan, never imagining she would one day stand among them.

Now 16, the Beijing native has returned to the same course not as a fan, but as a champion.

Liu captured the 2026 Orient Master-Beijing Women's Open by two strokes on Saturday, claiming her second China LPGA Tour title with a composed performance that belied her years.

The daughter of former table tennis world champion and Olympic gold medalist Liu Guoliang said the victory carried a significance far beyond another trophy.

"Winning at Beijing Orient Pearl Golf Club feels very different for me," she said.

"In 2018, I came here as a little girl and a spectator to watch the older players compete. That was also the first time I met Sui Xiang."

"Today, being able to compete alongside those same players, on the same course — and win — is a truly special feeling."

Sui finished runner-up at 10-under par, while Ren Yijia — the youngest six-time winner in China LPGA Tour history — placed third to remain atop the season standings.

Held from May 21 to 23 with a purse of 800,000 yuan ($117,949), the tournament attracted 132 players from 10 countries and regions, including China, Thailand, Malaysia, South Korea, Japan and Canada.

Yet the significance of the week extended beyond the leaderboard.

For Liu, Beijing Orient Pearl Golf Club has also been a place of painful lessons.

Two years ago, at just 14, she entered the final round tied for the lead before a disastrous back nine dropped her into a tie for 10th, while Ren stormed back to win in a playoff.

Returning to what she called "the place where the dream began," Liu appeared transformed this time around — calmer, steadier and far more comfortable with both pressure and expectation.

That resilience has become a hallmark of the new generation developing through the China LPGA Tour, a circuit that has steadily grown into the foundation of Chinese women's golf.

Over the past 18 years, the Beijing Women's Open has never missed a single China LPGA Tour season, making it one of the circuit's most enduring events.

Over nearly two decades, Beijing Orient Pearl Golf Club has continuously upgraded its fairways, bunkers and greens, while the tournament has become part of Beijing's sporting identity.



Liu Yujie, winner of the 2026 Orient Master-Beijing Women's Open, poses with the trophy following her two-stroke victory on Saturday at the Beijing Orient Pearl Golf Club. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A 'home-port' for Chinese players

Fan Yue, executive vice-chairman and secretary-general of the Beijing Golf Association, said the event had helped cultivate long-term golf culture and public awareness in the capital.

"Because the Beijing Women's Open has remained rooted here for so many years, it has created lasting sporting memories for the city," Fan said. "People have come to know golf, approach golf and appreciate golf through the tournament."

Three-time tournament champion Liu Wenbo, competing in the event for the ninth time, said the venue had become closely tied to different stages of her career.

"I started playing here in 2017, and this course holds many precious memories from different periods of my life," she said. "Every time I come back, I feel grounded and comfortable. And the course gets better every year."

In the eyes of Wei Qingfeng, secretary-general of the China Golf Association, the tournament's greatest achievement lies in how it has accompanied the growth of Chinese women's golf itself.

"When the first edition was held, many of today's young players had not even been born," he said. "This is not simply persistence across time. It is continuous support across generations.

"We have witnessed the passing of the torch in Chinese women's golf here. Generation after generation of Chinese players have left unforgettable moments and honors on this course."

Wei added that the association hopes the China LPGA Tour can further strengthen its role as a "mothership" or "home port" for players, nurturing talent before sending them onto the world stage.

That long-term philosophy has been central to the tour's development since its earliest days.

Li Hong, managing director of the China LPGA Tour and head of the women's professional events department at the China Golf Association, recalled that, when the circuit was founded 18 years ago, Chinese women's professional golf had barely 30 players, little funding and almost no understanding of international operational standards.

Great accomplishments

Today, she believes the tour's greatest accomplishment is proving that Chinese women's professional golf can sustain a viable long-term pathway.

"For 18 years, we resisted the temptation to chase quick success," Li said.

"Even in a very impatient environment, we focused on doing just one thing step by step: building a home for Chinese women golfers."

More importantly, it filled the developmental gap between junior and professional golf.



> Seeing players like Feng Shanshan and Yin Ruoning emerge from this system and reach the top of world golf gives us tremendous satisfaction."
>
> **Li Hong,** managing director of the CLPGA Tour

"Seeing players like Feng Shanshan and Yin Ruoning emerge from this system and reach the top of world golf gives us tremendous satisfaction," Li said.

"More than 20 Chinese players have now excelled on the international stage. Recognition from partners such as the LPGA and the Ladies European Tour proves that long-term commitment truly matters."

Li also highlighted the growing international profile of the tour, noting that overseas players now account for 45 percent of registered members, with competitors coming from 12 countries and regions including Thailand, Vietnam, Malaysia, Singapore, Myanmar and the Philippines.

Looking ahead, she acknowledged that the tour hopes to accelerate both international expansion and digital development. Before the pandemic, the 2019 schedule featured 18 tournaments, evenly split between domestic and overseas events.

Although rebuilding that international calendar remains a challenge, Li said it remains a key objective. The tour also plans to deepen cooperation with the LPGA and the Ladies European Tour while strengthening pathways for junior players.

As the sun set over Beijing at the conclusion of the 2026 Orient Master-Beijing Women's Open, Liu Yujie's victory offered perhaps the clearest symbol yet of what the China LPGA Tour has spent nearly two decades trying to build.

The little girl once sitting in the stands, emulating her heroes had returned to become a champion herself, thus carrying Chinese women's golf into the next generation.

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A Yangtze ferry tale
River city Wuhan thrives on rich cultural heritage
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CHINA DAILY
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Leaders' visits offer view of China's future

Zhejiang, among stops, reflects global allure of country's modernization, innovation drive

By MO JINGXI in Beijing and **CHEN YE** in Hangzhou

Humanoid robots performing martial arts, robotic dogs demonstrating their agility and robots dancing to foreign folk music have become some of the more unusual scenes on foreign leaders' trips to China this year.

Behind the eye-catching moments is a broader trend: China's vast market and technological strength are drawing visiting leaders beyond formal talks in Beijing.

The latest is Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao president, who is currently making a five-day state visit to China.

During a trip to DEEP Robotics in Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, shortly after his arrival in China on Tuesday, Thongloun operated a robotic dog and praised it as "very good" and "very flexible".

He also visited the headquarters of Chinese tech company Alibaba Group, where he learned how e-commerce platforms help Lao products reach consumers across the Chinese market.

Thongloun is not alone. Earlier this year, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz also included Zhejiang in their China itineraries.

The province, long seen as an important window on China's reform and opening-up, is also one of the first places where the country's digital economy took root and flourished.

Observers said the visits are more than lighthearted moments or technology showcases on packed diplomatic itineraries. Against the backdrop of global industrial transformation, the trips reflect a conscious choice by countries to embrace China's innovation drive and connect with its strengths in the digital economy, they said.

Zhejiang has become one of the most visible stops in this process because it allows visiting leaders to see, in one place, how digital platforms, artificial intelligence, robotics and advanced manufacturing are being applied in real industries.

Jian Junbo, a researcher with the Institute of International Studies at Fudan University in Shanghai, said the visits reflect foreign leaders' recognition of China's high-tech development, as well as their countries' desire to work with China and benefit from the momentum of its technological progress.

"They hope to carry out deeper and broader cooperation with China in areas such as sci-tech innovation, education and the application of technological achievements," Jian said.

See ***Itineraries,*** *page 3*



People climb the 168-meter "sky ladder", part of a via ferrata in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

ADVENTURERS SCRAMBLE TO EXPERIENCE 'SKY LADDER' IN HUNAN

Completing Qixing Mountain via ferrata has become popular after video goes viral

By LI MUYUN and **HE CHUN** in Changsha

A shaky chest-cam video, a mist-shrouded iron ladder and one trembling question — "Is this the way to heaven?" — have propelled the 168-meter "sky ladder", part of a via ferrata, or a secure climbing route, in Zhangjiajie, Hunan province, into the global spotlight.

Posted on social media platform RedNote in March, the first-person clip captures a climber inching up metal rungs that vanish into clouds. The ladder sways with the movement of people above and below. "I'm almost there," she whispers, sounding both frightened and unbowed.

The video was an instant hit, receiving more than 29,000 comments.

"My legs turned to jelly just from watching it," one viewer wrote. Another one said, "It feels like I'm the one standing on that sky ladder."

The buzz has traveled far beyond China.

By May, YouTube videos about the attraction had racked up more than 50 million views, while Instagram clips topped 100 million.

See ***Ladder,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.



Water begins flowing on Wednesday through the Madao navigation hub of the Pinglu Canal in the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Nation's first river-to-sea canal enters key test phase

By CHEN MEILING in Beijing and **ZHANG LI** in Qinzhou, Guangxi

The Pinglu Canal, a megaproject designed in South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region to handle vessels of the 5,000-metric-ton class, entered the water-testing phase on Wednesday, bringing it a step closer to its official opening in September.

As the first canal built in the country to connect a river system directly to the sea since the founding of the People's Republic of China, the landmark infrastructure project is expected to establish a convenient and cost-effective passage between China and the member states of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

Guangxi is the only region that links China to the ASEAN market by both land and sea. "The canal will enable ASEAN members to connect more efficiently and conveniently with China's inland market," Wei Tao, chairman of Guangxi, told China Daily in an earlier interview.

The 134.2-kilometer-long waterway, which stretches from the Xijin reservoir in the city of Hengzhou to Qinzhou port in the Beibu Gulf, is a key project on the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor that connects China's western regions to global markets.



Source: Pinglu Canal Group CHINA DAILY

On Wednesday morning, the canal's Madao and Qishi navigation hubs were filled with water, which allowed it to achieve full-channel connectivity and launch comprehensive water-fed commissioning.

With more than 96 percent of the project now complete, the waterway is scheduled to open to traffic during the China-ASEAN Expo scheduled for September in Nanning, the capital of Guangxi, according to Pinglu Canal Group.

Local authorities said that upon completion, the canal will reduce the inland shipping distance for export-quality goods from southwestern China by more than 560 km, compared with the previous route through Guangzhou port, and save around 5.2 billion yuan ($768 million) annually in logistics costs.

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Wu Tao, a professor of history at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, said that without convenient access to sea lanes, it was difficult to export goods from western China to global markets through maritime shipping.

By opening a direct river-to-sea link, the Pinglu Canal eliminates developmental bottlenecks and facilitates the gradual shift of western China's economy from an inward-looking inland model to an export-oriented maritime economy, driven by integrated land and sea transportation, he said.

"Despite highly developed road, air and railway transportation systems, inland waterway shipping routes remain irreplaceable. Large cargo capacity and low transportation costs make such routes ideal for bulk outbound shipment of agricultural produce and mineral resources," Wu added.

Ni Yuping, vice-president of the School of Humanities at Tsinghua University in Beijing, said the canal will help to improve China's cross-border logistics systems, and accelerate economic and trade growth in its southwestern hinterland.

"ASEAN member states having economic relations with China can deepen their trade with the country, realizing mutually beneficial outcomes," he said.

The Pinglu Canal inherits the functional quality of ancient waterways to spur endogenous growth of domestic regional economies while drawing on the development concepts behind the Suez Canal and the Panama Canal, which connect global maritime shipping and help expand cross-border trade, Ni added.

According to customs data, from January to April, China's trade with ASEAN economies reached 2.75 trillion yuan, up 15.7 percent year-on-year, accounting for 16.9 percent of the nation's total foreign trade volume. Among ASEAN member states, Vietnam, Malaysia and Indonesia ranked as China's top three trading partners, the data showed.

China has been ASEAN's largest trading partner for 17 consecutive years, while ASEAN has been China's largest trading partner for six years.

Shi Ruipeng in Nanning contributed to this story.

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Building a Laos-China community with a shared future

WORLD WATCH
By Thongloun Sisoulith

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Lao People's Democratic Republic and the People's Republic of China. The two sides have designated 2026 as the "Laos-China Friendship Year" and have jointly organized a wide range of meaningful activities to commemorate this historic occasion.

Over the past six-and-a-half decades, our bilateral relations have withstood the tests of global transformations and uncertainties. Regardless of how the international landscape has evolved, the Laos-China friendship has remained steadfast, resilient, and ever stronger, demonstrating the ideological values, and the remarkably stable and vibrant strategic cooperation that characterize Laos-China relations.

Guided by the spirit of the "Four Goods", namely good neighbors, good friends, good comrades and good partners, our two countries elevated relations to a comprehensive strategic cooperative partnership in 2009. This important milestone laid a solid political foundation conducive to expanding cooperation across all fields. In 2017, our two Parties and States further enhanced cooperation and established the Laos-China Community with a Shared Future, opening a new chapter of deeper solidarity, greater mutual trust and closer strategic coordination.

Today, the Laos-China relationship stands at its highest point in history, serving as a model of equality, mutual respect and mutually beneficial cooperation. High-level political trust and shared ideals have continuously delivered tangible benefits to the peoples of both nations.

In the field of economic cooperation, China has become the largest investor and the second-largest trading partner of the Lao PDR. Key sectors of shared potential include energy, mining, agriculture and infrastructure development. Most notably, the Laos-China Railway stands as a landmark symbol of this successful cooperation and a flagship project of the high-quality Belt and Road Initiative. This project has become a "golden corridor" connecting the two countries and the wider region, transforming the Lao PDR from a landlocked to a land-linked country, bringing transformative changes and new development opportunities to the Lao PDR. China remains an important development partner, providing financial assistance to the Lao PDR. In particular, the Party, government and people of China have extended generous support through the "Eight Major Projects for Laos", announced by President Xi Jinping in 2017, which have made significant contributions to the development of healthcare, human resources and the improvement of living standards for the Lao people.

At the regional and international levels, in the current uncertain global situation, it is increasingly important for developing countries to stand united, uphold multilateralism and build a more just, fair and equitable global order. Laos and China share a common commitment to promoting development and ensuring that the benefits of globalization are more equitably shared. The Lao PDR fully supports the global initiatives proposed by Xi, such as the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative and the Global Governance Initiative.

See ***Ties,*** *page 3*

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INDEPTH

Rewriting rural stories

Editor's note: *To mark the fifth anniversary of China eradicating absolute poverty, China Daily is publishing a series of stories on how the country's poverty alleviation experience has not only helped the country wipeout severe deprivation, but has also taken root and made an impact around the world.*

Sister villages embrace for poverty fight

Chinese model targets local issues, improves livelihoods in remote Laos settlement

By LI LEI and **HE CHUN**
in Shibadong, Hunan



Online
See more by scanning the code.

Children peer through a window of a small library built by China International Water & Electric Corp in Thinsom village, Luang Prabang province, Laos. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

On a laptop screen inside a meeting room in a rural area of Hunan province, the face of Padith flickers to life.

The 54-year-old village chief of Thinsom — a small hamlet nestled in the mountains of Laos' Luang Prabang province — waves from his computer in a local government building, a translator seated beside him. Grinning, he asks in Lao, "Secretary Lu, can you hear me? Very happy to see you!"

On the other end, Lu Chuntao, first Communist Party of China secretary of Shibadong in Huayuan county — China's model anti-poverty village — leans toward the camera.

"Hi, village chief. Spring has come to Shibadong. How is Thinsom?" he replies. Then the two begin exchanging the latest developments in their respective villages.

The exchange, recorded in early April, was part of a regular video call between two villages that became "international sister villages" in 2023.

But what makes this unusual is not the call itself — rather, what it represents: China is now exporting the playbook that has lifted Shibadong, and countless villages like it across the country, out of poverty since 2013.

When the sister village pact was signed in late 2023, Thinsom was a remote settlement of wooden houses reached by dirt roads. There was not a single kindergarten. Farmers coaxed just one rice harvest a year from parched fields.

Today, an 8.6-kilometer-long irrigation canal has been cleared. A bright new preschool stands next to a reading room. And villagers talk of a second annual rice crop.

"The new classroom gives children a safe place to learn — and parents now care more about education. The repaired canal has made farming more productive," Padith told his counterpart during the call. He added that the village plans to explore rural tourism and specialty products, following Shibadong's example.

China's export model

Officially introduced in 2013 at Shibadong, "targeted poverty alleviation" rejects one-size-fits-all aid. Instead, it assesses local problems — commonly scarce land, missing industries, or failing infrastructure — before designing customized solutions, ranging from building new schools to fostering new businesses. The approach lifted 98.99 million rural Chinese out of abject poverty between 2013 and 2020, according to official data. That meant an average of more than 12 million people a year — roughly the population of a medium-sized country.

Lu, assigned earlier this year to oversee Shibadong's industrial development, has become the idea's latest ambassador. In late March, shortly after taking up his post, he traveled to Laos for a weeklong exchange. He visited three Lao cities, including the capital Vientiane, for face-to-face meetings with officials and community leaders — recounting Shibadong's path out of poverty and encouraging them to follow suit.

"We also want to bring them here — to walk through Shibadong and see it with their own eyes," Lu said. "More exchanges, more mutual visits. That's how we share our experience and help them advance their own fight against poverty."

By sharing Shibadong's hard-won lessons in poverty eradication, Lu is following the path blazed by Shi Jintong, the village's Party secretary. Born in Shibadong in 1979, Shi inherited a village with no roads, no industry, and no visible future.

For Shi, the core of Shibadong's success lies in replicable principles. "First, you must accurately measure the extent of poverty and understand its causes," he said.

Every country defines poverty according to its own development context, Shi noted. China's 2013 standard — 2,300 yuan ($340) per year at 2010 rates, adjusted for inflation since — may differ from other nations' benchmarks, but the diagnostic method behind it is transferable.

A second factor, he said, is stimulating "internal motivation" — the poor's own willingness to change. "People need both policies and a sense of support," Shi explained, calling this a model worth borrowing.

Third, solutions must fit local realities. "Shibadong's method seeks truth from facts, adapts to conditions, and offers targeted guidance," he said. Unlike the indiscriminate "flooding" of past relief efforts, the new approach is precise — identifying what a community lacks and helping it get exactly that.

Shi traveled to Thinsom twice. "The first time was to learn — to see their geography, living conditions, industries, and incomes," he said. "Later, we sat down with Lao officials and villagers to discuss development — and that's how our partnership began." He noted that Thinsom's infrastructure, education, industries, and living environment closely resembled those of China's villages before poverty alleviation.

From diagnosis to delivery

Turning principles into practice fell to China International Water & Electric Corp, a subsidiary of the State-owned China Communications Construction Group.

Wang Jiang, CWE's Laos branch general manager, said his team spent weeks in early 2025 doing door-to-door surveys.

"The essence of targeted poverty alleviation is precision — we want to avoid the 'flood irrigation' approach," Wang said via a video call from Vientiane. "We believe that actually going out and surveying what the people wish for today are the prerequisite for making our follow-up work precise and effective."

"Villagers said the canal had silted up, and parents worried who would watch their toddlers while they worked elsewhere," he added. "So we tackled those two things first."

By June 2025 — ahead of the rainy season planting — the 8.6-kilometer canal was dredged and reinforced. Water from the famous Kuang Si waterfall now flows steadily to the paddies. "After we opened up the irrigation system, farming could go from one season to two," Wang said.

In September 2025, a new kindergarten opened, built by CWE with input from Shibadong's team. About 40 children — many left behind by migrant parents — now learn basic Lao and occasionally a Chinese nursery rhyme.

Next to the kindergarten, a small library stocked with picture books was added under an educational program named after the Lancang-Mekong River. Known as the Lancang River in China and the Mekong in Laos, the shared name symbolizes the friendship between the two countries.

"On the opening day, our volunteers sang with the kids. (When you hear) the laughter — that's when you know it's real," Wang said.

Lesson worth learning

Since 1978, China has lifted more than 800 million people out of poverty, according to the World Bank's international standard, accounting for over 70 percent of global poverty reduction in that period and making it the largest anti-poverty campaign in history.

China reached the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal of ending poverty a full decade ahead of the 2030 target. A World Bank report noted that, largely due to China's contribution, the global poverty rate fell from 38 percent in 1990 to 8.5 percent in 2024.

After eradicating extreme poverty at home, China has applied its proven methods to help other countries like Laos fight poverty.

By last year, China had run 15,000 training programs for more than 180 countries and international organizations, the China International Development Cooperation Agency said. The courses covered 17 fields and over 100 specialized areas, with more than 500 sessions focused specifically on governance and poverty reduction. In total, more than half a million people from around the world have been trained.

The Laos village chief Padith has come to understand the philosophy behind these projects.

"China's poverty alleviation model is not just about handing out supplies," he said. "It makes concrete plans based on the village's real situation. This approach builds our own ability to sustain progress — what they call 'hematopoietic ability' — rather than relying on outside help."

He hopes to deepen ties beyond infrastructure. "I hope we can increase mutual visits — for example, exchange and study trips for village cadres," Padith said. "We can also cooperate on agricultural technical training and share experiences in rural tourism development. We welcome Chinese friends to come to Thinsom, to see our progress and changes for themselves, and to explore together a sustainable development path that suits both sides."

Wang's team is now studying small-scale projects for Thinsom, such as homestays for tourists heading to Kuang Si waterfall. "We want Thinsom to develop its own 'hematopoietic ability' — to make its own money," Wang said.

Back in Shibadong, Shi remains confident about the future success of the Chinese model. "I believe that under the correct leadership of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party, and with the joint efforts of the Lao people, combining Shibadong's poverty-alleviation experience with Laos' own realities ... I am confident that Thinsom's future will be just like Shibadong's today."

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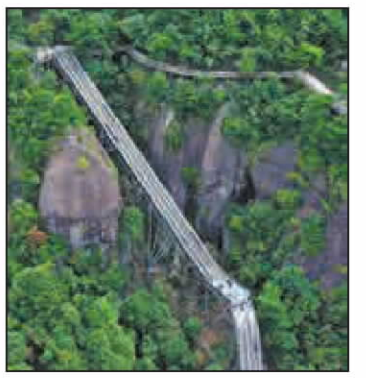
Left: Primary school students sit in their new classroom in Thinsom. **Right:** Children read in the village library.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Tourists take escalators in the mountains of Shibadong village in Hunan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Beekeeper sells sweet success

By LI LEI and **HE CHUN**
in Shibadong, Hunan

Long Xianlan, 39, used to be known as Shibadong village's "three ghosts" — drunkard, beggar and lazybones. Today, with more than 300 beehives and a honey packaging workshop, he is the "Bee Master".

His story is now being told to young Lao farmers who see in him a reason to stop waiting and start working.

"I drank every day because poverty left me without hope," Long said in a recent interview, sitting on the porch of his two-story wooden house in Shibadong, Hunan province.

Orphaned at a young age, he was fed by neighbors and slept where he fell.

In 2014, when a targeted poverty alleviation team arrived in Shibadong, they did not hand him cash. Instead, they took him on a study tour to a neighboring county. "I saw a young man my age with a sheep farm, a new brick house and a beautiful wife. I thought: he did it — why not me?" he recalled.

Long's turnaround started when a friend took him to study under a beekeeper in a neighboring county who earned over 100,000 yuan ($14,790) a year.

"If I could make 70,000 or 80,000 yuan, that would be a huge change," Long said. He became an apprentice, climbing the mountain two or three times daily to learn how to master beehives. But he worried no one would buy his honey.

The village's poverty alleviation team assured Long that tourists would buy whatever he produced. To prove the point, the officials gave Long some honey to sell at a tourist stop in Shibadong. It sold out immediately.

"That's when I gained confidence," he said, adding that he later obtained a bank loan with the villagers' committee acting as a guarantor.

In 2016, Long earned 50,000 yuan from honey production, officially shaking off poverty.

The following year, he found a wife and launched a beekeeping cooperative that now includes 118 households.

In 2019, he bought a new home in the county seat. A year later, his daughter Si'en — whose name signifies gratitude for one's roots — was born.

In 2023, a team from a Laos national television station came to Long's home. They filmed him walking among his hives, selling honey, and chasing his daughter around the yard.

Long, who still wakes before dawn to check his hives, is unfazed by his cross-border fame.

He keeps a photograph of the Lao journalists who filmed him on his wall, next to a picture of his wedding day.

"I want to use my own life's hardships to reach young people in their country — those who are hanging around, doing nothing, just waiting for handouts. I hope to influence them ... not to lose heart, not to give up, to keep working hard, and to create a new life — a life of value — while they are still young," he said.



Long Xianlan and his wife collect honey in Shibadong village, Hunan province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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TOP NEWS

Ties: Laos supports efforts to coordinate development strategies

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Within the framework of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Laos and China have closely supported each other through the implementation of the Plan of Action to Implement the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2026-30), covering the three pillars of the ASEAN Community and ASEAN Connectivity.

The Lao PDR highly values the fifth anniversary of the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership (2021-26), which will be jointly commemorated, and expresses its deep appreciation to the People's Republic of China for its steadfast support during Laos' three ASEAN chairmanships.

In addition, in 2027, the Lao PDR stands ready to assume the role of the ASEAN-China Coordinating Country for the period 2027-30 to further advance the ASEAN-China Comprehensive Strategic Partnership and continuously deepen Laos-China bilateral relations.

Within the Mekong-Lancang Cooperation Framework, Laos and China, together with other countries in the river basin, have jointly created a new era in transforming the Lancang-Mekong River into a river of peace, friendship and sustainable development, becoming an efficient and effective cooperation mechanism capable of translating shared visions into tangible and lasting results for the peoples of the region.

The Lao PDR reaffirms its unwavering commitment to closely cooperate with the People's Republic of China, in supporting efforts to coordinate comprehensive joint development strategies, advance mutual development, deepen reform and broaden international cooperation, and jointly pursue the path of socialist development in accordance with their respective national conditions.

We will further strengthen the traditional friendship, the stable and long-term comprehensive strategic partnership guided by the "Four Goods" spirit, and advance the building of a Laos-China community with a shared future toward higher standards, higher quality and higher levels, to truly bring greater civilization and prosperity to the people of our two nations.

The author is general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and president of the Lao PDR. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Airport reopens



A health worker disinfects passengers on Tuesday before they board a World Food Programme aircraft in Bunia, Democratic Republic of the Congo. The airport has been reopened after the number of suspected Ebola cases in the region declined. Last month, the government in Kinshasa suspended passenger flights to Bunia, the main airport in Ituri province, where the first Ebola cases were confirmed. MOSES SAWASAWA / AP

Itineraries: Visits help put aside stereotypes

From page 1

"The main purpose, and also their expectation, is to help drive the growth and development of their own domestic economies," Jian added.

Li Xiaopeng, a professor at Hangzhou City University, said: "Effective home-ground diplomacy is not just about meetings, group photos and signing ceremonies. It also requires letting guests see things for themselves — to see a country's development, its capabilities and where its future is heading."

Taking Hangzhou as an example, Li said the city has become a highly concentrated example of Chinese modernization. In 2025, Hangzhou's GDP exceeded 2.3 trillion yuan ($340 billion), while the added value of its core digital economy industries reached 678 billion yuan, official data shows.

Behind the figures is an ecosystem that includes platform companies, robotics enterprises, AI startups and advanced manufacturers, forming a broader industrial chain that allows visiting leaders to see more than individual companies, Li said.

Zhejiang is not the only place where such out-of-capital trips have taken place.

Foreign leaders visiting China have also traveled to places such as Shanghai, an international financial center; Xiong'an New Area in Hebei province; and Fujian, Shaanxi and Sichuan provinces — places that showcase Chinese modernization, coordinated regional development, poverty reduction and connectivity.

Jian, the researcher, said that in-person visits by foreign leaders play an irreplaceable role in helping them better understand the reasons behind China's economic success and its future development trends.

"Such visits help them see China more objectively, dispel the interference of certain Western narratives, and put aside prejudice and stereotypes about China," he said.

While the Lao top leader was visiting Zhejiang, Yvette Cooper, the United Kingdom's foreign secretary, traveled to Shenzhen, the technology hub in South China's Guangdong province, on Wednesday for a trip focused on science and technology, after meetings in the Chinese capital.

If Beijing is where diplomacy is conducted, Shenzhen is where China's industrial innovation takes shape on the ground, experts said.

"Shenzhen now stands in the global spotlight, as it will host an important international meeting this year," said Cui Hongjian, a professor at Beijing Foreign Studies University's Academy of Regional and Global Governance.

The city is set to host the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation Economic Leaders' Meeting in November.

Cui said that Cooper's visit to the city and to technology companies shows that Britain's diplomacy toward China has a clear and targeted agenda — to make economic diplomacy a main thread of its China policy.

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Ladder: Dual-cable system guarantees safety

From page 1

Dubbed "China's highest via ferrata", the ladder is attached to Qixing Mountain, a karst tableland around 13 kilometers from downtown Zhangjiajie.

With an average height of 1,328 meters above sea level, the mountain's dramatic landscape of sheer cliffs, deep gorges, seas of clouds and waterfalls has now been transformed into a thrilling outdoor adventure playground, complete with metal cables, ladders and steps that safely guide visitors up the vertical terrain.

According to Tian Jianbing, general manager of the Zhangjiajie Qixing Mountain Scenic Area, the via ferrata, or "iron path", has welcomed nearly 150,000 visitors since its opening in November 2024, including more than 27,000 foreign guests from 42 countries and regions.

In July, the attraction was featured on French television channel TF1's flagship evening news.

For Oleksii Lisianskyi, a Ukrainian outdoor enthusiast, via ferratas are nothing new, but after tackling Qixing Mountain on a sunny Saturday morning in April, the 35-year-old was left buzzing with an excitement like never before.

"This one in Zhangjiajie is definitely the biggest and most challenging I've ever experienced," Lisianskyi said. "Higher, longer, more obstacles — it really pushes you."

Setting out around 8 am, helmet and harness on, he looked up at the rock face melting into the mist. "OK … this is real," he recalled thinking. On the wall, strangers quickly became teammates. "You help each other, share stories, take photos together. It becomes more than just a challenge."

Climbers from around the world made it feel, in his words, "very international". Unlike the intimidating videos, the real journey was a mix of pure fun and adrenaline, with plenty of picture-perfect moments.

Safety is paramount. The climbing route features a dual-cable system comprising a 12-millimeter main lifeline and a second cable linking every handhold. Climbers are secured with two locking carabiners that can be opened with a special tool. As the designers put it, "You can't fall, even if you want to".

Lisianskyi and his companions finished before noon. At the top, a small ritual awaited: ringing a bell three times to mark their achievement. "After that, everyone shares their experience — the hardest part, the most exciting moment," he said.

Finishers will receive a certificate in Chinese and English, a trophy and — unexpectedly — drone footage capturing their ascent.

"Totally worth it," Lisianskyi said with a grin. And if an even bigger challenge comes? "I'll definitely go again."

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Solar firms eye space-based energy frontier

Shift will gradually eliminate the need for land grids and enable instant power supply

By ZHENG XIN
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In order to build on their leadership in the global arena and unlock next-generation growth channels, China's leading photovoltaic firms are eyeing space-based solar energy production as the industry's next technological frontier.

By expanding into this field, they hope to diversify their business, break conventional market constraints and create high-end applications for China's substantial solar production capacity.

At the opening ceremony of the 19th International Photovoltaic Power Generation and Smart Energy Conference and Exhibition in Shanghai on Tuesday, a consortium of 13 tier-one solar and technology enterprises officially launched the Space Energy Development Alliance.

The alliance aims to integrate resources across the entire supply chain, including solar power, energy storage, hydrogen power, computing and charging, in order to bridge the boundaries between aerospace and green energy.

Company executives and industry analysts regard this as a pivotal and strategic move for Chinese solar power manufacturers seeking to escape intense domestic competition and tap into massive incremental markets.

Zhu Gongshan, chairman of GCL Group, said, "If the first half of the photovoltaic industry's paradigm revolution is the symbiosis of watts and bits, the second half is the dance between materials and aerospace."

He described the shift as "an epic expansion of energy scenario boundaries", extending from the land and oceans to extraterrestrial orbits.

"Simultaneously arriving with the photovoltaic paradigm revolution is a cross-sectoral composite technology cluster covering power electronics, digital technology, advanced materials, aerospace engineering, communication technology, wireless power transmission and synthetic biology, far exceeding the industry's traditional technological road map," he said.

According to Zhu, gathering solar energy in the near-ideal cosmic environment enables systems to escape the effects of atmospheric filtering and the day-night cycle of the Earth, resulting in a highly efficient and constant form of closer-range photosynthesis.

"Reusable rockets continuously lower launch costs, and giant commercial constellations create large-scale demand, pushing space-based photovoltaics into the realm of engineering economics," Zhu said.

> "If the first half of the photovoltaic industry's paradigm revolution is the symbiosis of watts and bits, the second half is the dance between materials and aerospace."
>
> **Zhu Gongshan,** chairman of GCL Group

He projected that once radiation-resistant packaging passes rigorous testing, related technologies could be used for active space applications within five to 10 years.

The long-term outlook for the industry is that space-to-Earth wireless power delivery will replace conventional generation-transmission-consumption chains, eliminating the need for lengthy land grids and enabling instant power supply to remote outposts, islands and emergency sites.

Zhu noted that space will maximize the synergy between on-site energy production and real-time computing.

Prominent energy experts praised the alliance as a visionary step toward long-term industrial evolution, while also taking a pragmatic view of current market dynamics.

Lin Boqiang, head of Xiamen University's China Institute for Studies in Energy Policy, said that setting up such an alliance is a highly commendable initiative.

"While commercial operations remain on the distant horizon, pioneering this path is vital. Space-based solar power will likely be significantly more expensive than terrestrial alternatives for at least the next decade, meaning ground-based solar installations will remain our primary reliance for a long time to come," Lin said.

"However, the domestic ground-based market still holds significant growth potential, and initiating early layouts in space-based technology is a farsighted strategy worth advocating."

Tan Youru, a solar analyst at BloombergNEF, echoed this sentiment, adding that these corporate initiatives represent vital forward-looking technical developments and highly anticipated frontier applications.

While the long-term vision of space-based photovoltaics remains an exciting prospect for future technological leadership, he added that the industry must stay focused on resolving its immediate challenges, such as the issue of overcapacity.

Electric three-wheelers gaining traction overseas

By ZHONG NAN
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At a workshop owned by Jiangsu Zhufeng Electromechanical Technology Co in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, a buyer evaluated an electric three-wheeler model destined for Indonesia, discussing modifications with engineers, who took detailed notes on the customer's requirements.

As concerns over fuel costs and energy security grow globally, China's electric three-wheelers, widely used to transport people and goods, have seen a surge in demand in overseas markets in recent months.

Jiangsu Zhufeng Electromechanical Technology Co produced nearly 30,000 units in 2025, with exports mainly destined for the United States, Turkiye, Cambodia and Indonesia. With its products having entered Brunei, Vietnam and Laos this year, the company expects its annual production to surpass 50,000 units.

From January to April this year, exports of electric three-wheelers from Xuzhou reached 168 million yuan ($24.8 million), up 87.1 percent year-on-year, while exports of related parts and components totaled 115 million yuan, an increase of 29.6 percent from a year earlier, according to data from Xuzhou Customs.

Dai Hui, deputy head of Xuzhou Customs, said that three-wheelers made in Xuzhou have reached more than 130 countries and regions.

"In addition to emerging markets, the next frontier is North America, Western Europe and Northern Europe, where exporters are stepping up efforts to expand their presence," said Dai.

Ni Xiaofeng, president of Jiangsu Guowei Motorcycle Co, another three-wheeler manufacturer based in Wuxi, Jiangsu, said the growing appeal of low-cost, energy-efficient transportation solutions, coupled with stricter environmental regulations and efforts to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, have further boosted demand for Chinese three-wheelers in overseas markets.

"A standard electric three-wheeler and similar models typically sell for $3,000 to $6,000 in European and North American markets," he said.

Li Chengyun, head of the technical unit of Xuzhou Zhibo Locomotive Co in Xuzhou, said most electric three-wheelers on the market offer a driving range of 80 to 100 kilometers with standard lithium batteries. For an additional cost, customers can choose larger battery packs, which increase the range to as much as 180 to 220 kilometers.

"More overseas customers are demanding higher power output, prompting us to equip vehicles with larger motors," Li said. "Buyers are also requesting larger and wider tires and wheel rims, leading the company to adopt aluminum alloy wheels to better meet customers' specifications."

Zhang Hui, president of Xuzhou Zhibo Locomotive Co, said that in the long run, concerns over fuel supply disruptions and the search for affordable transportation alternatives will continue to drive the global adoption of electric three-wheelers.

Beyond traditional cargo and passenger-carrying three-wheelers, manufacturers are increasingly branching into specialty and recreational vehicles to diversify their product offerings.

He Shan, sales director at Jiangsu Shanming Shuixiu Environmental Protection Technology Co in Xuzhou, said the company's business originally focused on manufacturing cargo three-wheelers, but shifted toward developing and exporting specialty vehicles such as road sweepers after spotting growing demand in niche markets.

"We are now rolling out upgraded models that can sweep streets, wash surfaces, spray water mist and suppress dust. A single sweeper can do the work of more than a dozen people," said He.



Workers load electric three-wheelers for shipment at the parking lot of a manufacturing unit in Xuzhou, Jiangsu province, on Oct 16, 2025. MAO JUN / XINHUA

Household-use three-wheelers, passenger shuttles and leisure vehicles designed for tourist attractions and golf courses have become key growth segments for many traditional electric three-wheeler manufacturers, said Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee of the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

Chen said the growing popularity of electric three-wheelers reflects a broader shift toward affordable, energy-efficient mobility solutions, creating new opportunities for Chinese manufacturers in global markets.

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WORLD

Deadly blaze



Local people rescue a foreign national from a hotel fire in New Delhi, India, on Wednesday. The fire broke out in a building in the Malviya Nagar neighborhood in the southern part of the city. At least 21 people have been killed, police said. MANISH SWARUP / AP

PATH TO PROGRESS

Croatia eyes green partnership

Zagreb ready to expand synergy with Beijing in sustainable growth, envoy says

By **SHAO XINYING** and **LIU TIANYUN**

Croatia sees growing opportunities for deepening cooperation with Beijing in green development as China enters a new stage of growth, the Croatian envoy said.

Croatian Ambassador to China Dario Mihelin highlighted sustainability as an increasingly important pillar of bilateral ties, saying the two countries are well-positioned to expand synergy in areas ranging from ecological conservation to clean energy.

"I've been here (in China) for several years, since the 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-20). This is my third five-year plan to follow," Mihelin told China Daily. "Certainly, in the niche (areas) of sustainable development and ecological transition, I sense a strong potential for cooperation between Croatia and China."

As for sustainable development, "it's something that immediately brings us to reflect on the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), with a strong focus on making this country more beautiful and healthier", the ambassador said, adding that the emphasis on green development offers new opportunities.

Mihelin said the two countries have already translated partnerships into tangible results, including major infrastructure projects that have incorporated sustainability considerations.

He pointed to the landmark Peljesac Bridge, set to celebrate the fourth anniversary of its opening in July. Since its inception, the project has prioritized marine conservation through eco-friendly engineering and construction.

"This bridge is a true symbol of our cooperation and partnership," he said of the 2.4-kilometer-long bridge.

Built by a Chinese consortium led by the China Road and Bridge Corporation and mainly funded by the European Union, the bridge connects the Croatian mainland with the Peljesac Peninsula, slashing the transit time from up to three hours to just minutes.

"It's a unique example of cooperation between an EU member state ... in this case, Croatia, the European Union and China," he said.

"Chinese companies participated in the public procurement and bidding process and won that bid, and then executed the project in line with all the EU regulations and standards."

While the bridge is often associated with the Belt and Road Initiative, Mihelin stressed it represents something broader: a successful model of practical joint efforts between China and Europe. He said that future opportunities increasingly lie in low-carbon development.



Dario Mihelin

"The color of cooperation between China and the European Union is green," said Mihelin, adding that the description also applies to relations between Croatia and China, as evidenced by the Senj Wind Farm, built by China's Norinco International and one of the largest Chinese investments in Croatia.

"The cooperation and investment in the field of renewables certainly point to the fact that our cooperation is green," he said. "It's further strengthened by the cooperation that exists between our national parks."

The Plitvice Lakes National Park in Croatia and Jiuzhaigou National Park in China's Sichuan province, "really look like twins" and "have fantastic cooperation in the preservation of the special geological features", Mihelin said of the two tourist hot spots.

People exchanges

People-to-people exchanges also remain an important part of bilateral relations. Before the pandemic, nearly half a million Chinese tourists visited Croatia annually, Mihelin said, adding that tourism numbers are steadily recovering.

Infrastructure links created through projects such as the Peljesac Bridge have also helped improve access to surrounding areas such as Korcula, frequently visited by Chinese tourists interested in legendary explorer Marco Polo, and Dubrovnik, known for the filming location of the television series *Game of Thrones*.

This momentum is further propelled by China's decision to extend the unilateral visa-free policy for Croatian citizens until the end of this year.

The positive trajectory in people-to-people exchanges was on full display in Beijing last week. To mark Croatia's Armed Forces Day and Statehood Day, a cultural evening was held in the Chinese capital, where traditional music from the Hrvatsko Zagorje region, north of the capital Zagreb, took center stage. This celebration also comes as the two nations commemorate the diplomatic ties established 34 years ago.

Mihelin also expressed hope that direct flights between China and Croatia could be launched in the future.

"Certainly, a direct flight connection between China and Croatia would bring more people-to-people contacts, more Chinese friends to Croatia and more Croatians visiting China," he said.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

FM's visit signals pragmatic relations

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto
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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi's visit to Canada signals an effort by both sides to strengthen ties as Ottawa seeks to diversify trade and navigate growing uncertainty in its economic relationship with the United States, experts say.

Wang met with his counterpart Anita Anand and Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney during his three-day visit last week, the first by a Chinese foreign minister to Canada in a decade.

For Jiang Wenran, founding director of the China Institute at the University of Alberta and president of the Canada-China Energy and Environment Forum, the visit signals a shift in the broader trajectory of the relationship.

"This visit ... signals a deliberate shift from confrontation to pragmatic engagement," Jiang said. "Meeting both Anand and Carney underscores high-level commitment to turning the recent thaw into durable institutions."

He described the visit as a test of the "new strategic partnership" announced earlier this year, with both China and Canada seeking progress on long-standing trade and policy issues.

Economic cooperation remains central to that effort.

During Wang's meeting with Anand, the Canadian government reiterated its goal of continuing to increase exports to China.

Jeff Mahon, former deputy director of the China division at Global Affairs Canada — a government department responsible for foreign affairs and international trade — said stronger economic ties are supported by the complementary nature of the two economies.

"Canada and China have complementary opportunities to increase trade in a range of goods and services," Mahon said.

"Given the size of Canada's economy, its current exports are relatively low. Therefore, it is a realistic objective for Canada to increase its exports (to China) by 50 percent by 2030," he said.

Jiang said the goal is driven by complementary strengths — agricultural exports, energy and clean-tech cooperation.

Both experts linked the interest in economic cooperation to Canada's broader effort to diversify trade relationships.

"Increasing exports to China will play a critical role in Canada's diversification agenda given China's large market size and ongoing transformation to a consumption-driven economy," Mahon said.

Jiang said Canada's need to diversify has become more urgent as uncertainty surrounding the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement review approaches.

"With 75 percent of Canadian exports flowing to the US and the USMCA renegotiation looming, Canada faces acute pressure to diversify," he said.

"This uncertainty makes deeper economic engagement with China and other markets not just desirable but essential for sovereignty," he added.

Canada sent a letter to the US and Mexico on Tuesday outlining its recommendations to renew the trilateral trade deal for 16 years, while seeking parallel talks on sectoral tariffs ahead of the meeting between Canadian and US trade negotiators later in the day, Reuters reported.

The upcoming USMCA review may also prove to be the most significant challenge facing future China-Canada cooperation, Mahon said, adding that Canada will likely face pressure from Washington to align policies in certain sectors if it wishes to maintain preferential access to the US market.

"This political pressure demonstrates that we are entering a new era where politics will play a larger role in international commercial relations," he said.

Balancing act

Both Mahon and Jiang said the future of China-Canada relations will depend on Ottawa's ability to balance deeper engagement with Beijing while maintaining close ties with Washington.

Mahon emphasized the importance of pragmatism and trust-building.

"For Canada-China relations to continue on a positive trajectory, the two sides will need to deepen and expand political trust," he said.

Despite the challenges, both experts expressed cautious optimism that bilateral ties can continue to improve.

"If Ottawa can keep promises amid external pressure, the relationship can evolve into a stable, interest-driven partnership," Jiang said.



Canadian Prime Minister Mark Carney (right) meets with Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi in Ottawa on Friday. LI HAITAO / XINHUA

New Danish government to stand firm over Greenland

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
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Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has put the future of Greenland at the top of her political agenda after ending months of uncertainty by securing a center-left coalition to govern the country.

Her Social Democratic Party won 21.9 percent of the vote and 38 parliamentary seats in the March election, leaving it with the most votes but well short of the 90 seats needed for a majority.

After two months of negotiations, she has reached a deal with the Socialist People's Party, the center-left Radikale Venstre and the centrist Moderates, which will allow her to have a third term in office, and addressing the United States' designs on the Danish overseas territory will be one of her priorities.

US President Donald Trump first expressed a territorial interest in Greenland during his first term of office, and in December 2024, after his reelection, he said "the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity".

He suggested that he might want to buy the world's largest island, which is strategically important and believed to have vast mineral deposits. He repeated his interest at the start of the year, saying the US would take over the island "one way or the other".

The issue was a dominant theme in the election campaign, with the threat credited with a pre-polling surge in support for the Social Democrats after they put on a poor performance in local elections at the end of last year, and helping keep Frederiksen in office.

Carolin Hjort Rapp, a political scientist from the University of Copenhagen, told media that the Greenland crisis had played a role in keeping Frederiksen, and also Moderates leader Lars Lokke Rasmussen, in position when voters may otherwise have had reservations about their performance.

"They kind of survived, but at the same time, the voters were not satisfied with what the government had been doing before, so they wanted to move to other parties," she said. "You see smaller parties (of the left and far right) that gained way more votes than before."

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Voice cloning scams on the rise in US

WASHINGTON — Liz Benz still believes the distressed caller's voice was her son's — the tone, enunciation and cadence all matched her 16-year-old.

But it was an AI clone, making the mother yet another victim of a growing wave of impersonation scams in the United States.

Rapidly evolving artificial intelligence technology has demolished the boundaries between reality and fiction, handing cybercriminals strikingly convincing voice cloning tools to steal from people by mimicking loved ones.

Benz, who's located in Buffalo, a city in New York, was jolted from her couch by a call from an unknown number. On the line was someone sounding like her son Fred, crying for help.

She was told Fred's friend had been shot and killed, and her son — who was out at a local football game — was being held hostage.

The 46-year-old insurance broker and mother of six was instructed to deliver cash to a nearby Walmart to pay off the man holding him.

Eventually, a selfie from Fred smiling at the game returned her to reality: the call, she realized, was an elaborate scam.

"Nothing could have convinced me that this was a scam until I saw my son with my own eyes," Benz said, her voice trembling. "It was a good 20 minutes of terror."

US authorities and consumer advocates are increasingly warning of scams built around impersonating family members.

The FBI said US people over the age of 60 lost more than $7.7 billion to scams last year, a significant jump over 2024.

In April, US people lost over $893 million last year to AI-enabled hoaxes, including voice cloning scams, the FBI said.

Simple internet searches can surface a wide array of voice cloning apps, many available for free, that create realistic AI replicas using small samples — sometimes only seconds — of a person's real voice.

"It used to be somewhat hard to make these things. Now anyone can do it in seconds," said Brian Long, chief executive of Adaptive Security, a company offering training on AI fraud protection.

Since taking her story public, Benz said she has received a flood of messages from other victims, many of whom opt to stay anonymous because of the shame attached.

Elderly people are particularly vulnerable, with experts warning of rising cases of "grandparent scams".

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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WORLD

Showcasing culture



Handicrafts and cultural products are on display at a booth of the Chinese Permanent Mission to the United Nations at a charity sale held at the United Nations Headquarters in New York on Tuesday. WANG FAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Fresh strikes stoke Gulf jitters

Renewed US-Iran hostilities raise doubts over ceasefire as Mideast tensions spiral

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

Renewed military strikes involving Iran and the United States rattled the Gulf region on Wednesday. At least one death was reported in Kuwait from the attacks, while Bahrain intercepted missiles and drones allegedly targeting civilian sites.

Kuwait's Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement on X that it condemned the Iranian attacks using ballistic missiles and drones, which, it said, occurred at dawn on Wednesday, "targeting once again civilian and vital facilities, including Kuwait International Airport, resulting in the death of one individual, injuries to others, and damage to vital facilities, including diplomatic missions".

"The ministry affirms the State of Kuwait's categorical rejection of Iran's overt aggressive attacks, which lead to increased escalation, heightened tension, and undermine the security and stability of the region, constituting a flagrant violation of the rules of international law, the United Nations Charter, and Security Council Resolution 2817 of 2026," it said.

The foreign ministry stressed that "Kuwait's sovereignty, and the safety of its citizens and residents on its territory are a red line that cannot be crossed".

"The ministry affirms that the State of Kuwait reserves its full and inherent right to take appropriate measures in response to these sinful and repeated Iranian aggressions, in accordance with international law," it said.

Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation said on Wednesday that flights were suspended until further notice and that it had activated its emergency plan at Kuwait International Airport. It said Terminal 1 was subjected to targeting by drones and missiles from the "Iranian aggression", resulting in significant damage to several airport facilities, as well as injuries.

The agency's spokesman Abdullah Al-Rajhi said the authorities handled the incident in accordance with approved procedures, and were committed to ensuring the safety of workers and passengers, and securing the airport's facilities.

In Bahrain, the General Command of the Bahrain Defence Force said Iran continued its systematic hostile approach through its attacks with missiles and drones that targeted civilian properties in Bahrain. The command said its air defense systems had destroyed three missiles and a number of drones. It said the deliberate use of missiles and drones to target civilian sites and private property constituted a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law, Bahrain News Agency reported.

Retaliatory move

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said in the early hours of Wednesday that it carried out retaliatory missile and drone attacks against the headquarters of the US Fifth Fleet and other US military targets in response to repeated acts of aggression by the US, Tasnim News Agency reported.

In a statement released on Wednesday, the IRGC Public Relations Office said that late on Tuesday, the US military struck an Iranian oil tanker near the Strait of Hormuz with an aerial projectile, causing damage to the vessel in the engine room area.

Further, the IRGC said that "in a renewed act of aggression, the American enemy targeted an IRGC communications tower in the south of Qeshm Island with aerial projectiles".

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned the alleged targeting of an Iranian oil tanker in the strait and the attack on a telecommunications tower on Qeshm Island.

The ministry noted the attacks were launched in the early hours of Wednesday from the territories of two regional countries.

The US Central Command denied the allegations and said all attacks on its forces had failed and that they remained ready to defend themselves against unwarranted Iranian aggression.

"An additional wave of Iranian drones attempting to attack US forces in Kuwait failed to impact intended targets tonight. US Central Command air defenses successfully downed multiple drones and ensured no American personnel or assets were harmed," it added.

In Washington, US President Donald Trump said Iran has agreed not to have a nuclear weapon and that he would probably meet with Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei at some point if things "work out".

"They've already agreed they're not going to have a nuclear weapon," Trump told *Pod Force One* in an interview broadcast on Wednesday, while speaking about Iran.

Asked about Khamenei's involvement in talks with the US on ending hostilities, Trump said, "He's involved, absolutely. ... I think they have a lot of respect for him."

Agencies contributed to this story.

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Israel, Hezbollah trade blows as envoys meet in Washington

BEIRUT — Israel and Hezbollah exchanged fire on Tuesday while Lebanese and Israeli envoys met in Washington for direct talks.

The meeting lasted all day on Tuesday, a CNN report said, citing an Israeli official.

US Deputy National Security Adviser Mike Needham and State Department Counselor Dan Holler reportedly led the talks on the US side on Tuesday.

"We are trying to view the Lebanon-Israeli talks as separate and distinct from Iran, and what Iran wants to do is mix it all together," US Secretary of State Marco Rubio told a Senate hearing earlier on Tuesday.

Rubio also accused Iran of "trying to stymie any effort in which Israel and Lebanon can work together" and prolonging their negotiations.

He added, "Israel has no territorial claims in Lebanon. Hezbollah is the impediment."

State Department spokesman Tommy Pigott said on X that "progress continues on the political and security tracks" after the first day of talks ended. Another round was scheduled for Wednesday.

Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam called the talks, which are strongly opposed by Hezbollah, "the least costly choice for Lebanon".



People swim at a public beach as smoke rises in the background after an Israeli airstrike that hit a village, as seen from the southern port city of Tyre, Lebanon, on Tuesday. MOHAMMED ZAATARI / AP

Meanwhile, Lebanon's state-run National News Agency reported Israeli strikes, some of them deadly, on around 30 locations across the south on Tuesday.

The fighting came after US President Donald Trump declared on Monday that he had brokered a partial ceasefire deal, which the Lebanese embassy in Washington said would at first only cover Israeli attacks on Beirut and Hezbollah attacks on Israeli territory, before expanding in scope.

Israel has been fighting Hezbollah since the group dragged Lebanon into the wider Middle East conflict on March 2.

A senior Hezbollah official said on Tuesday that the group will not accept any partial ceasefire with Israel, rejecting the reported US-backed proposal demanding that Hezbollah halt attacks against northern Israel in exchange for Israel sparing Beirut's southern suburbs.

Hezbollah, meanwhile, said it had attacked Israeli troops in southern Lebanese lands they occupy, but had not claimed attacks in Israel.

The Israeli military said it intercepted two projectiles from Lebanon, without reporting any injuries.

On Wednesday and ahead of a second day of talks in Washington, Lebanese state media reported an Israeli strike near Beirut. The state-run National News Agency reported the targeting of a car on the Khaldeh-Naameh road, referring to an area at the southern entrance to the capital.

Meanwhile, a medical source in south Lebanon's Tyre told AFP that Israeli strikes near the coastal city on Wednesday killed six people, as Israel keeps up attacks on the country's south.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has written to UN Security Council members, stressing the need for a continued uniformed UN presence in Lebanon after the mandate of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon, or UNIFIL, expires at year's end.

Guterres outlined three options to replace the 7,500-strong UNIFIL in a letter to the 15 members of the Security Council dated on Monday and seen by Reuters.

They ranged from a light presence with limited capabilities to a more robust force with broader monitoring and de-escalation capabilities, and from around 1,980 to 5,525 uniformed personnel members.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Technology, participation mark Ethiopia's election

By **SHARON NAKOLA** in Nairobi, Kenya
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Regional election observers have praised Ethiopia's adoption of new electoral technologies and strong voter participation in its seventh general election, describing the process as a notable step in the country's efforts to strengthen democratic institutions despite persistent security challenges.

The polls on Monday were the second general election held since 2018 after Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was elected. As one of Africa's most populous nations and a key diplomatic player on the continent, developments in Ethiopia are closely watched by regional governments and international partners.

Preliminary assessments released on Wednesday by observer missions from the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development highlighted improvements in election administration, voter registration and electoral inclusion, while acknowledging that insecurity continued to affect parts of the country.

According to the National Electoral Board of Ethiopia, more than 50.5 million citizens registered to vote, surpassing the board's initial target and marking a significant increase from the previous general election. More than 5.5 million voters registered through digital platforms under a hybrid digital-analog registration system.

The observer missions hailed the use of technology as one of the election's defining features, including GIS-based mapping that leverages geographic information systems to digitize, analyze, and visualize voting centers, digital voter registration tools and special voting arrangements for internally displaced people and members of the security services.

The board was hailed for its administrative and operational capacity, with the observer team saying the measures helped improve accessibility, transparency and efficiency in the management of the vote.

Commendable way

"The way the election board conducted the 7th General Election is commendable," the AU and IGAD observer teams said during a media briefing on Wednesday, citing the institution's neutrality, technological preparedness, inclusiveness and election administration.

According to the observer missions, voting was successfully conducted in 501 constituencies, although polling did not take place in the Tigray region and parts of Oromia and Amhara due to security and operational challenges.

Overall, while more than 50,000 polling stations were operational, 143 failed to open due to security issues, according to media reports.

Speciosa Wandira-Kazibwe, head of the IGAD Election Observation Mission, described the level of public engagement as one of the most remarkable she had witnessed during election observation assignments across Africa.

"We have never encountered the level of public participation we saw in Ethiopia in other countries," she said.

Former Kenyan president Uhuru Kenyatta, who led the AU Election Observation Mission, also welcomed the conduct of the polls and praised efforts undertaken by Ethiopian authorities to strengthen election processes.

Final election results are expected to be announced within one to two weeks after voting concludes, in accordance with Ethiopia's electoral law.

Derailed disaster



Employees of the THW technical relief organization work on the recovery of a derailed streetcar in Berlin, on Wednesday. There were 20 casualties in the accident, three of whom were seriously injured. CHRISTOPHE GATEAU VIA AP

Briefly

CHINA

Myanmar's foreign minister to pay visit

Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning announced on Wednesday that Myanmar's Foreign Minister Tin Maung Swe will begin a three-day official visit to China on Thursday. The visit follows Foreign Minister Wang Yi's trip to Myanmar in late April and marks Tin Maung Swe's first visit to China since he was appointed foreign minister in April. Tin Maung Swe previously served as Myanmar's ambassador to China from November 2022 to January 2026.

UNITED STATES

Bill Pulte named as acting intel chief

US President Donald Trump on Tuesday appointed Bill Pulte, the director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency, as acting director of national intelligence. Trump said in a Truth Social post that Pulte "has deep experience managing the most sensitive matters in America, the safety and soundness of the markets". He added that Pulte would remain director of the Federal Housing Finance Agency and chairman of Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac while serving in the acting role. Pulte will replace Tulsi Gabbard, who announced on May 22 that she was resigning from her post after her husband was diagnosed with an extremely rare form of bone cancer. The director of national intelligence is responsible for the oversight and direction of 18 elements of the country's intelligence community.

NIGERIA

Gunmen kill 37 in two attacks on one village

Criminal gangs have killed at least 37 people in two days of attacks on a rural community in northwest Nigeria's Sokoto state, a security report and residents said. Gunmen on motorbikes, believed to be "bandits", killed at least 17 people and looted shops in Dangulbi village, according to a security report prepared for the UN and seen by AFP. The attackers returned to the village early on Tuesday, killing at least 20 more residents who were mourning the 17 people killed in the Sunday raid, a local official told AFP on Wednesday. "The victims were sheltered under sheds, following an earlier attack on the community on May 31," the report said.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA—AGENCIES

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COMMENT

Editorials

Implementation road map to expedite agricultural and rural modernization

China's newly unveiled plan for agricultural and rural modernization during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period represents a shift to managing complex structural transformation related to a sector of strategic importance to the nation.

The plan issued by the State Council, China's Cabinet, on Tuesday signals rural modernization is entering a crucial phase in which goals, timelines and responsibilities have become more clearly defined.

China's countryside faces two demographic forces: aging and urbanization. Labor mobility has been one of the engines of China's economic rise. The challenge now lies in managing its consequences. The country's urbanization rate has reached 67 percent and is expected to touch 70 percent by the end of the decade. The question is no longer how to encourage migration from villages to cities, a process that creates jobs and growth. It is how to ensure that rural residents enjoy rising incomes, quality public services and more self-improvement opportunities.

The urban-rural income ratio remains above 2.3, meaning rural residents still earn less than half as much as their urban counterparts on average, despite the gap narrowing considerably. The plan's focus on raising farmers' incomes through county-level industrial development, stronger property rights protection, wage growth for migrant workers and other targeted support policies therefore reflects a development imperative that is central to the modernization of people.

Yet that is only one part of the challenge.

The productivity model that supported China's agricultural development over the past decades is also approaching a point with diminishing marginal effects. As the country enters a stage of deepening rural reform, the focus is shifting to high-quality, comprehensive structural optimization. Future growth should increasingly come from improvements in total factor productivity rather than from additional inputs.

This is where the challenge becomes more complex. The country must feed about 17 percent of the global population with less than 9 percent of the world's arable land, while rising labor costs, tightening environmental constraints and increasingly strict protection of water resources make a transition from labor-intensive growth toward technology-driven efficiency gains a pressing task.

Faster adoption of technology has continued to lift agricultural productivity in China in recent years. In 2025, China's grain production reached about 714.9 million tonnes, marking the second straight year when grain output stayed above 700 million tonnes. Last year, the contribution rate of agricultural scientific and technological progress exceeded 64 percent, while the comprehensive mechanization rate of crop cultivation and harvesting reached 76.7 percent.

The new plan has set an anticipatory target of raising the contribution rate of sci-tech progress in boosting agricultural development to 67 percent by 2030. New generations of agricultural technologies should therefore become more land-saving, resource-efficient and environmentally sustainable. Yet such innovations require substantial investment, long development cycles and widespread adoption by farmers.

Land reform presents another difficult test. Greater efficiency requires more effective land-use arrangements and more mature land-transfer markets. Yet the rural reality in many regions remains characterized by fragmented landholdings, part-time farming and short-term land transfers. Achieving economies of scale without changing that pattern is no simple task.

For many elderly rural residents, farmland remains their major source of income. Policymakers must balance productivity gains against the need to protect vulnerable groups from losing land.

Environmental constraints add another layer of complexity. Agriculture sits at the intersection of food production, resource use, extreme weather responses and emissions reduction. Higher yields often require greater inputs, while greener production methods can involve higher costs and slower adoption. Balancing food security, farmer incomes and environmental sustainability will require careful policy coordination.

Perhaps the most difficult challenge lies in implementation itself. Rural modernization increasingly depends on institutional innovation. Technological progress, financial reform, land policy, social security, environmental protection and public service provision should operate as an integrated system in the process.

The next round of reform necessitates deeper adjustments to land institutions, rural finance and social welfare systems. These are inherently more challenging because they touch upon entrenched interests and long-standing structural arrangements. The new plan, if well implemented, will be conducive to better enabling the country to tackle the above challenges so as to create a rural economy that is systematically productive, environmentally sustainable, socially inclusive and resilient to external uncertainties and risks.

Key infrastructure unlocks trade potential

A crucial component of the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor, the Pinglu Canal is a monumental Chinese infrastructure project designed to enhance trade connectivity between China and the members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. The completion of the canal's full water filling on Wednesday represents a key step toward its planned opening for full navigation in September.

The flagship project with an investment of $10.2 billion under China's strategy to develop the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Yunnan province is a gateway to and for ASEAN. Stretching 134.2 kilometers from Nanning to Qinzhou Port facing the Beibu Gulf, the canal is the first direct river-to-sea canal project since the founding of the People's Republic of China. Connecting the upper reaches of the Xijiang River system directly to the sea, the canal provides a more cost-effective alternative route to the traditional, longer route via Guangdong province for vessels up to 5,000 tonnes. It is estimated that it will save 5.2 billion yuan ($753 million) a year in logistics costs.

The canal's effect on Guangxi and the broader southwestern interior will be transformative, as it will give the landlocked provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan and Guizhou more convenient access to the sea, accelerating their integration into global value chains, enabling Guangxi to better leverage its geographic advantage as a connector of Southeast Asia.

As logistics costs decrease, port-oriented industries focused on bulk raw materials, heavy chemical industries, and equipment manufacturing are expected to gather along the canal. Convenient transportation via the canal will help meet the increasing needs of the fast-developing manufacturing in Southeast Asian countries, such as Vietnam, which have a growing demand for equipment and raw materials. The canal will thus serve to strengthen supply chains in the region. And since the canal covers major agricultural production areas, it will also contribute to agricultural modernization and rural vitalization. All this will help upgrade the regional development landscape during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

The Pinglu Canal fits into the broader picture of China's infrastructure development strategy, which aims to enhance internal connectivity and strengthen international trade routes. Aligned with the country's long-term commitment to investing in infrastructure that supports both domestic development and international cooperation, the ambition of the Pinglu Canal invites comparison with another Guangxi marvel: the Lingqu Canal, constructed in 214 BC. As one of China's oldest canals, Lingqu played a crucial role in connecting the Yangtze and Pearl river systems, fostering cultural and ethnic integration.

But while the Lingqu Canal facilitated internal connection, the Pinglu Canal project promotes regional integration. Once fully operational, the canal is expected to alter trade dynamics in the region. It will present opportunities for businesses and industries that rely on trade between China and ASEAN countries, leading to anticipated increases in trade volumes and economic growth.

In essence, the Pinglu Canal is not merely a new route on a map. It is a strategic instrument that converts geographic proximity into economic gravity, promising to accelerate China's "dual circulation" development pattern while forging a more integrated, prosperous and interconnected future for Southeast Asia.

The scale of the project is extraordinary. An engineering feat that showcases China's capabilities in large-scale infrastructure development, Pinglu is the highest-grade navigable canal in China and one of the largest earth and rockwork projects of its kind in the country in recent years. It required the excavation of approximately 315 million cubic meters of material. When fully operational, the canal has the potential to shape a more connected and prosperous future for the region.

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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Tokyo's possible fighter jet funds offer revealing of ulterior motive

Japan, the United Kingdom and Italy joining forces to build a sixth-generation fighter jet by 2035 was supposed to be a "win-win partnership" for the three. Yet the UK's reported funding troubles have exposed an inconvenient truth. The so-called Global Combat Air Program increasingly looks less like an equal "partnership" and more like a vehicle for Japan's military ambitions.

Tokyo has generally kept a low profile about the deeper implications of the GCAP. Officially, the program is presented as a response to a "deteriorating security environment" and what Tokyo calls "the need to deter China". Yet as the UK struggles with budget constraints and Italy weighs its role, Japan appears prepared to shoulder a larger share of the burden, particularly during the critical early development phase, as some Japanese officials implied in recent interviews, showing Tokyo's anxiety about the "premature death" of the program.

That raises an obvious question: What exactly is Japan buying? The answer may not simply be an aircraft.

The GCAP offers Japan something it has sought for decades: advanced European aerospace know-how, experience in cutting-edge fighter development and the industrial foundation necessary for long-term self-reliance in military aviation. For a country seeking to emerge from postwar constraints, the attraction is obvious.

Japanese officials increasingly talk of expanding weapons exports. Restrictions that once limited overseas arms sales have been steadily loosened. The fighter program is therefore not merely about replacing aging F-2 aircraft. It is about creating the technological and industrial infrastructure necessary for Japan to become a major exporter of more advanced weapons in the future. With its strengths in shipbuilding and advanced manufacturing, the country is already exporting warships.

But history suggests that the world must be cautious whenever Japan markets its military expansion as a purely "defensive" exercise.

Invoking "external threats" to justify military buildup has long been a recurring tactic of Japanese militarism. Japan's military budget has reached record levels. Missile deployments are expanding, export restrictions on lethal weapons are being relaxed and constitutional revisions remain a persistent objective among Japanese right-wing politicians.

What makes the GCAP particularly significant is its expanding international scope. Canada, Australia, Germany, Sweden, Saudi Arabia and others have all been mentioned as potential participants or customers. If the UK's financial difficulties create a vacuum, Japan might seek additional partners to sustain momentum and expand the manufacturing program into a manufacturer-consumer complex, which is essentially a sophisticated technology acquisition strategy backed by generous Japanese funding.

Given the rise of neo-militarism in Japan, foreign governments would be wise to ask hard questions about the consequences of exposing some of their most advanced military technologies to Japan. Countries joining the GCAP are not entering a politically neutral project. They are participating in a strategic endeavor that regional countries in the Asia-Pacific view through the lens of Japan's past aggression.

The GCAP is deliberately designed to be outside the US military-industrial complex despite Japan's decades-long dependence on US weapons platforms and security guarantees. For Washington, that should be a revealing signal. The fighter program is about acquiring the technological and industrial independence necessary to reduce reliance on US arms in the future. For the right-wing forces advocating the "normalization" of Japan, the ultimate objective is to restore Japan as an autonomous military power capable of acting independently of the US. Japan rarely remains content as a junior partner indefinitely.

The question facing Japan's partners is whether they fully understand the destination before helping finance the journey with their experience and technology that will actually help reboot Japan's war machine.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Quota reform will help bolster IMF's credibility

Editor's note: *The reform of international organizations, including financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, has become a major topic of multilateral discussions due to the changing global economic landscape and the growing volatility in the international order. Lin Jianhai, former secretary of the IMF, told Securities Times that it is imperative to advance the organization's quota reform. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The international economic governance system has evolved over the past several decades, but its inherent contradictions and structural problems have not been resolved.

This is mainly reflected in the growing underrepresentation in the governance structure, increased fragmentation of multilateral mechanisms, the growing effect of geopolitical competition on global cooperation, and the higher demands imposed on the existing governance system by the rapidly developing emerging sectors.

Against such a backdrop, promoting the reform and restructuring of the global governance system, rebuilding consensus for international cooperation and enabling emerging markets and developing countries to secure a more influential voice have become central topics of international economic governance.

Various international organizations, especially financial institutions, need to accelerate the reform of their governance structures and properly adjust the voting power and representation of their members.

It is essential to establish a fairer financing mechanism geared toward sustainable development, and pay greater attention to developing countries' access to financing and the sustainability of their debt.

Efforts should focus on modernizing and aligning rules related to areas such as the digital economy, climate governance, green finance and energy transition. It's also necessary to strengthen coordination of macroeconomic policies to enhance the resilience of the global economy.

Institutions such as the IMF, World Bank and the World Trade Organization should play a core role in this process. They need to adapt to the changes occurring in the global economy, and collaborate with developing countries in global economic governance, instead of simply providing assistance to these countries.

Emerging economies, for their part, should play a more active role in governance reform and implement relevant policies more vigorously to help build a fairer and more effective governance system.

Understanding how quotas work is central to comprehending the IMF's operations. Each member state is assigned a quota upon joining the organization. This quota is denominated in special drawing rights, or SDRs, and reflects the country's position in the global economy. The quota also determines the member's contribution commitment to the IMF. By the end of 2025, the countries with the largest quotas were the United States, Japan and China.

The quota caps the amount a member can borrow from the institution, determines its voting power, and sets its share in the allocation of SDRs. The larger the quota, the greater the voting power. That explains why quota reform helps elevate the voice and representation of emerging markets and developing countries.

While intensified geoeconomic competition presents substantial challenges to the IMF's quota and governance reform in the short run, such reform is imperative. As the significance of emerging markets and developing countries in the global economy increases, the IMF should grant them matching representation and voting powers. This reform will benefit not only these economies but also bolster the IMF's legitimacy, credibility and effectiveness, thus facilitating sustained and robust growth of the global economy.

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VIEWS

Asit K. Biswas, Cecilia Tortajada and Li Peiyue

Iran war pushing focus away from fossil fuels

The Iran war has led to many unintended consequences. The US and Israeli airstrikes have left more than three thousand Iranians dead and many more injured. In addition, the bombings have caused extensive economic damage. Lebanon has also suffered numerous casualties and substantial economic losses.

While the United States and Iran are discussing a proposed 60-day extension of an uneasy ceasefire, its failure would likely have many consequences, affecting not only the countries directly involved but also others beyond the conflict. In fact, the conflict has already contributed to one of the greatest energy disruptions in modern history.

Before the war, in late February, Brent crude oil, the global benchmark, was trading at around $70-73 per barrel. In recent days, prices have exceeded $100 per barrel. As a result, energy import bills have skyrocketed. Moreover, since many Asian countries depend heavily on oil imports passing through the Strait of Hormuz, their energy supplies have been severely disrupted.

China, because of its long-term planning, maintains substantial oil and gas reserves and has been managing import shortages relatively effectively.

However, other Asian economies are now under severe strain due to rising energy prices and major supply chain disruptions.

Consequently, they are experiencing declining foreign exchange reserves, weakening currencies, higher inflation and reduced economic activity. This has forced governments to implement energy rationing, raise retail fuel prices and seek more expensive alternative energy sources.

For example, in Bangladesh, manufacturing costs for garments have reportedly risen by around 40 percent. Liquefied natural gas prices have nearly doubled compared to prewar levels, costing the country approximately $880 million.

The longer the war continues, the greater the likely economic, social and political damage for oil-importing countries. Much of the world was already transitioning toward renewable energy for both economic and environmental reasons.

However, the energy insecurity resulting from the Iran war, especially due to the closure of the Strait of Hormuz, has focused global attention on the importance of domestic control over electricity generation and reducing dependence on oil and gas imported from volatile regions through risky transportation routes.

Not surprisingly, Republic of Korea President Lee Jae-myung observed that the ROK needs to transition to renewable resources quickly. Lee stated that the future may be extremely risky, if the country relies on fossil fuel energy.

Many other countries have reached similar conclusions. Vietnam, for example, has already shelved plans for a major new liquefied natural gas terminal, while proposals for renewable energy expansion are now under consideration.

Pakistan has become a major user of rooftop solar electricity systems because electricity supplies have long been unreliable and millions of people still lack access to the national grid.

As electricity prices continue to rise because of the war, an increasing number of households are likely to adopt rooftop solar power generation.

In India, solar energy accounted for 9 percent of electricity generation in 2025, compared to only 0.5 percent a decade earlier. Considering that fuel prices in the country have increased at least three times in less than three weeks, its adoption of solar energy, electric vehicles and battery technologies is likely to accelerate further.

The Iran war has also imposed major costs on US consumers. According to The New York Times, the additional amount US citizens collectively spent on gasoline and diesel following the US and Israeli attacks on Iran reached an estimated $44.8 billion.

However, the US remains the only major country actively resisting the transition to clean energy while continuing to promote fossil fuels and coal.

In China, the government made EV research a national priority in 2001. A quarter-century later, China's long-term investments in green technology appear highly astute.

China, which now has between 60 and 85 percent of the global renewable energy equipment market, is rapidly evolving into an electrostate, while the US appears increasingly committed to remaining a petrostate.

Continuous innovation has also made EVs increasingly cost-competitive relative to conventional vehicles, after taking charging times and the distance vehicles can travel before recharging or refueling into account.

In the US, the average price of a new EV now exceeds $50,000, compared to $36,000 only a decade ago. In contrast, Chinese companies such as BYD and Geely offer some vehicles priced below $12,000. BYD, the world's largest EV manufacturer, reduced its average selling price from 143,000 yuan ($21,107) in 2021 to 119,225 yuan in 2025 because of continuous innovation, strict cost control, streamlined manufacturing and intense competition.

Interestingly, BYD's electric bus plant in California can reportedly produce buses at costs 30 percent lower than comparable US manufacturers, even though each bus contains approximately 70 percent US content by value.

In 2025, China's EV exports nearly doubled to 2.6 million units compared to the previous year. Nearly half of these vehicles were produced overseas in one of the 16 countries where Chinese companies either already operate or are planning manufacturing facilities. By 2035, these overseas plants are expected to produce 3.4 million units annually.

The International Energy Agency estimates that global EV sales surpassed 20 million units in 2025, representing nearly a sevenfold increase since 2020. Following the Iran war, global EV demand is likely to accelerate even more rapidly.

Chinese automotive companies are now actively exploring the establishment of manufacturing plants in Canada, Mexico, the European Union and several Asian, African and Latin American countries. These developments reflect a growing global perception that dependence on oil, once referred to as "black gold", has become increasingly incompatible with sustainable economic development and environmental protection.

China's long-term commitment to clean energy is now generating enormous economic returns.

China has transformed one of humanity's greatest challenges, climate change, into a major economic opportunity from which it is likely to derive significant economic and environmental benefits for decades to come.

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



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Zhao Jing

Classrooms are the original diplomacy

On May 16, I found myself at the Gies Memorial Stadium at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, watching my daughter's graduation ceremony. The commencement speaker was Sean Evans, host of *Hot Ones* and a recent addition to TIME magazine's inaugural TIME100 Creators list of the 100 most influential digital voices.

The next day, I attended a more intimate ceremony at the Krannert Center, where graduates were called by name one by one. What struck me, and every parent there, was the frequency of Chinese names being called.

Families cheered, grandparents who had crossed the Pacific lifted their phones with trembling hands, mothers wept and fathers waved orange-and-blue banners. For a few days, the cornfields of central Illinois resonated with the sound of Mandarin and the unmistakable language of pride.

Such scenes are not surprising at UIUC. With nearly 6,000 Chinese students enrolled last year, it hosts one of the largest Chinese student communities at any university in the United States. Chinese students make up roughly half of UIUC's entire international population, and about one in 10 of all students on campus.

These scenes are replicated across campuses from Boston to Los Angeles, and from New York to Chicago. They may get overlooked because tariffs and summits dominate the headlines, but they are, in their own quiet way, the most important interactions between China and the US.

For nearly 30 years, I have worked to build bridges between the two countries through students, scholars, business delegations, and people who have grown up with very different assumptions.

Throughout this time, I have seen the relationship between Beijing and Washington fluctuate between warmth, suspicion, hope, and tension. What I have learned is that policies shift with each election cycle, but the human bonds formed in classrooms and dormitories endure. They are the strongest infrastructure of peace we have.

This is why US President Donald Trump's remarks during his recent state visit to Beijing deserve more attention. In a Fox News interview broadcast from Beijing, the US president countered voices within his political base by saying, "It's a very insulting thing to tell a country we don't want your people in our schools." He noted that if Chinese students stopped coming, lower-tier US universities would be hit hardest. His proposal to admit up to 600,000 Chinese students — more than double the current enrollment — may be ambitious, but it is based on a sound principle.

The numbers tell a sobering story. According to the Institute of International Education's Open Doors report, the US hosted a record 1.18 million international students in the 2024-25 academic year, contributing nearly $55 billion to the US economy and supporting more than 355,000 jobs in the country.

But within that record total, Chinese enrollment has been declining. At its peak in 2019-20, roughly 372,000 Chinese students were studying in the US. By 2024-25, that figure had fallen to 265,919 — a decline of nearly 29 percent in five years. For the first time since 2009, India has surpassed China as the largest source of international students, with 363,019 students. New international enrollments in fall 2025 dropped 17 percent year over year.

The reasons for the decline are complex: the pandemic, visa issues, public discourse that often treats Chinese students as suspects rather than guests, the rise of excellent Chinese universities at home, and families' concerns about whether their children will be safe and welcomed.

For the US, this drop is not abstract. In Illinois alone, international students contributed $2.4 billion to the state economy in 2023-24. Their tuition dollars subsidize US classmates, they fill graduate programs in fields such as engineering, computer science and mathematics, and their research contributes to US patents and companies.

However, the deeper loss is not financial, but human. Over the decades, I have witnessed countless friendships between Chinese and US students — friendships that have outlasted graduations, weddings, career changes, and the chill of headlines. None of these relationships made the news. But all of them are the news, if we know how to read it.

In November 2023, President Xi Jinping invited 50,000 young Americans to visit China on exchange programs over five years. Thousands have already made the journey, learning the language, meeting families, and exploring places their grandparents could never have imagined visiting. This is the architecture of peace being built, one student at a time.

Education is the original form of diplomacy. It predates treaties and outlasts them. A trade agreement can be renegotiated in an afternoon; a friendship formed in a freshman dormitory can last 50 years, quietly shaping decisions in boardrooms and government offices long after the diploma is framed.

The graduation ceremonies taking place across the US this month are not just personal milestones. They are evidence of a partnership that, despite every obstacle, refuses to break. Each Chinese graduate who walks across that stage carries home a piece of the US. Each US classmate who waves goodbye carries home a piece of China. These exchanges do not eliminate disagreements between the two governments, but they form the human ballast that keeps disagreements from hardening into hostility.

President Trump was right to highlight this issue in Beijing. The challenge now, on both sides of the Pacific, is to ensure that words lead to open doors, fair visas, and the unassuming work of welcoming young people who have come a very long way to learn.

When my daughter's name was called at the Krannert Center, I thought of all the families around me. The future was sitting in those seats. We owe it to them — and to ourselves — to keep the doors open.

The author is the founder and CEO of the Global CSR Foundation.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Dan Steinbock

The inconvenient truths about the Ebola crisis

For weeks, the latest Ebola outbreak in Central Africa was seen as a regional emergency. But now there is mounting evidence that the outbreak may be broader, more fragmented and entrenched than initially believed. On Saturday, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus visited Bunia in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the virus is spreading faster than the response.

The crisis is centered in eastern Congo, with spillovers into Uganda and rising concern across neighboring countries. Official numbers remain uncertain because surveillance systems in conflict zones are incomplete.

The outbreak circulated for weeks, perhaps longer, before it was fully recognized. By the time authorities moved aggressively, transmission chains may have spread across borders, refugee corridors and informal trade networks.

The danger does not lie primarily in the current number of cases, which is far lower than COVID-19 or the 2014-16 Ebola outbreak in West Africa.

The danger is that the present crisis is unfolding under unusually adverse conditions: war, displacement, urbanization, weak public health systems, declining international aid capacity and growing mistrust of authorities.

"Never before has an Ebola outbreak recorded so many cases so soon after its declaration," the medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières has warned.

Historically, Ebola outbreaks have remained geographically concentrated. Although the virus is highly lethal, it is relatively difficult to transmit compared with airborne respiratory diseases.

Eastern Congo is one of the most difficult environments in the world for epidemic control. Armed militias, population displacement and attacks on medical facilities undermine contact tracing and isolation efforts. Informal border crossings are extensive.

Urban growth has accelerated faster than health infrastructure. In some affected regions, public trust in government and foreign health interventions is extremely weak.

Moreover, the current outbreak involves the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, for which no fully established licensed vaccine exists comparable to those deployed against the Zaire strain during previous outbreaks. That sharply complicates containment.

One of the least understood aspects of the present outbreak concerns contagion linkages beyond immediate epidemiology. Let's start with physical contagion networks. Eastern Africa's transport corridors increasingly connect local outbreaks to regional and global mobility systems.

Cities like Kampala, Kigali and Nairobi are no longer isolated peripheral centers. They are integrated into international aviation and trade flows linking Africa to the Gulf, Europe and Asia.

Then comes the institutional contagion effect. Fragile health systems already weakened by debt burdens, inflation and post-pandemic exhaustion are struggling to absorb another major shock, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa.

The psychological and economic contagion adds to the problem. Financial markets, tourism flows, commodity exports and investment patterns can react violently even to limited outbreaks if fears of wider transmission intensify. The 2014-16 Ebola crisis demonstrated how panic itself can generate severe economic damage regardless of the actual epidemiological scale.

Finally, geopolitical contagion can be devastating. In a fragmented multipolar world, global health crises increasingly intersect with strategic competition, sanctions, debt restructuring and security concerns. Epidemics no longer operate outside geopolitics; they amplify it.

One of the most consequential dimensions of the current Ebola crisis concerns the partial retreat of the US and Western international health support over recent years.

US funding cuts and shifting priorities have weakened several pillars of global epidemic preparedness, including surveillance systems, laboratory support, emergency logistics and NGO operations across vulnerable regions. The abrupt manner in which these cuts were executed compounded the negative effects.

The retreat of preventive international health capacity increases the probability of far costlier future global emergencies.

The first and most likely scenario is a severe but regionally contained epidemic. The outbreak could produce thousands or even tens of thousands of cases regionally, while devastating local economies and healthcare systems.

In this case, intensified international response efforts eventually stabilize transmission through traditional Ebola control measures: isolation, tracing, border monitoring and behavioral adaptation. For now, this is the most likely scenario.

The second scenario involves a wider multinational African epidemic. This becomes plausible if transmission becomes embedded along mobility corridors linking Congo, Uganda, Rwanda, Kenya, Tanzania and beyond. Refugee flows, mining routes and informal commerce networks could facilitate wider regional spread.

In this case, Ebola would remain primarily an African crisis, but one with major global economic, humanitarian and geopolitical repercussions.

The third scenario — a true global pandemic transition — remains unlikely but cannot be dismissed entirely. Sustained international spread would likely require repeated exportation into major cities combined with failures in hospital containment and perhaps viral adaptation toward easier transmission.

There is currently no evidence of such adaptation. Nevertheless, prolonged uncontrolled transmission increases evolutionary opportunities and magnifies systemic risk.

The failure to contain the Ebola crisis in its early stages suggests that the lessons of the COVID-19 pandemic have not been learned.

The present Ebola crisis has not become a global pandemic threat comparable to COVID-19, and public health officials hope it will remain regionally concentrated despite severe humanitarian consequences.

However, the world today is less institutionally cohesive, less politically cooperative and less strategically prepared for transnational crises than it was just a decade ago.

Pandemic fatigue, geopolitical rivalry and fiscal retrenchment have weakened the mechanisms needed for early containment.

Infectious disease containment operates on a simple principle: outbreaks are cheapest to stop at the periphery.

Once they reach major urban systems and international mobility corridors, costs rise exponentially. It is a rule the international community can ignore at its peril.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

NISIT PANTHAMIT, PAISARN PANTHAMITR AND NITCHANAT PHENGPHUM

Funding the fintech future

China's digital finance is oriented toward the real economy, shedding light on that of other Global South countries



MA HUI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Nisit Panthamit



Paisarn Panthamitr



Nitchanat Phengphum

The next phase of global development will not be decided by trade corridors alone. It will be determined by how effectively financial systems integrate with technology. In this respect, China's outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for national economic and social development sends a clear signal: finance is becoming an active engine of economic growth.

This shift matters far beyond China. For other countries across the Global South, the real question is no longer whether to adopt digital finance, but how to do so in a way that is inclusive, resilient and aligned with domestic development priorities. China's experience offers a compelling answer — not as a template to copy, but as a framework to adapt.

For decades, one of the biggest challenges for developing economies has been financial exclusion. Traditional banking systems are costly to build, slow to expand and often concentrated in urban areas. As a result, millions remain outside formal financial networks, limiting both household welfare and business growth.

China has made substantial progress in overcoming this constraint. Through mobile payments, digital platforms and data-driven credit systems, it has transformed financial access into a scalable public good. This is a transformation driven not by market forces alone, but by deliberate national strategy embedded in successive five-year plans.

The lesson for other Global South countries is straightforward but powerful: digital finance does not just complement traditional banking — it can function as a transformative force to improve the whole banking system. Thailand and Indonesia have already demonstrated this potential. Thailand's PromptPay system and Indonesia's QRIS infrastructure have significantly reduced transaction costs and expanded access to financial services. In October 2025, Thailand launched a direct cross-border QR payment service with China — a milestone linking the two countries' instant retail payment systems to foster greater integration in trade, investment and tourism. Yet deeper transformation lies ahead: integrating these systems into a broader digital financial architecture that reaches informal sectors, rural communities and small enterprises.

The global financial system is entering a period of fragmentation. Geopolitical tensions, risks of sanctions and currency volatility are reshaping how countries think about financial dependence. For many developing economies, reliance on external clearing systems, particularly those dominated by the US dollar, creates vulnerabilities that are increasingly difficult to ignore.

China's response has been proactive. By expanding cross-border renminbi settlement, advancing the digital renminbi and developing independent fintech platforms, it is building alternative channels for financial interaction. According to the People's Bank of China, as of the end of November 2025, China had recorded 3.48 billion cumulative digital renminbi transactions worth approximately $2.37 trillion — this is no longer an experiment.

For other Global South countries, the ability to diversify payment systems, settle trade in local currencies and reduce exposure to external shocks enhances both economic resilience and policy autonomy. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations' growing emphasis on local currency settlement reflects this shift. Technology is the enabler that makes it viable at scale, and Thailand and Indonesia — as two of the region's most digitally advanced economies — are well positioned to lead.

Perhaps the most important aspect of China's fintech policy is its orientation toward the real economy. Unlike models that prioritize financial liberalization or speculative innovation, China emphasizes the role of finance in supporting industrial upgrading, technological innovation and rural development.

Many developing economies have experienced the risks of premature financialization, where financial expansion outpaces productive capacity. China's approach suggests a different path: fintech is not an end in itself, but a tool to channel capital into sectors that generate long-term value.

In Thailand, this could mean leveraging digital finance to strengthen small and medium-sized enterprises, agricultural supply chains and tourism-related services, sectors that form the backbone of the economy. In Indonesia, it could involve deeper integration between fintech platforms and manufacturing or green energy initiatives. The ASEAN-China Free Trade Area Version 3.0 goes beyond tariff reduction to address digital integration, with e-payment systems taking center stage. Successful tech-finance ecosystems are not imported, but built around local economic structures.

China's role in global fintech is not confined to its domestic market. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and BRICS cooperation, it is actively sharing financial technology solutions with other developing economies. In May 2026, China and ASEAN launched the China-ASEAN Artificial Intelligence Industry Innovation Center, aimed at building a shared digital ecosystem with harmonized data governance and interoperability.

What distinguishes this model is its pragmatism. It is typically demand-driven, focused on implementation and less constrained by the policy conditionalities that have traditionally accompanied development assistance. In Southeast Asia, Chinese fintech firms have already contributed to improving efficiency in local financial systems. The next step is to move from bilateral projects to integrated regional ecosystems.

ASEAN is uniquely positioned to translate these ideas into reality. The region combines high digital adoption, strong trade linkages and ongoing policy coordination. Initiatives such as regional payment connectivity are already laying the groundwork for deeper financial integration.

Thailand and Indonesia stand out as key nodes in this process. Thailand's interoperable payment systems, anchored by PromptPay and its cross-border QR linkage with China, and Indonesia's rapidly expanding digital economy provide complementary strengths. Together, they illustrate how tech-finance can move from concept to implementation at a regional scale.

The opportunity now is to scale up. This means going beyond payments to include digital identity systems, cross-border credit frameworks and regulatory harmonization. The broader lesson from Southeast Asia's payment revolution is clear: Seamless small-value transactions make trade and commerce more efficient, and the region is developing an ASEAN-wide QR framework with the potential to make paying abroad as easy as paying at home.

China's financial development during the 15th Five-Year Plan period can mark a shift from financial expansion to financial transformation. Technology is no longer peripheral — it is central to how finance operates, evolves and contributes to growth.

For the whole Global South, this may represent a strategic inflection point. The tools for building inclusive and resilient financial systems are more accessible than ever. The cost of inaction, however, is rising. Countries that fail to integrate into emerging digital financial architectures risk falling further behind.

The choice is not between adopting China's model and maintaining the status quo. It is between engaging with a rapidly evolving financial paradigm and being constrained by outdated systems. Fintech is not a future possibility — it is a present reality.

In this new landscape, those who move first will shape the rules; those who hesitate will follow them.

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LU JIAJUN AND WANG SHANGYU

Beyond buildings to neighborhoods

Quality homes should anchor China's property transition toward better standards, stronger renewal and more sustainable growth



Lu Jiajun



Wang Shangyu

The call for "quality homes" in this year's Government Work Report represents an important policy shift. But without institutional changes, the concept risks remaining a policy slogan or, worse, being absorbed into the marketing language of high-end projects.

At present, the gap is clear: While demand has upgraded toward housing that is safe, comfortable, green and smart, the supply system remains largely anchored in the old model of scale expansion and rapid turnover, including land allocation, development incentives and financing structures. As a result, the policy emphasis on "quality" risks being diluted by mechanisms still rewarding quantity.

The first priority, therefore, is to embed quality into the rules of supply, rather than leaving it to voluntary developer behavior. Land transactions should move beyond price competition and incorporate binding quality indicators, including design standards, environmental performance and livability metrics. Planning and approval processes should shift their focus accordingly, from floor area and density to aspects such as layout efficiency, sound insulation, ventilation and age-friendly design.

More importantly, regulatory oversight should extend to the delivery stage, ensuring that quality commitments made at the planning phase are enforceable and verifiable. Without such institutionalization, the "quality homes" policy cannot form a stable expectation in the market. A useful international reference is Singapore, where sustainability and quality benchmarks are integrated into land supply and development requirements from the outset. The key lesson is not replication, but sequencing: Quality must be defined ex ante in the system, not added ex post in sales narratives.

The second priority is to avoid narrowing "quality homes" to only new, premium housing supply. Such an interpretation would significantly limit its policy relevance. In China's current stage of urbanization, the marginal improvement in living standards increasingly comes from upgrading existing neighborhoods rather than building entirely new ones. This implies a necessary shift from a "new construction-centered" approach to a "stock optimization-centered" model. Urban renewal, renovation of aging residential compounds, redevelopment of urban villages and age-friendly retrofitting should become the main carriers of "quality improvement". In this context, housing quality is inseparable from community quality. The experience of Chongqing's Taping renewal project illustrates this direction. Covering 44 residential buildings and benefiting 1,487 households, the project took some of the residents' most pressing concerns as its main targets, including undergrounding overhead utility lines, removing safety hazards and separating rainwater from sewage, while also advancing housing renovation, the construction of small public activity squares and the provision of a community canteen. This case shows how broad policy goals can be translated into concrete, resident-oriented interventions at the neighborhood level. This highlights a critical point: Quality housing is increasingly delivered through systemic neighborhood improvement, not isolated building upgrades.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The third priority is to realign financial structures with the new development logic. The traditional financing model, which is heavily reliant on presales and rapid capital turnover, was built for an era of high-speed expansion, but it is poorly suited to a system now centered on delivery assurance, long-term operation and gradual renewal. What is needed is not simply more financing, but a fundamentally different kind of financing, one that prioritizes stability over liquidity and long-term value over short-term returns. Both medium- and long-term capital should be systematically directed toward project completion, urban renewal, energy-efficiency upgrades and community infrastructure. Achieving this requires financial instruments such as infrastructure investment funds, green bonds and long-term leasing vehicles, as well as regulatory frameworks that incentivize patient capital and support longer investment horizons with more stable, predictable returns.

Recent policy signals are moving in this direction. The further use of the "white list" mechanism and guidance from the National Administration of Financial Regulation suggest an effort to improve financing support for viable projects under the new model. Meanwhile, practices in Guangzhou demonstrate a shift from "sales-driven finance" to "delivery- and renewal-oriented finance". Fifty-two approved special-loan projects for urban village redevelopment have already entered the stage of substantive construction, with total credit reaching 409.6 billion yuan ($59.3 billion). The funds have been directed toward early-stage project work, compensation and resettlement, the construction of resettlement housing and supporting infrastructure for resettlement communities. What matters here is not simply the scale of funding, but the fact that financing is being channeled toward delivery, resettlement and supporting facilities rather than short-term sales expansion. This transition is essential if quality improvement is to be sustained rather than episodic.

Ultimately, the significance of the "quality homes" policy lies in whether it can serve as a structural anchor for the real estate sector's transition and whether it can connect micro-level well-being with macro-level objectives such as urban renewal, new-type urbanization and high-quality development. This connection will not materialize automatically. It depends on whether the concept is translated into binding supply rules, a rebalanced focus on stock renewal and a compatible financial system. If these three dimensions advance together, "quality homes" can move beyond rhetoric and become the foundation of a more resilient and sustainable real estate model. Otherwise, it risks becoming just another policy phrase in a sector still searching for its next equilibrium.

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BUSINESS

Rare disease seen as innovation frontier

Diagnosis network nationwide, policy incentives boost sector's progress

By ZHANG CHENXU
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Doctors provide rare disease medical consultation at a free clinic in Guiyang, Guizhou province. TAO LIANG / XINHUA

China's rare disease sector is entering a strategic window for biomedical innovation, as the country's expanding diagnosis network and relatively large unmet medical needs create new momentum for drug development, clinical translation and payment support mechanisms, a top rare disease expert said.

Zhang Shuyang, president of Peking Union Medical College Hospital (PUMCH), told China Daily that rare diseases should not be seen only as a public health and livelihood issue, but also as a promising field for biomedical innovation, with the potential to support new growth drivers in healthcare and advance the Healthy China 2030 initiative.

To seize that opportunity, China needs stronger policy incentives, more efficient clinical translation and a more sustainable payment mechanism to ensure innovative therapies can better help patients, Zhang said.

The challenge is acute. About 95 percent of rare diseases still lack effective therapies, leaving many patients with limited treatment options while pointing to a large unmet need for drug innovation, she said.

"Rare disease drug research and development is not only about addressing the needs of a small patient group. A deeper understanding of rare disease mechanisms can offer important clues for tackling major diseases, chronic conditions and aging," Zhang said.

China has built up an important foundation for innovation through its national rare disease diagnosis and treatment network. Led by PUMCH, the network now covers 419 member hospitals and extends to provincial and prefecture-level institutions, helping patients obtain clearer referral channels and more standardized services.

"We integrate resources around patients' needs so that information, experts and resources move around the patient, rather than leaving patients to run from one place to another," Zhang said.

She added that the model is replicable and could support a tiered national system, with national centers as



Zhang Shuyang

hubs, provincial centers as nodes, and grassroots medical institutions as frontline units. Such a system would narrow regional gaps and improve early screening, diagnosis and intervention.

Meanwhile, artificial intelligence is adding new momentum to rare disease diagnosis, a field long challenged by the large number of disease types, complex clinical manifestations and scattered patient cases. PUMCH has launched its rare disease AI model "PUMCH-GENESIS", based on high-quality Chinese clinical data and accumulated clinical experience.

The model is designed to help doctors identify suspected rare diseases from complex symptoms and serve as a round-the-clock training tool for primary-level and early-career physicians. AI cannot replace doctors, Zhang said, but it can integrate medical knowledge, recognize complex patterns and support cross-case analysis.

In recent years, policy support has been further intensified in China for rare disease control and treatment. In 2025, the country approved 48 rare disease drugs, helping address treatment gaps for special patient groups, said the National Medical Products Administration.

Chu Lei, senior researcher at the Healthcare Executive Institute, said there is a trend of Chinese pharmaceutical companies developing and launching more rare disease medicines, covering both innovative and generic drugs.

Among the rare disease treatments approved in China last year, Chu said more than 17 were developed by Chinese enterprises.

Frost & Sullivan, a global consulting and market research firm, has forecast that China's rare disease drug market will expand from $1.3 billion in 2020 to $25.9 billion by 2030, representing a compound annual growth rate of 34.5 percent. China is expected to account for 6.8 percent of the global rare disease drug market by 2030, it said.

Yet to build a stronger innovation ecosystem, Zhang called for closer coordination among hospitals, research institutions, innovative drug companies and patient organizations.

She suggested accelerating special legislation for rare diseases, improving incentives for drug development and building national-level platforms — including a rare disease laboratory and a medical research data center — to connect basic research, clinical translation and industrial application.

Payment support is equally important, Zhang said. Since basic medical insurance focuses on essential coverage, and commercial insurance and charity support remain limited, some patients still face the dilemma of having medicines available but being unable to afford them. Such gaps also weaken expectations for companies investing in rare disease drug development.

Chu, the senior researcher, also said commercial insurance could open up a new payment channel for rare disease medicines and help support related R&D innovation.

Furthermore, Zhang suggested establishing dedicated rare disease funding, mainly supported by government fiscal input and supplemented by social fundraising. The fund could be led by the National Healthcare Security Administration, with multi-departmental coordination, and pilots could first be launched in regions with stronger diagnosis and treatment capacity.

"Accessible, affordable and sustainable — these words are our solemn commitment to every rare disease patient," Zhang said.

Zhang's remarks come after the World Health Assembly adopted a resolution in 2025 identifying rare diseases as a priority for global health equity and inclusion, with this year's discussions focused on moving from "promise to progress".

She said the global consensus offers an important reference for China and a platform for the country to share its experience in diagnosis networks, clinical research, AI applications and patient support.

Looking ahead, China can further advance diagnosis networks, legislation, scientific innovation and funding mechanisms in a coordinated way, so that efforts in rare disease control and treatment can move from local exploration to systematic breakthroughs, Zhang said, adding, "Rare disease patients should not be forgotten or left behind."

NBA's Curry, Li-Ning ink major deal

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Chinese sportswear giant Li-Ning is turning to NBA superstar Stephen Curry to accelerate its global growth and strengthen its basketball and lifestyle segments. On Monday, the company announced a partnership with Curry and his Curry Brand, to develop basketball, golf and lifestyle products, and promote sports culture initiatives worldwide.

Li-Ning plans to open Curry Brand stores in both China and the United States, reflecting its ambition to expand its international footprint and elevate brand equity.

The Golden State Warriors guard called the deal "the partnership of a lifetime".

"I couldn't be more proud to build a long-term vision with Li-Ning that will fuel the Curry Brand for years to come and unlock the full potential of this company on a global scale," Curry wrote in a letter.

Curry's selection of Li-Ning over other US and international offers — despite similar or even higher financial proposals — highlights the company's growing appeal.

Curry said he was impressed while testing shoes from Li-Ning signature athletes Dwyane Wade and Warriors teammate Jimmy Butler, which influenced his decision.

Li-Ning was founded in 1990 by Chinese Olympic gold medalist Li Ning. The company has over 7,600 stores.

Adam Zhang, founder of KeySolution Sports Consulting, described the collaboration as "a breakthrough in business models for Chinese sportswear brands".

Zhang said, "Li-Ning's partnership with Stephen Curry establishes a stand-alone sub-brand, similar to Nike's Jordan brand, with its own retail channels and athlete endorsements."

The line will focus on basketball footwear, likely expanding into golf, tapping Curry's 150 million global fans and China's massive basketball audience, said Zhang.

The move positions Li-Ning to scale revenue rapidly and marks a milestone in the globalization of Chinese sportswear brands. Based on Li-Ning's previous collaborations, Curry-branded basketball shoes alone could exceed 600,000 pairs annually. At an average selling price of 1,000 yuan ($148), this translates to roughly 600 million yuan in footwear revenue.

Analysts view the partnership as a potential turning point for Li-Ning's basketball division, which experienced a lackluster performance in 2025.

Sinolink Securities cited early signs of recovery in 2026, saying the Curry partnership could drive near-term growth, improve brand perception and reduce consumer education costs in overseas markets. It may also enhance Li-Ning's ability to secure shelf space in key retail channels across Europe and North America.

Merck launches innovation center in Shenzhen

By CHEN HONG
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Merck, a major science and technology company, started operations of a new innovation and collaboration center in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Monday. This center is dedicated to serving the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area by uniting efforts from government, industry and academia to foster technological breakthroughs on a global scale.

"It's not just an innovation center, it's also a collaboration center that will bring different forces together," said Rogier Janssens, president of Merck China. "The question was never why Shenzhen, but rather when. As an epicenter of science and technology, Shenzhen is perhaps the capital of the world in these fields right now."

The center, spanning a total of 2,500 square meters in Nanshan district, is a joint effort by Merck, the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) and the Shenzhen municipal government.

It includes a 600-square-meter main facility and an additional 1,900-square-meter laboratory operated by CAS. The laboratory is accessible to students, faculty members and research teams within the CAS system, fostering an open innovation ecosystem.

Janssens highlighted the center's role in facilitating breakthroughs, which he described as "not a solo act". He said: "We have the government providing policy support, academia offering ideas and innovation, and Merck bringing scale and speed to development.

"This cocktail of collaboration is what will drive new innovations forward."

The center is strategically positioned to capitalize on the GBA's burgeoning role as a gateway to global markets.

"Lots of Chinese startups and academic projects are originating right here, and the GBA offers opportunities to go global from this part of the world into any other one, especially given the financial markets so close by in Hong Kong," said Janssens.

However, he emphasized that the primary goal is to drive innovation through collaboration, with global expansion as a potential benefit.

Noting that Merck has witnessed China's evolution over its 93-year presence in the country, Janssens said China's opening-up is transitioning from phase 1.0, characterized by a surge in manufacturing and production, to the current 2.0.

This new phase emphasizes innovation and talent development, enhancing the entire ecosystem and fostering collaboration between government, industry and academia.

With the new center, Merck could better serve the development of the GBA with efforts including introducing global technological resources, high-end equipment and laboratory consumables, alongside supporting local enterprises to enhance their research and development capabilities and align with international standards, said Janssens.

Nation eyes mega-infrastructure investment push

BEIJING — China is mulling multi-trillion-yuan investment through a "Six Networks" initiative, as the country works to expand domestic demand and stabilize economic growth amid external uncertainties and lingering domestic supply-demand imbalances.

The "Six Networks" include water networks, new-type power grids, computing power networks, next-generation communication networks, urban underground pipeline networks and logistics networks.

Bolstering the country's strategic economic positioning, the initiative has been given prominent attention by both the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council Executive Meeting in recent sessions.

China is now moving quickly to implement the investment plans. Li Chao, spokesperson with the National Development and Reform Commission, said at a recent news conference that the commission would promptly issue relevant plans and implementation schemes, further coordinate the construction aspects of the "Six Networks," clarify investment priorities in each area, break down targets into annual tasks and set clear timelines and progress schedules.

Investment in the "Six Networks" and related key areas is provisionally estimated to exceed 7 trillion yuan ($1 trillion) this year alone, said NDRC head Zheng Shanjie.

China expects to invest more than 5 trillion yuan during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30) on the upgraded power grid alone, which will involve the building of power transmission corridors and inter-provincial electricity mutual-aid projects, and the upgrading of urban power distribution networks and the strengthening of weak county-level and rural power grids.

While the country has already built a massive, safe and technologically advanced national power grid, surging new energy connection demand, growing regional power supply-demand imbalances, and the increasing complexity of safe grid operations have prompted action towards building a more secure, reliable and environmentally friendly power grid system.

Underground pipelines represent another massive investment front. China had built nearly 3.9 million kilometers of pipelines by the end of 2025, the world's largest such network.

Yet gaps remain, as aging pipelines urgently need replacement, and problems such as insufficient urban drainage capacity and water supply leakage still remain.

During the 15th Five-Year Plan period, China expects to invest approximately 5 trillion yuan to build and renovate about 770,000 km of gas, water supply, drainage and heating pipelines, enhancing urban infrastructure safety and resilience.

The investment wave will ripple across a wide range of sectors, said Zhou Wei, managing director of China Investment Consulting Co Ltd, citing demand for steel, pipes and construction machinery from traditional infrastructure upgrades.

The "Six Networks" should not only serve as an independent network separately, but also can play a part in multi-network collaboration, to promote the optimization and integration of modern infrastructure systems and achieve larger efficiency, the NDRC said.

"In the short term, hardware and some software investments related to the 'Six Networks' construction carry the certainty of incremental investment," said Wang Xiaojie, chief domestic policy analyst at Western Securities' research center.



An image captures the construction of a box girder for the Jiaozuo-Luoyang-Pingdingshan High-speed Railway, a project partially undertaken by China Railway Construction Corp's 24th bureau, in Jiaozuo, Henan province, on May 25. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In the long term, the new infrastructure is expected to boost the improvement of the industrial ecosystem, leading to a virtuous cycle of investment and consumption, further amplifying domestic demand.

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BUSINESS

Foreign luxury firms see China sales surge

Tapestry, Ralph Lauren, Canada Goose have strong quarters driven by Gen Z shoppers

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Above: People check out Coach handbags during the eighth China International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 6. Coach is a brand owned by US-based luxury company Tapestry.
GAO YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Right: Customers shop at a Polo Ralph Lauren store in Shanghai on May 2.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

A string of upbeat earnings reports from global luxury and lifestyle apparel companies show that Chinese shoppers are returning to premium spending, boosted by localized and culturally relevant products for the Chinese market from these brands.

From accessible luxury handbags to high-end outerwear and classic US fashion, brands including Tapestry Inc, Ralph Lauren and Canada Goose Holdings all reported recent quarterly sales surges in China, driven by Generation Z shoppers — those born roughly between 1997 and 2012 — localized marketing campaigns and strong Chinese New Year demand.

For foreign apparel companies, China is once again becoming a critical growth engine.

Tapestry, parent company of Coach and Kate Spade New York, delivered some of the strongest signs of momentum. The company said China sales jumped 55 percent in the fiscal third quarter ended March 28, helping drive a 30 percent increase across the Asia-Pacific on a constant-currency basis.

The surging business resulted from a strategy of focusing on young consumers. The company added more than 2.4 million new customers globally during the quarter, with Gen Z consumers accounting for more than 35 percent of those acquisitions. Coach handbags proved especially popular, with unit sales rising more than 20 percent alongside low double-digit increases in average selling prices. The brand has established a presence in over 90 cities nationwide, with more than 350 stores spanning tier-one to tier-four markets. It will soon roll out targeted plans for nearly 200 additional cities this year.

The performance shows strong evidence that Chinese consumers remain willing to spend on brands that combine craftsmanship, accessibility and cultural relevance.

CEO Joanne Crevoiserat said Tapestry's focus on younger shoppers and localized engagement was helping fuel growth in China.

To coincide with Chinese New Year celebrations, Coach partnered with Chinese streetwear label Clot on an immersive campaign that blended gaming, cafes, exclusive merchandise and community events. The initiative was designed to deepen connections with younger consumers while reinforcing the brand's local relevance.

Crevoiserat said during the company's earnings call, "Our strategies of getting behind a real focus on Gen Z consumers is driving our business with new customer acquisition."

During her recent visit to China, Crevoiserat said the group has stayed closely attuned to Chinese consumers, with a particular focus on the lifestyles, values and consumption preferences of younger generations.

As Chinese consumers increasingly prioritize quality, emotional connections and self-expression, the company is forging lasting and profound emotional bonds with them through localized product development, omnichannel engagement and deeper cultural resonance, she said.

For example, initiatives such as the "China Cool" project support the growth of young Chinese design talent, infusing the brand with local inspiration and innovative vitality.

The company continues to optimize touchpoints across offline retail, digital platforms and content ecosystems to deliver brand experiences aligned with local preferences and younger consumers.

She said that over the next decade, about 5 million Chinese consumers will come of age each year. The company's brands aspire to be the choice for "the first handbag" in these young consumers' lives.

Ralph Lauren Corp has also benefited from the rebound in Chinese demand.

The company on May 21 reported fourth-quarter revenue growth of 17 percent on a reported basis, while Asia sales climbed 31 percent. China was the standout market, with sales surging more than 50 percent during the quarter.

Executives attributed the growth to strong Chinese New Year spending, expansion across key Chinese cities and a broad push into localized digital marketing.

President and CEO Patrice Louvet pointed to a range of China-focused initiatives during the earnings call, including digital red-envelope campaigns on WeChat and a large drone show in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, tied to Chinese New Year festivities.

"China performance was supported by an exceptionally strong Chinese New Year, along with further expansion across our top six city clusters and on Douyin," Louvet said.

Chief Financial Officer Justin Picicci said the company was also scaling its digital ecosystem across China while increasing engagement on local social-media platforms.

Meanwhile, Canada Goose Holdings Inc's fourth-quarter revenue rose 18 percent, while China sales increased more than 24.2 percent to 172.2 million Canadian dollars ($124.7 million).

The Canadian outerwear maker said results were supported by expanded product offerings and the launch of its first Chinese New Year capsule collection, part of a broader strategy to increase product newness and deepen engagement with Chinese shoppers.

The company also introduced its largest spring collection to date as it seeks to broaden appeal beyond winter apparel and establish itself as a year-round luxury lifestyle brand.

Taken together, the earnings reports suggest premium international brands are succeeding in China by leaning heavily into localized storytelling, digital ecosystems and culturally tailored experiences rather than relying solely on traditional luxury positioning.

The strategy appears especially effective with younger consumers. Gen Z and millennial shoppers in China are increasingly driving growth in fashion and lifestyle categories, industry analysts said, particularly for brands that can combine global prestige with local cultural fluency.

Cheng Weixiong, a fashion analyst and founder of Shanghai Liangqi Brand Management, said the country's multitiered consumer market continues to offer significant growth opportunities for international top designer and apparel brands.

"This resurgence is underpinned by deep-seated consumer trust in these brands' lifestyle positioning and product quality. Sustained, high-frequency content marketing has been instrumental in driving the brands' operational turnaround," Cheng said.

The resilience in apparel and luxury spending may also reflect a broader shift in Chinese consumption patterns. Consumers are becoming more selective, prioritizing experiences, emotional value and identity-driven purchases over purely functional spending, he added.

Online
Unlock China's Treasures: Shop, Explore, Enjoy.

Solid foundation helps nation's cosmetics industry bloom

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**

The country's beauty market is witnessing an increase of domestic brands that are consolidating their positions and driving sector growth, according to industry reports.

Data from the China Association of Fragrance Flavour and Cosmetic Industries show that among the top 500 brands by transaction value in 2025, the number of brands exceeding 100 million yuan ($14.74 million) in scale rose from 746 in 2023 to 839 in 2025. At the same time, the market share of domestic brands climbed to 57.37 percent, marking five consecutive years of growth and signaling a fundamental shift in market power.

Leading listed and pre-listing companies in China's first-tier beauty market are performing strongly. Data from FBeauty show that the top 10 domestic beauty enterprises generated total revenue exceeding 60 billion yuan, with 3 billion yuan now serving as the new threshold for inclusion in the top 10.

These enterprises are evolving strategically: moving from reliance on single brands to multibrand portfolios; from traffic-driven to research and development-driven models; and from a domestic focus to global expansion. Each shift reflects the broader trajectory of the country's beauty industry.

In 2025, the top 10 domestic beauty listed and pre-listing companies posted combined revenue of 60.072 billion yuan and net profit attributable to shareholders of 7.16 billion yuan. This represents a significant leap from 2024, when total revenue stood at 54.37 billion yuan and net profit at 4.883 billion yuan.

The market's upper echelon remained largely stable. Proya retained its leading position with 10.59 billion yuan in revenue, marking its third consecutive year as the top domestic beauty company and the only enterprise to surpass the 10-billion-yuan milestone. Chicmax Group achieved a 35.12 percent year-on-year growth rate, closing in on the 10-billion-yuan threshold. Shanghai Jahwa United returned to growth, ranking third with 6.31 billion yuan in revenue.



Visitors get to know products from Proya at its exhibition stand during the China Beauty Expo in Shanghai on May 14, 2025.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The mid-tier segment proved highly competitive, with the companies ranked fourth to seventh all reporting revenue around the 5-billion-yuan mark. Botanee Group and Chando were separated by just 41 million yuan, highlighting the potential for rapid ranking changes. Mao Geping Cosmetics officially joined the "5-Billion Club" with 30.01 percent growth. Although Giant Biogene saw a slight revenue decline, it maintained fourth place at 5.52 billion yuan.

Marubi Biotechnology acted as the "gatekeeper" of the top 10 with 3.46 billion yuan in revenue. Meanwhile, S'young Group and Yatsen Holding — which underwent adjustments last year — returned to growth, both achieving double-digit increases.

For example, according to Yatsen Holding Ltd's 2025 annual financial results, the company achieved full-year revenue of 4.3 billion yuan, representing a year-on-year increase of 26.7 percent. Gross margin improved to 78.2 percent, up 1.1 percentage points year-on-year. Notably, non-GAAP net profit reached 8.4 million yuan, marking a historic breakthrough as the company recorded its first-ever annual non-GAAP profit since going public.

The skincare business demonstrated robust growth momentum, with net revenue surging 63.5 percent year-on-year to 2.28 billion yuan, accounting for 53 percent of total annual net revenue. The company has established a high-quality dual-engine growth pattern driven by both skincare and color cosmetics, providing more resilient support for future business expansion, said the company.

The company continues to adhere to an R&D-driven strategy, maintaining consistent investment in scientific research. In 2025, R&D expenditure reached 140 million yuan, a year-on-year increase of 25.6 percent, with the R&D expense ratio remaining above 3 percent for the fourth consecutive year. The company's cumulative R&D investment has approached 700 million yuan.

Industry data support the rise of beauty and cosmetic products. In terms of cosmetics, retail sales reached 32.6 billion yuan in April, representing a year-on-year increase of 4.7 percent, said the National Bureau of Statistics.

In the first four months, retail sales of cosmetics in China reached 154.2 billion yuan, a year-on-year increase of 5.6 percent. This growth rate significantly outpaces the 4 percent recorded during the same period last year and far exceeds the 1.9 percent increase in the total retail sales of consumer goods.

Cosmetics accounted for about 0.93 percent of total consumer retail sales during this period, marking a further increase compared to the previous year. The industry's sustained recovery trend has injected strong confidence into the market for the first half, said Cosmetic Newspaper.

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CHINA

Bloom boom



Visitors take photos amidst a sea of blooming hydrangeas at a park in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Tuesday. This year, the park has revamped its planting layout to feature a variety of flowers. These hydrangeas, ranging in color from pale green to deep violet-blue, will bloom through August.

WANG YUHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

DPP's bid to smear mainland social media apps denounced

Actions reflect 'insecurity and fear' and are doomed to fail, spokeswoman says

By LI SHANGYI
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A Chinese mainland spokeswoman said on Wednesday that the Lai Ching-te administration's attempts to undermine cross-Strait exchanges and integration by discrediting mainland-based social media platforms are doomed to fail.

During a regular news conference, Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, criticized the Democratic Progressive Party authorities, under Lai's leadership, for continuing to smear mainland-based social media platforms and intimidating Taiwan's youth, despite the role the platforms have played in helping young people on the island access opportunities and pursue their aspirations.

Zhu said the actions reflected the DPP authorities' "insecurity and fear", adding that any attempt to undermine cross-Strait exchanges and integration is doomed to fail.

She made the remarks in response to a recent dialogue between Lai and high school students in Taiwan, during which Lai claimed that the influence of TikTok and RedNote, also known as Xiaohongshu, on the island's younger generation had become a "security crisis".

Lai said such influence could erode Taiwan's "will to safeguard democracy" and lead people to view the mainland as "benign". He called on the island's education and cultural authorities to address the issue.

"Mainland compatriots are not only good people to Taiwan compatriots, but also their relatives and family members," Zhu said.

She noted that the growing popularity of mainland social media apps among Taiwan residents, especially the younger generation, reflects how the platforms have enabled richer life experiences and greater opportunities for self-expression.

According to statistics, there are about 3 million RedNote users in Taiwan, with around 30 percent of high school students using the app. Users commonly turn to the platform for recommendations on travel, fashion and dining experiences.

In December, the DPP authorities in Taiwan announced a one-year ban on RedNote, citing fraud cases associated with the platform. However, users in Taiwan with local IP addresses reportedly remain active on the platform despite the ban.

In addition to RedNote, the DPP authorities have recently identified four other mainland-developed apps as potential risks related to real-time behavioral monitoring, system information collection, and data transmission and sharing.

The apps include Amap, a navigation service; Bilibili, a video-sharing platform; iQIYI, a streaming platform; and BIMOBIMO, an artificial intelligence-powered chatbot application. The DPP authorities have urged the public to remain vigilant in safeguarding their digital security.

Zhu criticized the DPP authorities for discrediting mainland technology products and discouraging Taiwan residents from using related applications. She said the move was driven by the agenda of "opposing and resisting the mainland".

"Such actions are anti-technology and contrary to the trend of the times, and will only lead to growing public discontent in Taiwan," Zhu said.

During the news conference, the spokeswoman also reiterated that peaceful reunification and "one country, two systems" are the basic policy framework for resolving the Taiwan question and the preferred approach to achieving national reunification. She was responding to a recent report by the Lowy Institute, an Australian think tank, on the mainland's approach to Taiwan.

She said the specific form of implementing "one country, two systems" in Taiwan would fully take into account the island's realities, draw extensively on the views and suggestions of people from all sectors on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, and give full consideration to the interests and sentiments of Taiwan compatriots.

Zhu added that, provided national sovereignty, security and development interests are safeguarded, Taiwan's social system and way of life would be fully respected after peaceful reunification, and the aspiration of Taiwan compatriots to be masters of their own affairs would be fully protected in accordance with the law.

City-level cooperation key to Sino-African friendship

By YANG RAN and **LIU JIANQIAO**

As the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges unfolds, city leaders from across Africa have underscored the critical role of city-level cooperation in deepening China-Africa relations, emphasizing that people-to-people exchanges, particularly among young people, are vital to the long-term development of China-Africa friendship.

The remarks were made at the 2026 Global Mayors Dialogue in Beijing on Wednesday. The event, themed "Enhance Cultural Exchange and Mutual Learning; Inherit the Time-Honored Friendship Between China and Africa", brought together city leaders from African nations to discuss ways to expand practical cooperation and jointly advance modernization.

El Hadji Saer Faye, deputy mayor of Ziguinchor, Senegal, highlighted the crucial role of local governments in implementing China-Africa cooperation. He said local governments should serve as ambassadors of China-Africa friendship because it is in cities where people experience the tangible benefits of such cooperation in their daily lives.

Faye said African cities could learn from China's expertise in urban planning, transportation, industrial development and poverty alleviation efforts. Chinese cities, meanwhile, could draw inspiration from Africa's experiences in community resilience, social cohesion and local innovation.

According to the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, 187 sister-city relationships were established between China and African nations as of April.

Josy Michaud-Payet, mayor of Victoria, Seychelles, said her city has established sister-city ties with many Chinese cities and stands as "living proof" of the benefits of such relationships.

City-level connections "create a vast platform for small countries like us to benefit from exchanges of all the experiences from cities around the world", she said. "We have benefited a lot from China in terms of infrastructure, culture and education."

Khalid El Fataoui, a member of the Marrakech city council and head of international cooperation, cited the two-decade friendship between Marrakech and Ningbo, Zhejiang province, as an example of how city-to-city cooperation can strengthen China-Africa ties.

He said cooperation between cities helps ensure that agreements reached at the national level are effectively implemented. City-level exchanges also facilitate mutual learning and help address practical challenges such as transportation and sustainable development.

Beyond government cooperation, El Fataoui emphasized the importance of people-to-people ties and cultural exchanges. He identified language barriers as a major obstacle to communication between Chinese and African people and called for greater efforts to promote language learning on both sides. He also urged more frequent exchanges among universities and young people.

According to the Confucius Institute website, Africa was home to 67 Confucius Institutes as of the end of 2023. Meanwhile, Chinese universities offer language programs in more than 20 native African languages.

This year has been designated as the China-Africa Year of People-to-People Exchanges. Key priorities include strengthening mutual learning among civilizations, expanding people-to-people exchanges — especially among young people — and deepening exchanges of governance experience.

Yang Cheng contributed to this story.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Novel gas-solid battery can also store hydrogen

By LI MENGHAN
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A Chinese research team has developed the world's first gas-solid battery capable of storing hydrogen at normal room temperature and pressure while simultaneously discharging electricity. This breakthrough bypasses the extreme conditions required by conventional hydrogen containment methods.

The findings were published recently in the peer-reviewed scientific journal Joule.

"Compared to conventional batteries using liquid electrolytes — the chemical medium that allows electrical charge to flow — such as lithium-ion batteries, all-solid-state batteries fundamentally address the safety issue of battery flammability," said Chen Ping, corresponding author of the study and a researcher at the Dalian Institute of Chemical Physics of the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

"They also offer potential advantages such as higher energy density, meaning they can store more power in a smaller size, improved cycle performance, and a wider operating temperature range, making them a key development direction for next-generation electrochemical energy storage technologies," Chen added.

However, the widely studied lithium-ion solid-state batteries still face hurdles. These include poor contact between the solid components, slow movement of electrical charges, large changes in the size of the battery electrodes during operation, and high costs. These issues hinder their efficiency and limit their transition from the laboratory to mass production.

To address these problems, Chen's team proposed a new approach in 2018. The team suggested using hydride ions — hydrogen atoms with an extra electron that carries a negative charge — as the charge carriers in all-solid-state batteries. These ions are highly reactive, store a large amount of energy, and rely on abundant natural resources. Crucially, they prevent the formation of metal dendrites, which are needle-like structures that can grow inside a battery, cause short circuits, and create safety risks.

The team also developed a novel electrolyte to keep these hydride ions moving smoothly even at low temperatures, and subsequently verified its usability in an all-solid-state hydride ion prototype battery developed in 2025.

Building on their previous progress, the team introduced hydrogen gas into the battery reaction, enabling it to operate over a wide temperature range from minus 20 C to around 90 C. The battery utilizes a heat-releasing reaction between magnesium and hydrogen, which act as the active materials for the negative and positive poles of the battery, respectively. The heat generated by this reaction is harnessed to produce electrical output. In this setup, the solid electrolyte serves as a highway for the hydride ions to travel through, while electrons flow through an external wire to power devices.

Experiments showed that the battery's initial discharge capacity — a measure of how much electrical energy can be released from the battery materials — can reach 1,526 milliamp-hours per gram. Impressively, it retained over 70 percent of its capacity after 60 charge-discharge cycles.

Moreover, when 10 small batteries were stacked together to create a larger battery pack, it generated more than 2.4 volts and successfully powered an LED bulb, demonstrating the technology's practical potential.

Notably, during discharge, hydrogen is converted into hydride ions, while the metal is oxidized to form magnesium hydride. The process reverses during charging: the magnesium hydride releases hydrogen gas and changes back into metal, allowing the hydrogen to be safely locked inside the solid metal.

"The system can function both as a battery for energy storage and as a hydrogen tank, achieving efficient hydrogen storage at ambient temperature and pressure," Chen said.

"As an energy storage device, the battery has a charge-discharge efficiency of around 56 percent, leaving significant room for improvement. However, when employed as a hydrogen storage solution, its hydrogen energy utilization efficiency can reach 93.9 percent, which is one-third higher than that of traditional thermal hydrogen storage methods," she added.

This work has opened up a new path for hydrogen storage. It completely avoids the extreme conditions required by conventional physical methods, such as compressing hydrogen gas under a crushing pressure of 700 atmospheres, or cooling it down to a frigid minus 253 C to turn it into a liquid.

Chen noted that this battery is still in the research and development stage, making its overall market cost difficult to determine. However, a preliminary assessment of material costs shows promise. Magnesium and the raw chemical blocks for the electrolyte both cost several tens of thousands of yuan per metric ton, which is relatively low compared to mainstream batteries used today.

Breathing fire



An artist performs the Sichuan Opera "fire breathing" stunt in Dongxing district of Neijiang, Sichuan province, on Wednesday. In recent years, Dongxing district has actively organized Sichuan Opera tours, enriching local residents' cultural lives.

LAN ZITAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

New gene could bolster high-protein corn cultivation

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Chinese scientists have discovered a second major high-protein gene in corn, a breakthrough that could significantly boost the nutritional value of the crop and reduce China's heavy reliance on imported animal feed.

By combining this newly mapped gene with another discovered by the same team, researchers can increase the protein content of standard corn from 10 percent to 15 percent. For China's most widely planted commercial hybrid corn varieties, grain protein could jump from 8.5 percent to between 12 percent and 13 percent — all without reducing the overall yield.

The findings, representing 15 years of work by a collaborative team from the Center for Excellence in Molecular Plant Sciences at the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai Normal University, and Sichuan Agricultural University, were published on Wednesday in the journal Nature.

The research carries massive economic implications for China's livestock industry. Protein feed is one of the most expensive and scarce ingredients in diets for pigs, poultry and cattle. Currently, China relies on foreign imports for up to 80 percent of its protein feed materials, primarily soybean meal. In 2025, the country's soybean imports exceeded 100 million metric tons.

Experts estimate that if the protein content of feed corn can be raised by 4 percentage points nationwide, it could slash soybean imports by roughly 30 million tons annually, dramatically shifting the supply-and-demand balance.

While wild ancestors of modern corn boast protein levels as high as 30 percent, those nutritional traits were inadvertently lost over centuries of farming. Because early farmers and modern breeders focused entirely on increasing crop volume and starch, the specific genes responsible for high protein were gradually lost.

In 2022, the research team isolated the first of these lost genes, named THP9-T, from wild corn. Their latest breakthrough centers on a second gene, THP3-T.

"THP3-T acts like the core engine on the nitrogen metabolism production line, encoding an enzyme responsible for efficiently synthesizing amino acids," said Wu Yongrui, a lead scientist on the study.

Wu explained that the team found unique variations in this gene that essentially act as an upgrade to the engine, giving it a stronger "throttle". This allows the corn plant to capture and use nitrogen — a foundational building block for nutrients — much more efficiently to manufacture protein.

When THP3-T works in tandem with the gene discovered in 2022, they form a powerful metabolic center. This genetic teamwork allows the corn to thrive and maintain high protein levels even in low-nitrogen soil, reducing the need for heavy chemical fertilizers.

In livestock production, this high-protein corn could replace between 50 percent to 100 percent of the soybean meal traditionally used in pig feed, and significantly reduce soybean reliance in poultry farming. For farmers and industrial producers, the scientists say the crop will lower overall feed costs, protect national food security, and boost farming incomes.

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POLICY REVIEW

Nation's standards grow in influence

Hangzhou ISO meeting addresses need to make scenic spots, hospitality more accessible

By YANG FEIYUE
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SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

China hosted its first-ever ISO tourism technical committee meeting recently, on the back of four updated national standards for the tourism sector, highlighting the nation's push to play a bigger role in the rollout of international standards.

In mid-May, the International Organization for Standardization's Technical Committee on Tourism and Related Services (ISO/TC 228) held its plenary meeting in Hangzhou in East China's Zhejiang province. It was the first time in the committee's 21-year history that the gathering had taken place in China.

The timing was no coincidence as just weeks earlier, China's State Administration for Market Regulation released four new recommended national standards covering tourist shopping venues, smart scenic area operations, senior travel services and accessible hotel services. Three of them take effect on Aug 1, while the smart tourism standard follows on Nov 1.

Together, the new standards and the Hangzhou meeting point to China playing a growing role in shaping tourism standards internationally, officials and industry experts said.

They described the four updated national standards, all recently issued under the national tourism standardization technical committee (TC210), as a major step forward.

The most notable is the accessible tourism service standard for hotels, which marks China's first national standard in this category. It aligns with the ISO international standard Accessible tourism for all — Requirements and recommendations (ISO 21902), which served as the basis for a new Chinese national standard issued just last month — modified to fit local conditions and regulatory frameworks, according to authorities.

The standard moves beyond the traditional focus on wheelchair users to cover all types of travelers with accessibility needs, including seniors, families with young children and people with temporary injuries. It sets quantitative requirements for 18 categories of facilities and outlines service protocols for six core scenarios.

In the area of tourist accommodation, the standard specifies accessible guest room configurations, including door widths and grab bar installations at precise heights. The information and communication protocols demand that all digital systems — including websites, mobile apps and self-service kiosks — comply with international accessibility standards. The training section requires ongoing staff training and the employment of personnel with specialized knowledge in areas such as sign language and Braille.

"This is a shift from 'one-time hardware installation' to 'long-term service operations'," said Liu Jianming, a senior official from the ministry's Tourism Quality Supervision and Management Office.

The smart scenic area operations standard (GB/T 30225—2026) is the first revision since its original release in 2013. It adds a new chapter on data management and breaks down the old "application service platform" into four distinct sections, consisting of smart management, smart service, smart marketing and smart experiences. The goal, according to the standard, is to make tourism operations "digital, connected and intelligent" from end to end.

Two other released standards target specific pain points. The tourist shopping venue standard requires at least 12 themed activities per year, with cultural experiences making up no less than half, and mandates 48-hour returns and a minimum 95 percent visitor satisfaction rate. The senior travel service standard, a completely new issuance, addresses China's rapidly aging population by setting rules on itinerary pacing, staff training and emergency protocols.

Vote of confidence

The domestic push reflects China's deepening commitment to tourism standardization, which has not gone unnoticed abroad.

The decision to bring the ISO/TC 228 plenary meeting to Hangzhou was made by a vote of all member states.

"We applied two years ago and won," Liu said, adding that Hangzhou's accelerated development over the past few years represents the general tourism development in China.

During the ISO/TC 228 plenary meeting, more than 60 international delegates from 33 countries and four international organizations spoke positively of tourism operations in the city.

During the weeklong meeting, they visited rural villages, a vocational college, tech companies including Ant Group, and cultural heritage sites.

Manuel Otero, the Spanish chairman of ISO/TC 228, said Hangzhou exceeded his expectations.

"I see a very modern city — something I did not expect. Everything is really, very, very well done," he said.

What impressed him greatly was a visit to the Tourism College of Zhejiang, where students in the tea culture program must earn three advanced professional certifications before graduation. During the visit, they presented a standard Song Dynasty (960-1279) tea ceremony that blended centuries-old traditions with contemporary design.

"What I saw yesterday is absolutely with the highest standards," Otero said. "The students smile. They have a good attitude. They have a good mood. We feel that they want to do it — and that is very important for professionals."

Maria Velasco Gonzalez from Spain serves on the ISO/TC 228 working group developing an international standard for smart tourist destinations.

During her visit to Hangzhou, she bought souvenirs and tried her hand at the Song Dynasty tea-whisking ceremony. She was impressed by the meticulous explanation from the instructor that helped her better understand not just the operation but the culture and history behind it.

"If I should rate from 1 to 10, you can have a 10," she said about the experience.

Growing role

China became a participating member of ISO/TC 228 in 2020. In just six years, it has taken on an increasingly prominent role by co-leading 12 international standard projects and pre-work items under discussion, four of which have already been published, according to a senior official with the department of science, technology and education at the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

During the Hangzhou meeting, Chinese delegates made progress in six international standard projects led by China, including sustainable tourism, camping tourism and smart tourism. They also made three new proposals, covering rural tourism and tourism marketing. All were preliminarily approved and will move into the next process.

"We are putting forward our successful practices through the ISO process," tourism official Liu said. "At the same time, we are also learning from other countries."

A senior official with the Standardization Administration of China noted that TC 228 has so far published 60 international standards, with 19 more in development. She cited the United Nations' tourism data showing that global international tourist arrivals reached 1.52 billion in 2025, contributing 9.8 percent to global tourism GDP.

"The vitality of standards lies in their implementation," the official said.

Liu said that the country is considering a standard for pet-friendly tourism — hotels and attractions that welcome travelers with pets.

"Many people have pets at home. Without suitable places to go, the pet owners themselves are less likely to travel. A standard would boost development of new business formats and help offer high-quality products and services," he said.

That might seem a long way from accessible ramps and smart data platforms, but it reflects the same logic that standards are tools to solve real problems, participants at the Hangzhou meeting said. As the Hangzhou meeting showed, the solutions China is developing are increasingly attracting global attention.

"They are not just visiting," Liu said of the international delegates. "They are also seriously learning from China's experience."

As tourism becomes more digital, inclusive and experience-driven, officials and experts at the Hangzhou meeting agreed that standards are increasingly shaping not only how people travel, but how destinations compete globally.

Policy Digest

Monthlong online recruitment campaign launched

China has launched a monthlong online recruitment campaign, matching job openings from internet companies with college graduates and other young people.

The event, initiated by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, runs from Monday to June 30.

Local authorities will gather job openings from major internet enterprises and host online recruitment activities. The ministry will collect and release recruitment updates and job vacancies through job.mohrss.gov.cn.

In addition, on-site job fairs will be held in regions with clusters of internet companies such as the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei area, the Yangtze River Delta, Pearl River Delta and the Chengdu-Chongqing region.

Departments push promotion of industrial culture, heritage

The Ministry of Culture and Tourism and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and five other departments have jointly released a notice to promote industrial culture, protect industrial heritage and develop industrial tourism.

The document outlines eight key tasks, such as conducting industrial heritage surveys, strengthening heritage protection, enriching tourism products, improving services and developing study tours.

The notice encourages the creative reuse of industrial sites, innovative industrial tourism products and immersive experiences, as well as industrial-themed study tours to integrate popular science and cultural inheritance.

Meanwhile, the notice also requires such tours to be organized with utmost attention paid to safety. It asked for separation and warning signs to be set between tourism and production areas, as well as emergency protocols and regular rescue drills.

National campaign aims to boost digital literacy, skills

China has unveiled a circular on boosting public digital literacy and skills, outlining priorities for 2026.

The document was jointly released by the Cyberspace Administration of China, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, and the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security.

It puts forward 15 key tasks in six major aspects: optimizing the digital literacy training system, expanding digital application scenarios, raising public awareness of artificial intelligence, advancing inclusive digital development, fostering a sound cyber environment and improving coordination mechanisms.

According to a nationwide survey in 2024 by the CAC, more than 60 percent of Chinese citizens possess basic or higher levels of digital literacy and skills.

New rules target regulating online content distribution

Five Chinese government bodies, including the Cyberspace Administration of China and the Ministry of Public Security, have jointly released a new regulation targeting online information distribution services.

Unveiled on Friday, the regulation will take effect on Sept 1. It defines the regulated services as a full range of operations including content planning, production, distribution, marketing, promotion and brokerage for posts on public social media accounts.

An official from the CAC said that the fast-growing sector has seen irregularities such as hype over trending topics, fabricated online personas and the spread of illegal or harmful content. Such acts have disrupted online order and violated the public's legitimate rights and interests, the official said.

The new rules aim to rectify these problems and build a solid legal shield to forestall relevant risks, the official added.

CHINA DAILY

Tourist center demonstrates metrics in practice

By YANG FEIYUE

Free shuttle buses pull up every few minutes to carry visitors up the winding road to Jingshan Mountain in Hangzhou, East China's Zhejiang province.

At the information desk of the Da Jingshan Tourist Information Center, a staff member switches effortlessly from Mandarin to English to help travelers figure out which bus to take.

The sprawling Da Jingshan center complex, nestled at the foot of a mountain, is known for its thousand-year-old tea culture. Last year, its free shuttle buses carried 2.6 million passengers up and down the mountain. This year, the numbers are already on track to surpass that.

What makes the center stand out is that it has been operating this way for years, following the international standard for tourist information services that was published in 2024. The standard sets global benchmarks for how tourist information centers should serve visitors.

"The work we had already done met the standard," said Liu Yanli, the center's deputy manager, who has worked there since 2019.

That confidence reflects a broader shift in how China engages with global tourism rules.

Natalia Ortiz de Zarate, secretary of ISO/TC 228, describes the relationship as a "win-win".

"China contributes more projects and more initiatives, and also leads some working groups," she said. "At the same time, China adopts international standards. We all win with this relationship."

The Da Jingshan center reflects how international standards are being implemented on the ground. Beyond the free shuttles and multilingual signs, the center offers a full suite of services that align with ISO standards for detailed tourist information, destination promotion, accessible facilities, and trained staff who can answer questions about everything from bus schedules to local history.

One critical change took place in 2023 when the center stopped hiring external guides for its multilingual services.

"They could translate, but they didn't have a deep understanding of Jingshan culture," Liu said.

So the center built its own team of locally trained guides, who are young professionals and know not just the words but the stories behind the local tea fields, the temples and the centuries-old traditions. The feedback from international visitors improved immediately, she added.

During her recent visit to Hangzhou, Ortiz noted that China is no longer just a follower.

"China has moved from standard taker to standard maker," she said. "This is key for the future, because you write how you want the future of tourism to be."

Ortiz pointed to China's proactive approach in identifying gaps where new standards are needed. "China is very good at identifying gaps," she said.

Leonardo Persi, a Brazilian expert in adventure tourism standards, visited the Da Jingshan center during a recent trip and came away impressed. He noticed the accessibility features — the ramps, the clear signage, the spaces designed for elderly visitors and families with young children.

"Your spaces think about all kinds of visitors," he said.

Persi was particularly impressed by the balance between global standards and local character at the destinations in Hangzhou.

"It's a good thing that a country has to apply international standards, but we cannot lose our main cultural characteristics. If we do, everyone becomes like a robot. And that is the one thing all tourists do not want," he said.

Ortiz agreed on the need for balance. "The important thing is not only producing helpful standards, but also boosting their implementation. Otherwise, we will have a book of guidelines that is useful but not used," she added.

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LIFE

An urban narrative centered on water

Well-known as a thoroughfare, city upgrades ferry routes, improves historical sites, and clears interrupted views, giving rise to sightseeing and family travel, report **Yang Feiyue** and **Zhou Lihua** in Wuhan.

China's river city is transforming itself from a transit hub into a cultural destination through poetry, heritage and the landscapes of the Yangtze.

When the Yangtze River reaches Wuhan, Hubei province, it slows down.

For thousands of kilometers upstream, China's longest river cuts through mountains and gorges. But in Wuhan, in the flat heartland of Central China, the Yangtze broadens into a calmer expanse. Tortoise Hill and Snake Hill rise on opposite banks like half-open gates, framing a stretch of water before the river continues east toward the sea.

Mist lingers above the water in late spring. Across the river, skyscrapers emerge and disappear behind shifting veils of vapor. More than 1,200 years ago, Tang Dynasty (618-907) poet Cui Hao stood on this same stretch of riverbank and wrote the lines that would become inseparable from Wuhan's identity: "Where lies my homeland at sunset? Mist upon the river brings deep sorrow."

The poem survived. And so did the view.

Bridges now span the river, and towers rise where fishing boats once gathered. Yet Wuhan, long known as the "thoroughfare of nine provinces" because nearly every major route in Central China seemed to pass through it, is undergoing a quieter transformation.

For generations, travelers once made transient calls here on their way to somewhere else. Now the city wants them to stay.

Standing at Hanyangmen Wharf in Wuchang district, ferry guide Fan Yunlong points toward the muddy-green waters where the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers meet.

"That protruding area over there is Nan'an Mouth. That's where the two rivers merge," he says.

Fan grew up along the riverbanks. He speaks about currents and ferry crossings the way other people talk about family history.

"When I was a kid, we didn't have smartphones. No weather forecast either. Every morning, I'd just look at the bridges. Whichever ones I could see clearly were where the weather was good. That's where I'd go to find my schoolmates," he recalls with a laugh.

He gestures toward the water. The bridges arc across the water like a procession. The stately double-deck Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge, gray and unyielding, has been carrying trains and cars since 1957. Farther south, the orange cables of Yingwuzhou Yangtze River Bridge catch the afternoon light like harp strings. Beyond it, the golden towers of the Yangsigang Yangtze River Bridge rise against the hazy sky.

As he speaks, a white ferry slowly approaches through the fog, its hull carrying the words *Jianghan Lansheng*, roughly translated as "River Confluence Panorama".

Upgraded in early 2026, the themed ferry route links some of Wuhan's most iconic historical sites — from the famed Yellow Crane Tower on the Wuchang bank to Qingchuan Pavilion on the Hanyang shore, where a two-story Ming-Dynasty (1368-1644) structure with red walls and double-eave roofs keeps watch over the water.

The route doesn't just cross the river, but also connects sightseeing with history and quietly reshapes how visitors experience the city.

The concept has proved popular. During the Spring Festival holiday in February, daily passenger numbers on the route exceeded 4,700 — nearly five times higher than the previous year.

The figure indicates roughly 15-20 full sailings in a single day, near the maximum operational capacity, according to the ferry operator.

For Fan, the attraction lies mostly in the river itself.

The Yangtze appears yellow-brown, carrying heavy sediment from western China. The Hanjiang River, narrower and calmer, looks greener. During flood season, the two currents flow side by side before fully blending together. "Like a cocktail," Fan says with a grin.

Written in poetry

For centuries, Wuhan's identity has been inseparable from water.

The city sits at the intersection of the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers and historically developed as three separate towns divided by waterways: Wuchang, Hankou and Hanyang. Together, they became modern Wuhan.

Here, water is geography, memory and psychology. At Yellow Crane Tower, tour guide Wu Yanan has explained this layered identity to countless visitors beneath the towering eaves for more than two years.

Originally constructed during the Three Kingdoms period (220-280), the tower began as a military watchtower. Over the centuries, however, it evolved into one of China's most celebrated literary landmarks, as generations of poets climbed its upper floors, overlooking the Yangtze.

"It has been destroyed and rebuilt many times," Wu says.

The original structure burned down repeatedly through war and fire. The current tower, completed in 1985, was reconstructed based on Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) architectural designs.

Wu has noticed a shift in visitors' interest from simply climbing its nine stories to its legacy of poetry and culture.

"When I first started, people would rush up, take a picture of the river, and rush down," she says. "Now they ask questions. They want to know about the poems, about the history of the reconstructions, about why this tower matters."

Wu has received a rising number of parents who bring their children specifically to recite poems.

The 2023 film *Chang An*, which prominently features Yellow Crane Tower, sparked a fresh wave of interest, with young visitors arriving armed with couplets memorized from the screen, she explains.

The tower has also adapted to a new generation of visitors. During major holidays, performers dressed in Tang Dynasty costumes staged interactive shows that drew large crowds.

Similar efforts to turn heritage into lived experience can be found nearby in Doujiying, a renovated historical neighborhood less than 500 meters from Yellow Crane Tower.

Doujiying's most striking feature is that the Yellow Crane Tower never disappears from view. No matter where visitors stand inside the narrow lanes, the tower rises above the gray-tiled rooftops.

The uninterrupted view is the result of a carefully planned renovation that adjusted the height of several late-20th-century buildings to preserve sightlines toward the tower.

"One building used to block the view completely," says Xia Qi, who oversees operations in the neighborhood. "So we removed an entire floor and turned it into a viewing platform."

The project reflects a broader shift in Wuhan's urban philosophy.

For decades, Chinese cities often prioritized speed, scale and vertical expansion. In parts of Wuhan today, planners are attempting the reverse: reducing height, restoring historical texture, and allowing older cultural symbols to re-emerge within the modern skyline.

Doujiying itself dates back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279). During the late Qing Dynasty, it served as a military grain distribution area, giving the neighborhood its name. In the early 20th century, some of Hubei province's earliest photography studios and pharmacies appeared here.

Now the district mixes historical preservation with contemporary tourism: poetry-themed bookstores, old-time photography museums, teahouses and immersive cultural spaces occupy restored brick buildings. During the 2026 Spring Festival holiday, nearly 670,000 visits were recorded in the area, according to Xia.

Renovating and adapting

Across the river, on Tortoise Hill, another experiment in cultural reinvention is unfolding.

Zhiyin Hall, a newly renovated performance venue overlooking the confluence of the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers, stages an immersive dinner theater production inspired by the Three Kingdoms period, the era of warfare and political intrigue that still occupies an enormous place in the Chinese imagination.

The building itself was originally constructed in 1999 as part of a larger "Three Kingdoms City" tourism complex. "When we took over operations, we kept almost everything structurally intact," says Liu Bin, the project manager. "We just adapted the interior and added performance functions."

He describes it as "micro-renovation". The production, *A Banquet of Beauties from the Three Kingdoms*, combines historical storytelling, dance and regional cuisine. Each course corresponds to a dramatic episode involving legendary female figures from the era.

The venue accommodates around 150 people daily and frequently sells out during weekends and holidays, Liu says.

Yet the site's most popular feature may be its second-floor observation deck that offers access for free. From there, visitors can see six bridges stretching across the rivers on clear days. The Yangtze flows outward in one direction, while the Hanjiang River curves inward from another. Ferries move slowly beneath the skyline.

The view reveals Wuhan's greatest advantage: not individual landmarks, but the relationship between them. Historically, many of the city's tourism resources operated independently — Yellow Crane Tower, Qingchuan Pavilion, the Yangtze light shows, river cruises, museums and historical neighborhoods.

Now officials are attempting to weave them into a single urban narrative centered on water, history and cultural continuity.

The strategy accelerated after 2022, when the city experienced a sharp rise in domestic tourism.

"For a long time, Wuhan was mainly considered a transportation hub," says Su Xing, deputy director of the Wuhan culture and tourism bureau. That perception, he says, has changed dramatically.

Compared with five years ago, the city's visitor numbers and tourism revenue have risen by more than 50 percent. International tourism has also rebounded sharply.

During cherry blossom season this year, local authorities report that Tortoise Hill Park received 10 times its previous average daily visitor volume.

The city's tourism campaigns increasingly emphasize experiential imagery rather than traditional sightseeing alone, as evidenced by offerings such as nighttime ferry rides, riverside concerts, historical reenactments, poetry recitals and seasonal flower-viewing.

Fan Yunlong has a simple way of explaining Wuhan.

"Hold out your right hand," he says. "The thumb is the Hanjiang River. The four fingers are the Yangtze. Between them is the city."

For centuries, Wuhan's rivers made it one of China's great crossroads — a place people moved through on their way elsewhere.

Now the city is trying to turn those same waterways into reasons to stay.

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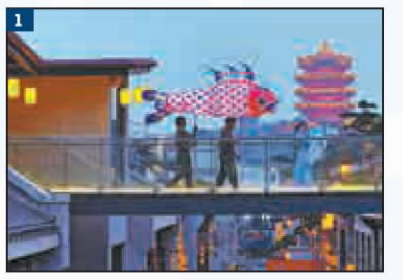
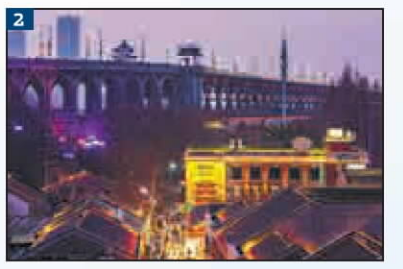


1 Lights trace the city block and a bridge across the Yangtze, altogether composing a scene worth framing in Wuhan, Hubei province.



2 Overlooking the confluence of the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers, Zhiyin Hall stages an immersive dinner theater inspired by the Three Kingdoms.



3 A ferry service crossing the Yangtze River is the heart of the Wuhan experience among travelers.



4 On the Hanyang shore, Qingchuan Pavilion keeps watch over the Yangtze River. Its red walls and double-eave roofs echo Ming-era (1368-1644) elegance.



5 Overlooking the confluence of the Yangtze and Hanjiang rivers, Zhiyin Hall stages an immersive dinner theater inspired by the Three Kingdoms.

The stately double-deck Wuhan Yangtze River Bridge has been carrying trains and cars since 1957. PHOTOS COURTESY OF WUHAN MUNICIPAL BUREAU OF CULTURE AND TOURISM FOR CHINA DAILY

Online Scan the code to watch the video.

A nighttime performance unfolds along a suspended corridor in the Doujiying neighborhood, where the glowing Yellow Crane Tower becomes part of the scene.

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LIFE





Left: Two SPARK initiatives are launched on May 19 at the Re:Think 2026 Sustainable Procurement Innovation Week in Chengdu, Sichuan province, to promote sustainable innovation projects and sustainable lifestyles. **Right:** Song Youyang (second from left), founder and CEO of PEELSPHERE, accepts the honor of her company being selected as one of the first cohort of SPARK Selected 2026. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ideas powering a greener future

From plant-based fabrics and clean materials to community-led crafts, innovators are turning sustainable concepts into market-ready solutions, **Peng Chao** reports in Chengdu.

Apple peels, grape skins and coffee grounds are being transformed into clothing and footwear. Sugarcane and cassava are finding new life as non-toxic paint. Even everyday activities such as cycling or tapping a foot can generate electricity to power smart devices.

These were among the innovations showcased at Re:Think 2026 Sustainable Procurement Innovation Week, recently held in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province. All are aligned with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

The nine-day event, which concluded on May 24, was hosted by the United Nations Development Programme in China, with support from the China International Center for Economic and Technical Exchanges and the Chengdu Hi-Tech Zone.

Themed "Local Ideas, Global Pathways", the event drew participants from government, business, academia, and the innovation ecosystem to help Chinese enterprises strengthen their ability to compete in higher-standard global markets and contribute to sustainable development and global climate goals.

"The Sustainable Development Goals — our shared global blueprint to safeguard people and planet by 2030 — are in serious jeopardy," said James George, UNDP Resident Representative ad interim in China, while addressing the event. "More than one-third of the SDG targets are either stalled or regressing."

Addressing these challenges requires all hands on deck, including small and medium-sized enterprises, which account for around half of global GDP, he said. Therefore, it is of vital importance to ensure that SMEs can thrive in an increasingly interconnected global economy shaped by international standards.

George noted that business competitiveness today is no longer determined solely by cost and scale. Increasingly, it depends on trust, transparency and sustainability.

"Across industries, global markets are placing greater emphasis on ESG (environmental, social, governance) performance, supply chain due diligence, and verifiable standards," he said.

"Consumers are demanding more responsible products, and international partners and investors are looking for reliability, accountability, and long-term value."

To help local innovations succeed globally, Re:Think 2026 took an important step forward this year, evolving from a platform focused primarily on dialogue into one that actively identifies, showcases, and supports concrete solutions.

A major highlight was the launch of the SPARK Selected Initiative, a mechanism designed to discover promising SDG-aligned innovations, raise the visibility for emerging brands and entrepreneurs, and connect them with partners, markets, and future opportunities, George said.

The initiative received a total of 110 applications, from which 11 were selected as its inaugural cohort and officially announced at the event. The selected projects demonstrated strong potential in areas such as supply chain transparency, sustainable value creation and cultural expression.

Among them is PEELSPHERE, a startup based in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, that transforms more than 60 types of non-food agricultural waste — including coffee grounds, fruit peels, wine lees and seaweed — into plant-based fabric.

"The coffee grounds from 18 cups of coffee can produce one square meter of fabric," said Song Youyang, founder and CEO of PEELSPHERE.

She said the fabrics are made by breaking down the effective structural units of agricultural waste to the micro-nano scale, before redesigning and reconstructing them into new materials.

The company has developed three product lines serving footwear, apparel, bags, automotive interiors, and home furnishings. Its products have entered the supply chains of global luxury groups and international automakers.







From top: James George, UNDP Resident Representative ad interim in China, delivers a speech on May 19 at the opening ceremony of the Innovation Week in Chengdu. Models showcase ethnic costumes at a sustainable lifestyle fair during the event in Chengdu Hi-Tech Zone. People shop for handy goods at a sustainable lifestyle fair.

"An increasing number of consumers care about whether the products' materials are natural, healthy and non-toxic," said Song at a panel discussion, noting that such awareness is crucial for the development of sustainable brands.

But functionality is equally important, she said: "Even if a product uses sustainable materials, it cannot be truly sustainable if it wears out after just a few uses."

Song said their products are more durable and resistant to peeling than conventional synthetic leather. Unlike genuine leather, they require little maintenance, can be machine-washed and cost roughly one-third as much.

Transparency is another key factor. "Our raw materials are fully traceable, giving us an edge over brands that merely claim to use sustainable materials but cannot verify their origins," she said.

Those advantages have helped fuel rapid growth. The company has expanded its customer base by around 60 percent this year and continues to receive repeat orders from existing clients.

An innovation project specially invited to the event was Batang Folk Arts, a regional public brand from Batang county in Sichuan's Garze Tibetan autonomous prefecture. The initiative is breathing new life into traditional handicrafts while supporting sustainable development in local communities.

The brand emerged from a traditional skills competition launched in 2023 for local herders and farmers. Categories included sewing, weaving, woodworking and painting. Participants were invited to create handcrafted works using natural materials over seven days.

"We quickly realized that these creations had genuine commercial value — people wanted to buy them on the spot," said Zhang Shufeng, founder of the brand. The competition also sparked lively discussion among locals, she noted, because these skills had been passed down from their parents.

"We saw this as an opportunity to unlock the internal drive for sustainable development within the community, rather than continuing to rely on top-down policy support," she said.

The county subsequently established the brand and a development association. Winners of the competition are paired with designers to create products that blend traditional craftsmanship with modern design. These products are sold at a government-funded exhibition hall and an official online store.

The brand now works with 209 herders and farmers from 91 villages across the county's 17 townships.

One standout artisan, Tenzin, teamed up with a graduate from the University of the Arts London to create his own line of handmade leather bags. Priced at over 1,000 yuan ($147.5) each, the bags earned him an extra income of 100,000 yuan last year.

"What we mean by 'folk art' is not merely traditional crafts, but the art of everyday life — the way local people have lived in harmony with nature for generations," said Zhang.

"We hope to leverage market forces to ensure these traditions are passed down sustainably and to help more people appreciate the wisdom behind them."

SPARK Selected is part of the broader SPARK Sustainable Collective Initiative, a platform linking innovation, sustainable lifestyles, and community participation, which also features a sustainable lifestyle fair and a night market for local residents.

Together, these activities aim to bring sustainable development out of policy discussions and into everyday urban life, while giving greater visibility to local innovations with global relevance that support the achievement of the SDGs.

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Young scientists turn villagers into biodiversity guardians

NANCHANG — Each spring and summer, a group of young researchers leads local volunteers on patrol along farmland and riverbanks three times a week in search of invasive snails in a renowned scenic area in Jiangxi province.

The work is muddy, repetitive and physically demanding, a far cry from the urban careers many of these researchers, most born in the 1990s and 2000s, could have pursued after earning postgraduate and doctoral degrees.

Over the past eight years, members of the Linnaeus Laboratory in Wuyuan county have devoted themselves to removing invasive species, rescuing injured wildlife and promoting environmental awareness. Their efforts have helped protect local biodiversity while inspiring greater public participation in ecological conservation through nature education.

Often dubbed "China's most beautiful village", Wuyuan is famed for its traditional Huizhou-style (Huizhou is the old name for an area including Anhui province) houses with white walls and black tiles, as well as vast fields of rapeseed flowers that attract tourists every spring.

Nestled in a quiet corner of the county seat, the Linnaeus Laboratory is an understated yet magical space. Named after Swedish botanist Carl Linnaeus, it houses microscopes for curious children, petri dishes nurturing fern spores and temporary shelters for rescued wildlife.

Founded in 2018 by botanist Liu Zhilong and partners from several leading Chinese universities, the laboratory reflects a deliberate choice by a group of young scholars to build their careers in rural Jiangxi rather than in major cities.

"At first, villagers thought we were strange people doing strange things. But later, they came to understand exactly what we're trying to achieve," Liu says.

One of the team's annual challenges is combating golden apple snails, an invasive species that threatens crops and aquatic ecosystems.

Team member Zhou Xinlong, who can identify more than 6,000 plant species, teaches residents how to trap snail eggs by placing bamboo slips in shallow-water silt. "We put bamboo strips into the mud in the morning, then return later to collect the snails and remove the eggs," Zhou says.



A researcher from the Linnaeus Laboratory instructs children to remove Canada goldenrod, an invasive plant in Wuyuan, Jiangxi province, on Nov 2, 2024. XINHUA

The fieldwork can be exhausting and occasionally misunderstood.

Shen Xianhui, who holds a PhD in ecology, recalls heading out by boat at 1 am to study snail activity, only to be mistaken for a fish thief by vigilant villagers.

Later in the year, the team turns its attention to another ecological threat: Canada goldenrod, an invasive plant that spreads rapidly and crowds out native vegetation.

To encourage public participation, the researchers organize educational campaigns, sometimes delivering up to nine lectures a day. They teach residents how to identify invasive species and have launched a mini-program that allows the public to report sightings. Volunteers also take part in removal and composting activities.

"After joining the program, I realized this is not just physical work, but a valuable opportunity to help understand nature," says Jiang Li, a local resident who participated with her child.

The laboratory also serves as a hub for nature education, bringing together experts in veterinary science, plant taxonomy, animal behavior and butterfly genome evolution.

Liu says the laboratory offers free or low-cost public classes every week, including indoor lectures, outdoor field trips, and nighttime wildlife observation sessions.

"Nature education is not simply going out for spring outings. It is about helping people build an emotional bond with nature," Liu says.

Over the past eight years, the laboratory's team of more than 20 members has introduced over 55,000 youngsters to nature through programs such as the Field Natural History Expeditions, The Magic of Yeast, and Secrets of the Bacterial World.

The laboratory also operates Wuyuan's only wildlife rescue and rehabilitation center. "We are not only rescuing animals but also changing public attitude toward wildlife," Liu says.

Villagers who once killed snakes on sight or used them to make medicinal liquor are increasingly choosing to protect them instead.

"We hope to make science more accessible," says Ning Zhenzhen, a recent graduate of Nanjing Agricultural University. "Biodiversity protection is not just the responsibility of researchers and authorities. It is a duty shared by all of us."

XINHUA

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LIFE

The future of rural culture

Workshop discusses how to balance modernization with identity as villages undergo rapid change, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

At a Peking University workshop, experts examine whether rural vitalization is also about restoring how communities perceive places.

"What if the most important right in rural development is not the right to build, but the right to perceive?" The question surfaced inside a lecture hall at the university in Beijing in late May, during the workshop.

The discussion quickly moved beyond roads, investment and tourism figures toward questions of memory, belonging and cultural continuity.

That tone was carried throughout the workshop, The Village of Tomorrow: A Global South Perspective on Rural Cultural Construction, which brought together more than 30 scholars, policymakers, designers, and cultural practitioners from China and abroad. Jointly organized by the UNESCO Chair on Creativity and Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, the School of Arts at Peking University, and its Institute for Cultural Industries, the event sparked discussions ranging from heritage preservation and village mapping to cultural memory, tourism pressures and the role of local communities in shaping development.

At the opening of the workshop, Xiang Yong, dean of the Institute for Cultural Industries at Peking University and chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on Creativity and Sustainable Development in Rural Areas, described the workshop as an attempt to move "beyond geographical and cognitive boundaries", emphasizing that rural vitalization should not be treated as a localized policy issue but as a field of comparative learning across the Global South.

"What we are trying to do is distill experiences that can be shared, while opening space for equal dialogue and mutual learning," Xiang says.

He also outlined a series of ongoing initiatives under the UNESCO Chair, including creative rural residencies for young practitioners, art-led rural vitalization projects, rural cultural databases, and multilingual case archives documenting cultural practices in sustainable development. Xiang says the goal is not simply to



document rural practices, but to create platforms where experiences from different regions can be exchanged on equal terms.

Over the past years, these efforts have expanded into sustained field-based training platforms, including a six-year "Creative 100" program in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area that has brought together more than 130 young designers and practitioners, as well as cross-regional craft experiments in provinces such as Guizhou, Yunnan and Sichuan, notes Chen Ping, chairholder of the UNESCO Chair on World Traditional Handicrafts: Inheritance and Innovation, and dean of the Academy of Cultural Heritage and Creativity of Jinan University.

The initiative has also generated extensive field documentation and exhibition outputs, alongside a growing publication series on traditional Chinese handicrafts.

Chen says many heritage projects are no longer focused solely on preservation. Crafts are increasingly entering schools, community workshops, tourism programs, and contemporary design collaborations.

"Culture should not remain in the past as a static legacy. It must be oriented toward the future as a shared imagination," she explains.

Chen says that the shift also changes who gets to shape cultural heritage projects.

"Cultural heritage is not only about safeguarding what exists," she says. "It is about deciding who activates it, under what systems, and for whom it is transformed."

Beyond questions of institutional activation, attention at the workshop turned to how rural space itself is measured, interpreted, and ultimately made visible in policy and planning systems.

"In rural development today, we rely heavily on indicators," says Wang Sha, deputy director of the Research Institute of Better China Initiative at the China Academy of Art. "Road construction, tourism numbers, investment data, infrastructure completion — these are important, but they are not enough."

During fieldwork, Wang says she has visited villages where new guesthouses, paved roads and public squares had transformed the landscape, yet longtime residents still felt disconnected from the places they once knew.

In some villages, old gathering spaces disappeared beneath standardized landscaping. In others, farming rhythms gradually gave way to tourism schedules and livestream-friendly redesigns.

"What disappears is sometimes not a building, but a way of sensing place," she says.

Wang says her team has been documenting local stories, daily practices and sensory memories alongside conventional planning data.

"The question is not only who builds rural space," she says. "It is whether people still have the right to perceive it and define it from within their own experience."

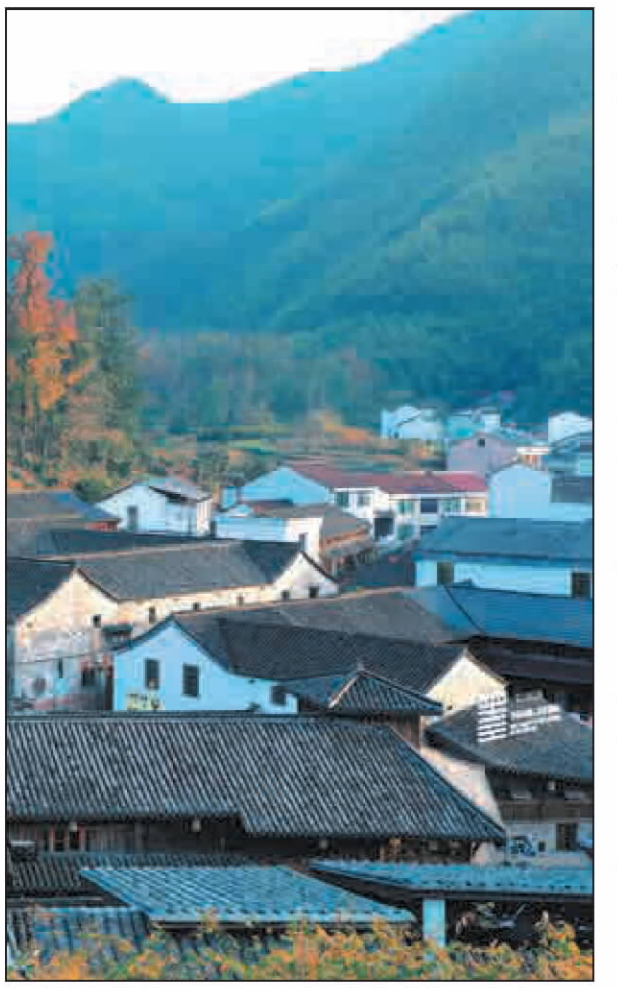
Against the backdrop of mounting global challenges, participants noted that rural vitalization through culture is evolving from a localized practice into a broader intellectual and social movement.

The concern over how rural transformation is framed and standardized finds another perspective in Tran Thi Thuy, deputy director of the Institute of Chinese Studies at the Vietnam Academy of Social Sciences.

Tran says Vietnam's countryside has changed rapidly in recent years through infrastructure expansion, digital technology and tourism development.

But she notes that many Vietnamese people still associate the idea of "home" with rural imagery





Top left: A child learns pottery-making in Yaoli village, Huzhou, Zhejiang province, where traditional crafts have become part of local cultural tourism. **Top:** Visitors take in the countryside scenery from a cafe terrace in Molin village, Jinhua, Zhejiang, reflecting new lifestyle-oriented approaches to rural vitalization. **Above:** An aerial view of Molin village in Jinhua, a rural community exploring culture-led development and tourism. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

— banyan trees, village wells and childhood memories of rice fields.

"Many people still feel that a hometown must be connected to the countryside," she says.

She cautions against reducing rural modernization to a single formula.

"Villages are not only spaces of production," Tran says. "They are also spaces of memory, kinship and belonging."

Red dots crowded the screen as Wang Fang, a professor at Peking University's College of Architecture and Landscape, projected a map tracing traditional villages across river valleys, mountain corridors and historical farming regions.

She revealed an unsettling reality at the gathering: villages are disappearing faster than many protection systems can document them.

"Some villages vanish before researchers even arrive," Wang Fang says. "By the time they enter official surveys, they may already be empty or fundamentally altered."

Her team has been experimenting with data-driven monitoring systems that combine heritage records, satellite imagery, ecological data, and even ancient tree registries to identify villages that may be at risk before decline becomes irreversible. The goal, she explains, is to move beyond what she calls "rescue-style preservation", intervening only after deterioration becomes visible.

In one pilot study in Huangshan, East China's Anhui province, her team analyzed hundreds of villages simultaneously, tracing not only architectural conditions but also changes in settlement vitality, population activity and landscape continuity.

"Protection cannot remain reactive, and we need to understand change before it becomes loss," she says.

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From quiet fishing post to film set and tourism hot spot

By **XING WEN**
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Set-jetting is simple: watch a film, then visit its location.

Ya Lan has done it twice, traveling to the same island 11 years apart.

What she saw in between was not just an island changing, but time, tourism and cinema quietly rewriting its soul.

Back in April 2015, after watching director Han Han's 2014 debut film *The Continent* — a road movie featuring three young people growing up on Dongji Island — she learned about the filming location, which was the island itself. Known collectively as the Dongji Islands, they are the easternmost inhabited group of islands of the Chinese mainland, located in Zhejiang province, and mainly comprise four inhabited islands: Miaozihu, Qingbang, Dongfushan, and Huangxing.

Among them, Dongfushan is promoted as the place where the first ray of sunlight of the 21st century fell on the Chinese mainland.

Drawn by its romantic geography, she decided to see Dongfushan for herself.

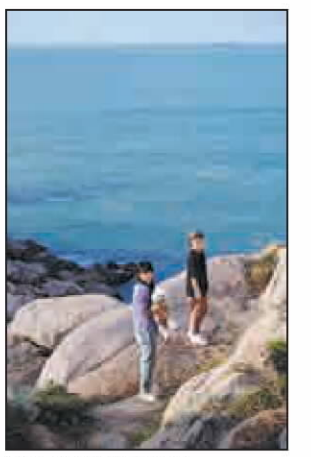
What stayed with her were the layered stone houses climbing the hillside, the four-hour hike around the isle, modest guesthouses with no Wi-Fi, frequent power outages, and a handful of restaurants.

That was it. That was Dongfushan.

But everything changed when she recently returned to the group of







From left: Residents Zhu Li (left) and Li Yuanyuan take part in a beach cleanup on Dongji Island. A view of Miaozihu, the busiest inhabited island of Dongji. Zhu and Li are permanent residents of Miaozihu and operate four shops on the island. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

islands. That visit was mainly motivated by director Fang Li's acclaimed 2023 documentary, *The Sinking of the Lisbon Maru*, which recounts the story of how local islanders rescued British prisoners of war from drowning in October 1942.

This time, she set her sights on Miaozihu, the central island of the group.

"Before the boat even docked, I could see the well-renovated buildings, the colorful neon signs of restaurants and homestays," she recalls.

"It was completely different from the impression I had of this place."

Today, the islands have been transformed. A modernized power grid is in place. The passenger ferry terminal has been expanded. Seafood stalls and coffee shops line the streets. Well-paved hiking trails circle the islands.

What once existed as a remote, geographically unique place has become a tourist hot spot, welcoming around 419,000 visitors last year.

Zhong Lei, a local islander, runs one homestay on Dongfushan and another on Miaozihu.

"Few people used to come to the islands," he says, "mostly art students looking for places to sketch, or foreign tourists who wanted some peace and quiet. But over the last couple of years, it's been busy year-round. I barely have to worry about occupancy rates anymore."

Zhong used to run a business at Shenjiamen Port in Zhoushan, but when he saw his home island gaining recognition through films, he decided to return and build a career in local tourism.

"There are more and more homestays on the island now," he adds. "What we're working on is how to improve quality and stand out to visitors."

The island has also drawn many outsiders who have decided to stay.

Zhu Li is one of them. Once a high-earning sales manager at a real estate company in Zhoushan, she grew tired of working until 3 or 4 am during busy seasons and being on call at all hours. So she quit and came to Miaozihu to volunteer at a youth hostel.

"After I arrived, I thought, this place is really beautiful. The sea is truly blue. We're in Zhoushan — it's not far from here — but I had never seen blue seawater there, only yellow. I never knew there was a place this blue," she says.

During her time off, she went fishing with friends, hiked around the island, and picked up trash from the beaches.

Just one month of volunteering convinced her to stay and start a business on the island. She and her friend took over an old house and renovated it themselves by painting the walls, refinishing old tables and chairs with veneer, installing faucets, and patching the roof.

"Because supplies have to be shipped in from the mainland and getting rid of large items of trash is a hassle, we had no choice but to repurpose old things and build whatever we needed with our own hands. In the process, I felt empowered."

Today, she and her friend run four shops on the island, selling coffee, desserts, and their own branded cultural products.

"Life is busy, but fulfilling," she says. "I cherish my free lifestyle now.

"When I worked in the city, every day was the same routine. Now, even though I'm busy, I'm busy with my own things — the small tasks I actually care about.

"Back in the city, I was sensitive to every noise. But here, even with all the hustle and bustle of local island life, I sleep soundly."

Over the past decade, the island has transformed with each passing year — welcoming tourists, embracing returnees, and giving newcomers a place to start over.

Set-jetting brought Ya Lan here. But what she witnessed, across 11 years and two trips, was an island learning to embrace change without losing itself.

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SPORTS

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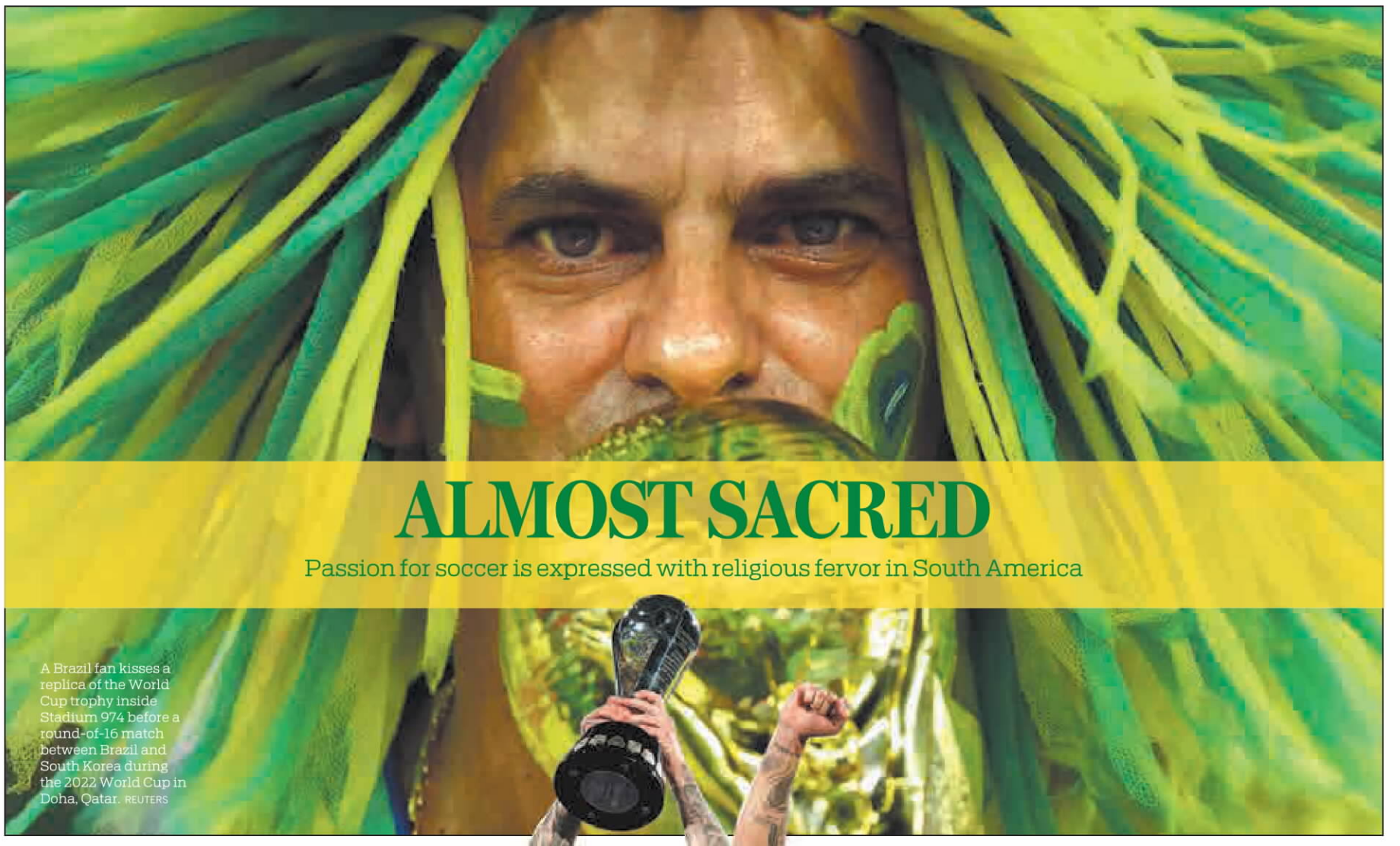

ALMOST SACRED

Passion for soccer is expressed with religious fervor in South America

A Brazil fan kisses a replica of the World Cup trophy inside Stadium 974 before a round-of-16 match between Brazil and South Korea during the 2022 World Cup in Doha, Qatar. REUTERS

The chain that hung from Santiago Garcia's neck carried no crosses or saint medals, yet it felt sacred nonetheless.

When Garcia's grandmother fell sick years ago and he visited her in intensive care, the Argentine soccer fan took off his beloved Boca Juniors necklace and placed it around her neck.

"Boca will save you," Garcia murmured to his grandmother. "And it did. So now it's hers."

Garcia's faith in his club mirrors that of millions across Latin America as the region prepares for the 2026 World Cup. From Argentina to Mexico, devotion to the game often spills into everyday life, inspiring rituals and beliefs tied to the sport.

"There has been an emotional connection between the public and their soccer teams for a long time," said Mexican analyst Erick Fernandez. "It fosters identity and bonds that make us feel part of a sporting process that represents us."

In Argentina, the home country of Lionel Messi, sports passion is often inherited within families and loyalty to clubs strengthens over time. Pope Francis himself — born in Argentina and lifelong supporter of club San Lorenzo — said he agreed with those describing soccer as the world's most beautiful game.

Garcia's love for Boca Juniors came from his father. He said his mother used to support another team, but after the couple met, she became a Boca fan too.

"You usually support your mother's or father's club," Garcia said. "Soccer is the backbone of it all, but you develop a sense of belonging to a team and carry it with you everywhere."

He may have let go of his Boca necklace and the energy he believed it carried, but the club's imprint was already etched into his skin.

At age 17, Garcia tattooed a phrase from the club's anthem on his torso. Fourteen years later, those words remain as meaningful as they were when the ink was fresh.

"It belongs to a song that is like a chant of war for us," he said. "It's like saying: 'No matter the storm, no matter what happens, we will always be there for you.'"



Cruz Azul's players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Mexican league final against Pumas in Mexico City on May 24. AP

The power of belonging

Pope Francis once told a crowd that soccer is a team sport whose beauty comes from its collective spirit.

Among fans, too, passion is nurtured through a sense of community. The singing of anthems, tears shed after victories or defeats, and the embrace of strangers inside a stadium are experiences that can mirror forms of collective devotion.

"Each person can support a team, but the sense of togetherness that generates '*communitas*' — a word associated with religion — is only possible when people gather," said Argentine anthropologist Eloisa Martin.

Both negative and positive reactions can emerge from that sense of collective identity. A fan who feels a member of his sporting community has been attacked by a rival may react violently in ways he otherwise never would. But the same dynamic can strengthen solidarity, leading fans to help strangers because they support the same club.

"Soccer creates a community even for those who lack one," Martin said.

On a recent night, among a sea of fans heading toward Maracana stadium in Rio de Janeiro was Adilvania Santos. Dressed in the maroon and green colors of Fluminense, the 27-year-old said that supporting the club had helped her through a difficult time in her life.

"I get emotional talking about Fluminense," said Santos, who described the passion for her club as the most important aspect of her life, apart from her family. "Some people come together to go to church. For us, accompanying Fluminense is also sacred."

Santos tries to attend every game despite living nearly 100 kilometers (about 60 miles) from Rio. When she follows matches from home, she stays alone in her bedroom to avoid interruptions from family members who may not support her team.

"Soccer deeply moves Brazilians because it creates a sense of belonging, identity and hope," said Jeferson Mengali, a Catholic priest in the Braganca Paulista diocese and a lifelong fan of Corinthians. "People suffer, work hard and face difficulties, and soccer becomes a space for collective joy."

Rituals for victory

Mengali supported Corinthians as a chaplain for years. He celebrated Masses with the team and was present during training sessions and matches.

"I have always liked praying before important games," he said. "Asking more for serenity than victory."

While not all soccer fans pray, many cling to rituals they believe can influence the outcome of a game. In Argentina these practices are known as "*cabalas*". According to Martin, they became widespread during the 1990s.

Cabalas vary widely. Fans may drink from the same cup, sit in the exact same spot or wear the same underwear during every match. Others insist on watching games with certain people, while some avoid watching altogether after concluding they bring bad luck to their team.

Rituals are repeated if the team wins and abandoned if it loses. For some supporters, avoiding a match can even feel like a sacrifice made in hopes of securing victory.

At Garcia's home, his father sits in a specific chair whenever Boca is playing well. If the rival team scores, he changes seats. His mother cleans the house instead of watching the game, stopping every so often to ask about the score.

Garcia's current *cabala* includes wearing the same jersey throughout the season and carrying a small image of Diego Maradona everywhere he goes.

"After he died, he was rapidly sanctified by the people," Garcia said. "He became a figure bigger than sports."

Saints of the stadium

Argentines rarely call him Maradona. He's simply "El Diego", as one would refer to a family member or an old friend from the neighborhood.

"Maradona is the player, while 'El Diego' is the one people turn to like a family member when they need help," Martin said. "Sacredness only works when there's a community behind it."

Legends like "El Diego" or Brazil's "The King" Pele are recognized across the world. But other soccer fans in Latin America revere personal idols of their own.

In Chile, Hector Hermosilla keeps a black-and-white portrait of Colo Colo club founder David Arellano at his home.

"He founded Colo Colo in 1925 and before every match I always say goodbye to him and ask him to watch over us," Hermosilla said.

He still remembers attending his first match in 1986 and falling under the spell of the atmosphere inside the arena. From then on, he faithfully began to follow his team, traveling from Chile's far north to Puerto Montt, considered the gateway to Patagonia.

To finance his trips, he and his wife typed out the iconic anthems of Colo Colo and sold photocopies to fans, earning him the nickname "Nano Fotocopia".

"There were around 20 songs and I would make photocopies and sell them for 100 pesos," he said.

Typewriters and photocopies became obsolete over time. Hermosilla now sells necklaces, bracelets and other accessories to finance the trips he now does with his wife and teenage son.

When in Chile, Hermosilla still attends matches every Sunday and performs a ritual he has followed since the 1980s. Beneath Arellano's portrait, he asks for the club founder's blessing, packs his products for sale and heads to a roast chicken restaurant where fans gather.

"He is like our God," Hermosilla said. "He is the one who guides us."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA







From left: A person takes a photograph of an Aerolineas Argentinas Airbus A330-200 aircraft wrapped with the No 10, in tribute to Lionel Messi, during its presentation in Buenos Aires, on May 22; Youngsters play soccer on a dirt field in the Cooperativa San Francisco neighborhood of Guayaquil, Ecuador on May 15. A view showing a part of one of the host cities for the 2026 FIFA World Cup in Monterrey, Mexico. AGENCIES

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Fans who failed to secure tickets to a Mayday concert listen from outside the National Stadium in Beijing on May 18. Between April 30 and May 18, the Taiwan rock band performed 12 times at the venue, drawing music lovers from across the country. WEI XIAOHAO / CHINA DAILY

XI'S VISION | HIGH-QUALITY DEVELOPMENT

Consumers unlock new potential

Expansion of domestic demand seen as key strategy tied to nation's modernization drive

By **WANG KEJU** and **ZHOU LANXU**

As China shifts from high-speed to high-quality growth, the engines of its consumer market are evolving in tandem, with vast potential fueled by rising demand for premium goods, quality services and new consumption scenarios, economists and executives said.

The world's second-largest economy is doubling down on expanding domestic demand and further opening its vast market to the world — a move that will offer an important source of predictability and create massive opportunities for Chinese and foreign businesses alike, even as global trade remains tepid and protectionist pressures mount, they added.

In late April, a meeting of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, which was chaired by President Xi Jinping, reiterated the need to fully tap the potential of domestic demand, and called for efforts to expand the supply of quality goods and services and promote the upgrading of consumption.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee, had stressed in December, in an article published in Qiushi Journal, the flagship magazine of the CPC Central Committee, that expanding domestic demand is not a stopgap effort, but a strategic measure that bears on economic stability and security.

Implementing a strategy of expanding domestic demand is necessary for maintaining the long-term, sustained and healthy development of China's economy and meeting the people's ever-growing demand for a better life, Xi added.

Zhang Yansheng, a veteran economist and expert on global economic affairs, said Xi's remarks underscored that expanding domestic demand and boosting consumption should not be viewed merely as short-term policy tools to counter cyclical pressures, but as a long-term strategy closely tied to China's modernization drive.

"A Chinese modernization with a huge population, a huge economic size and deep integration with the global economy cannot possibly be built on external demand," Zhang said. "No external market in the world can accommodate such a scale. Therefore, China's modernization must be rooted in domestic demand."

According to Zhang, expanding domestic demand and consumption requires a broader shift in policy thinking — taking the people's growing need for a better life as the fundamental starting point, while strengthening support for public services, social welfare and income growth.

That shift has been underway. Supply has been continuously improved to meet consumers' growing demand for better quality and personalized offerings, helping drive the expansion of domestic demand.

In fact, China's economic miracle did not happen by chance. It testifies to the effectiveness and adaptability of China's socialist economy under the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Economy, according to Yang Weiyong, an associate professor at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing.

Retail sales of cultural, sports and leisure services all grew at double-digit rates in the first four months of this year, the National Bureau of Statistics said. Spending on physical goods is also shifting toward higher-quality categories, with retail sales of communication equipment up 17.7 percent year-on-year and cosmetics up 5.6 percent.

"With per capita GDP having exceeded $10,000, China is currently in a stage of rapid upgrading of the consumption structure," said Fu Linghui, spokesman and chief economist of the bureau, adding that such trends in demand will go in tandem with a broader and more diversified supply of goods and services to continue driving consumption growth.

See ***Consumption,*** *page 3*

Increase in western Pacific military activities noted

By **JIANG CHENGLONG**
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Apart from the United States, extra-regional countries from Europe and Oceania increased the frequency of their military activities in the western Pacific in 2025, especially in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea, raising the risk of accidental clashes and undermining regional peace and stability, said a think tank report released on Tuesday.

According to the report, which was issued by the Beijing-based think tank South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, countries including the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia have in recent years frequently sent warships and military aircraft to the region for so-called "freedom of navigation" operations, citing tensions in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

In 2025, six warships from Australia, Canada, the UK and New Zealand sailed through the strait on five occasions, each accompanied by official publicity machinery, the report said.

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The UK and Australia also carried out two so-called "freedom of navigation" operations in the Nansha Islands in the South China Sea in 2025, it said.

Hu Bo, director of the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, said that Australia, Canada and the UK have used the pretext of safeguarding rights of passage in international waters under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea to make their military presence felt in the Taiwan Strait and the South China Sea.

Among these extra-regional countries, Australia has been the "most aggressive", with its military aircraft intruding into the airspace of China's Xisha Islands in the South China Sea frequently, according to the report.

Chinese military sources said that Australian military aircraft intruded into the Xisha Islands airspace in February and October last year, and were driven away on both occasions by Chinese military aircraft.

The think tank's report said that Australia's statements at the time avoided mentioning its deliberate intrusion into China's Xisha Islands airspace and instead accused a Chinese fighter jet of conducting "unsafe" maneuvers.

In 2025, nearly 200 warships from 18 extra-regional countries sailed or operated in the region, with a total surface force presence of nearly 10,000 ship-days throughout the year, according to incomplete statistics cited in the report.

Among them, 109 warships from the US operated in the western Pacific for 9,088 ship-days. A total of 48 warships from non-US countries operated in the region for 610 ship-days, equivalent to an average presence of about two vessels on the surface per day, the report said.

Hu said the main purpose of these military activities from non-regional countries is to increase their presence in the region and strengthen relations with regional countries, while also coordinating with US military strategies and operations in the region.

He added that these non-US countries are also trying to enhance interoperability with allies and partners in East Asia and demonstrate a collective presence through their military activities, noting that their political signaling carries more weight than their actual military impact.

"Strategically, such military operations are not conducive to regional peace and stability, and tactically, they carry the risk of accidental clashes," Hu said.

"At the same time, they are also insufficient to change the regional balance of power."

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Africa can learn from China's win over poverty

WORLD WATCH
By Melha Rout Biel

China and Africa have historically grappled with poverty, a major obstacle to prosperity and development. While China has made remarkable progress, lifting more than 800 million people out of poverty over the past decades, Africa is still battling severe poverty and development challenges.

This raises two key questions: How did China achieve this in a relatively short period of time? And how can African countries draw lessons from China's experiences and adapt them to their own national conditions to accelerate poverty alleviation?

Africa's population is estimated at about 1.58 billion, exceeding the populations of China and India individually and representing roughly 19 percent of the global population.

The continent's population is projected to exceed 2.5 billion by 2050. Urbanization is also growing, with at least 52 cities on the continent having more than 1 million inhabitants, according to Worldometer and 2026 demographic data.

African governments must therefore plan carefully for sustainable urban development, including adequate housing, job creation, modern healthcare systems, efficient transportation networks, reliable electricity supplies to support industrialization, quality education for all and enhanced public safety.

Despite being endowed with vast natural resources — including critical minerals, arable land and abundant water — African nations continue to grapple with poverty decades after gaining independence from colonial rule. Colonialism disrupted local economic systems, eroded social cohesion and restructured state institutions across the continent, and the lingering impacts still shape Africa's development paths to this day.

Currently, more than 460 million Africans live in extreme poverty, representing roughly one-third of the continent's population, according to data from the World Bank. Sub-Saharan Africa is home to over 67 percent of the world's extreme poor, and in several countries the poverty rate exceeds 70 percent.

By 2019, an estimated 391 million people in sub-Saharan Africa lived in extreme poverty. By 2022, that figure had risen to about 460 million, and by 2024 it reached 464 million — an increase widely attributed to economic disruptions from the COVID-19 pandemic, the Russia-Ukraine conflict and ongoing regional fragility.

Africa's relative share of global income has also declined over the past two centuries. In 1820, the average European worker earned about three times more than the average African worker. Today, the average European earns about 20 times more. While per capita GDP in Africa has gradually increased, income levels still lag significantly behind other regions.

This situation is driven by high inequality, frequent conflicts, economic vulnerability, insufficient quality of education, underdeveloped infrastructure, climate change impacts and governance challenges.

See ***Poverty,*** *page 3*





Left: A poster of the film *Dear You* is displayed during an event at Peking University on May 19. JIANG QIMING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE
Right: Rice-less cakes as shown in the movie. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

HIT MOVIE SERVES UP A TASTE OF NOSTALGIA

As *Dear You* continues to dominate the box office, the food it features is earning as much critical acclaim as the film itself

By **LI YINGXUE**
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As the film *Dear You* continues its strong Chinese box-office run, surpassing 1.1 billion yuan ($162 million) since its release on April 30, a bowl of dark pickled olive vegetable and a plate of rice-less cakes have unexpectedly moved audiences to tears.

China Vibes — FOOD —

These traditional foods from Chaoshan — a region that includes the cities of Shantou, Chaozhou and Jieyang in Guangdong province, and is known for its strong clan traditions and well-preserved folk customs — have quietly stepped into the spotlight, becoming some of the film's most emotional symbols.

Threaded through the story are decades of *qiaopi* letters — overseas Chinese correspondence that once connected families across Southeast Asia and southern China. Alongside them, the enduring flavors of Chaoshan cuisine emerge as a living archive of migration, longing and home.

From ancestral Guangdong courtyards to streets in far-flung Chinatowns, these everyday dishes have carried generations of memory and are now becoming a window for the world to rediscover Chaoshan's landscape, people and history. For many viewers, the film is not just a story of distance and return, but a shared memory.

For 56-year-old Shanghai-based chef Huang Peibin, whose hometown is Puning in Jieyang, the film feels deeply personal.

"This is a very authentic Chaoshan story," he said. "The hardships of leaving home and struggling to build a life elsewhere are very familiar to us. Hearing the dialect and seeing the old houses really touched me."

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INDEPTH





Left: Children from the Shanghai Municipal Kindergarten interact with a robot in December. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** Wu Rongjin, principal of Shanghai Huangpu Luwan No 1 Central Primary School, greets students as they enter the school in the morning. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

'Emotional education' to counter AI-driven job uncertainty



Cultivating 'most human' qualities best way to work with new tech, experts say

Children from Shanghai Municipal Kindergarten mail letters to express thanks to those they appreciate the most. The letters are dictated by the children and handwritten by their teachers. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Four out of five parents in China with mid-to-high net worth are worried that artificial intelligence may affect their children's future job prospects, while 20 percent admit they have no idea how to prepare for the changes, a survey found.

Published by the Shanghai-based Fudan International School of Finance in April, the survey results confirm a public perception that AI is significantly reshaping the future job landscape. This has raised parents' anxiety about their children's education, and selecting the right career paths.

Despite these concerns, no one has yet clearly articulated what new skills and qualities young people will need to thrive in an AI-driven future. However, there is a growing consensus in teaching and academic circles about the value of "emotional education".

"The more pervasive machines become, the more we need to cultivate the 'most human' qualities in the young generation," said Wu Rongjin, principal of Shanghai Huangpu Luwan No 1 Central Primary School.

Education experts believe preparing young people for the future involves developing and strengthening "uniquely human" qualities that cannot be replaced by machines, and fostering lifelong learning habits and the ability to keep acquiring new skills. School education should shift from merely acquiring knowledge to developing skills that cultivate human traits like empathy, creativity, ethics and collaboration, they said.

"In the legal field, AI can read thousands of pages in seconds but doesn't understand justice; and AI in medicine can diagnose health conditions but cannot hold a patient's trembling hand," Wu explained. "The magic of human-machine collaboration lies here: Machines are responsible for efficient execution, while value judgments and the development of a humane character are beyond their reach."

In some primary schools in Shanghai's Huangpu and Jiading districts, weekly "emotional education classes" have become a compulsory part of the curriculum. The ultimate goal is to help children grow into well-rounded individuals with positive emotions, a stable mood, and "noble" character traits, that is, the ability to show concern for others.

"These qualities distinguish humans from machines, and are essential for navigating future challenges and adapting to societal changes, especially in the AI era," said Wu.

"Emotional intelligence, along with independent critical thinking, logical reasoning, and perseverance, benefits an individual's lifelong development," she said.

Shining qualities

In emotional education classes, teachers typically focus on themes, such as self-awareness, emotional management, empathy, interpersonal communication, and the value of life. The classes also help students explore ways to relieve stress and adjust their mindset.

Teachers at Shanghai Huangpu Luwan No 1 Central Primary School said that during recent classes, students were encouraged to nominate "unsung heroes" around them.

"It was an opportunity to allow children to recognize the shining qualities in ordinary individuals who might not be highly visible and not receive the most academic awards, and inspire them to see the strengths in everyone," said Bao Yinglei, a teacher at the school.

She said the school had installed cameras in the corridors to quickly identify potential problems when students gather in groups. However, these cameras have now become a window for capturing moments of warmth and concern.

"The cameras record how surrounding children react if a student falls. These acts of kindness become topics for discussion in emotional education classes," Bao said.

Zhou Shuqun, master of Hiba Academy Shanghai, a bilingual school of Wellington College Education (China), said that over the last few years the school had implemented various practices to help students develop "uniquely human qualities".

One example is emphasizing oral expression in primary school classes to cultivate a pupil's ability to listen to others with respect and improve self-expression and group collaboration. For middle school students, debating competitions help develop critical thinking and oral expression skills, she said.

When someone makes others feel comfortable in interactions, it often leads to successful collaborations and business deals, experts pointed out.

Some kindergarten teachers are also changing the way they interact with their students.

Xu Hui, a kindergarten teacher in Shanghai, said when conflicts arise among children, instead of providing a direct judgment, she and her colleagues now encourage the children to express themselves and then switch roles to describe the situation.

"This process is more beneficial as it helps the minors gradually acquire the ability to better communicate and collaborate with others," she said.

Some kindergarten teachers believe that preparing children for the future must be rooted in moral development, the basis of humanity that AI cannot replace. Core competencies in this area include empathy, kindness, collaboration, and reverence for life, they said.

"Through daily interactions with young children in an atmosphere of passing on love and care, teachers instill these virtues and qualities into the minors' hearts," said Xu.

Lin Min, deputy principal of the Shanghai Municipal Kindergarten, said the school emphasizes that teachers should respond to children in a positive and encouraging way.

Since last year, the teachers at the school have been meeting regularly to discuss real-life cases that occur daily in their classes. They discuss how they should respond to the pupils in such situations, and whether there are better ways to address and guide them.

"The way a teacher responds to a child will influence how the child responds to others in their later lives. This is a gradual accumulation process that leads to qualitative changes in their characters," said Lin.

She said despite AI's development, the teachers believe that a positive outlook and a sense of national pride and responsibility, are human qualities that AI lacks.

She cited as an example the humanoid robot half-marathon in Beijing in April, saying what touched her the most was when a robot failed to complete the race, its programmer cradled it as they left.

"Machines will accomplish many things that surpass human physical limits, but they can never win over human emotions. Those moments when people give love and gain trust from each other cannot be replaced," said Lin.

Soft skills

With the belief AI will perform repetitive and standardized jobs, about 60 percent of parents now prioritize "soft skills", such as character building, interpersonal communication, and problem-solving for their children's development, the Fudan survey also found.

This compares with 43 percent who still place securing a seat in a top university first, according to the survey of 1,900 families across the country.



Students from Wellington College International Shanghai experienced VR equipment at the school's sustainability fair in April. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wang Shuangchen, 39, from Chongqing, signed up her 12-year-old son for an extracurricular public speaking course a year ago after discussing it with him.

"Even though AI tools can assist in writing a speech draft, there is still a significant difference in the personal charisma each individual displays when speaking on stage," said Wang, a book editor.

"My husband and I believe that having the ability to deliver compelling and engaging speeches in public is a highly competitive skill in the future job market," she said.

The awareness that her 11-year-old daughter needs skills that are hard for machines to replicate prompted Lu Yiyi, a mother from Shanghai, to make changes in their lives. Since September, the fifth-grader has been taking the subway to and from school alone, a 60-minute journey that includes transferring between lines.

"For my child, traveling between home and school alone involves finding the way, taking charge of her own safety, managing her time, and coping with unexpected situations," said Lu, adding that her experience in the graphic design profession has heightened her awareness of the pressures brought by AI.

This personal experience led her to reconsider how to better equip her child for the future. "Communication skills and the capacity to tackle real-world challenges are not what kids can learn at school through exams. They are developed via real experiences like these," she said.

Such practices align with the new educational paradigm of "human flourishing" proposed by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development in recent years.

Michael Stevenson, founder of the OECD's High Performing Systems for Tomorrow Initiative, said under the concept of human flourishing, the goal of education is to help every youth develop core competencies, including adaptive problem-solving.

Chinese-style emotions

Wu, the principal, believes Chinese people possess unique qualities, such as humility, subtlety, diligence, and perseverance, which extend to a thirst for knowledge and a love for all aspects of life. She said it is important to highlight these qualities when implementing emotional education.

The country's rich culinary traditions are an embodiment of Chinese people's diligence in her eyes, so the school encourages students interested in cooking to experience this firsthand by preparing dishes.

When a group visits the school, the students are now capable of working together to organize and prepare a meal of typical Shanghai dishes for the guests.

Once a child is able to cook, he or she is willing to prepare food for the family, which improves the atmosphere at home, said Wu.

"Whenever a child's strengths are recognized and encouraged, they gain confidence and stand tall," said Wu, who believes that teachers should identify the potential in each child to help them succeed, which she believes is the essence of education: focusing on the growth of each individual.

Zhao Zizi, a senior middle school teacher in Shanghai for three decades, said even though AI has become powerful, it is not a "person" a child can aspire to emulate.

"AI is just a tool to help us get closer to people who we admire and are worth learning from," she said.

Experts have pointed out that embracing AI, which will systematically enhance learning and work efficiency, is an irreversible trend.

The next generation will create AI, rather than just consume AI, and they will expand what's possible for the good of society and humanity, said Michael Levitt, 2013 Nobel laureate in chemistry, during the World Laureates Forum 2025 held in Shanghai in October.

Many primary and middle schools have been encouraging young people to use AI to solve social problems they encounter. For instance, a group of primary school students in Shanghai's Huangpu district attempted to use large language models to create movie descriptions for the visually impaired.

Through this process, the children not only mastered a technological skill, but also understood that technology should always serve human welfare, said teachers involved in the project.

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TOP NEWS

Poverty: Sound governance remains key

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Many countries that achieved rapid development, such as China, benefited from visionary leadership that prioritized national development and public welfare.

In Africa, while some national leaders have shown clear development ambitions, many governments still struggle to implement effective policies that can fundamentally improve people's livelihoods.

This raises a critical question: Why is it difficult for African policymakers and leaders to learn from China's experience in poverty alleviation? In my view, poverty remains the continent's most pressing challenge.

China's development success is partly rooted in sound governance, and reflected in zero tolerance for corruption and nepotism, as well as in discipline, hard work and national unity above ethnic and regional divisions.

In Africa, many wars and internal conflicts across the continent arise from the absence of these guiding principles, which are consistently upheld by China's top leadership and fully implemented across government institutions. If Africa can adopt and practice these core principles, it will be better positioned to achieve inclusive prosperity for all.

The Forum on China-Africa Cooperation provides an important platform for bilateral engagement. The summit offers African leaders opportunities to visit China and witness firsthand its rapid socioeconomic transformation, strong work ethic and culture of self-discipline and collective development.

China-Africa relations have grown stronger and more strategic over the past decades. Many African ruling parties maintain close ties with the Communist Party of China, and numerous African officials have participated in training programs in China focusing on leadership, governance and national development.

Such exchanges create valuable opportunities for African leaders to draw on China's development experience, particularly in poverty reduction, economic planning and infrastructure development.

One key lesson Africa can learn from China is the value of sound governance, political stability, strong political commitment to national development, and the ability to mobilize the whole society toward shared national goals.

In terms of poverty reduction, Africa must manage its rich natural resources more efficiently. Again, sound governance and political stability play an indispensable role. Peace is also a fundamental prerequisite for development; Africa can only achieve long-term development and prosperity in a peaceful environment. This enables policymakers to design and carry out effective anti-poverty programs.

China did not lift hundreds of millions out of absolute poverty overnight. Its achievement came from decades of consistent and long-term policy implementation. A vital lesson is that poverty alleviation must be a state-led, long-term strategy, carried out steadily regardless of changes in political leadership.

This requires firm political commitment from ruling parties and governments alike, with policies clearly communicated to the public to gain public understanding and support. China has adhered to this path consistently, sustaining steady development progress. Africa can achieve greater progress if it adopts and strictly implements such development principles.

The author is executive director of the Institute for Strategic and Policy Studies in South Sudan. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic, who is on a state visit to China, tours the Museum of the Communist Party of China in Beijing on Tuesday. WANG ZHUANGFEI / CHINA DAILY

Vucic praises China's rapid transformation

Serbian president witnesses nation's progress in wide range of fields during tours in Beijing

By **MO JINGXI, ZHAO JIA** and **JI HAISHENG**

Inside

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On Tuesday, the third day of Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's state visit to China, he spent about five minutes inside a newly released electric vehicle at the showroom of Chinese tech company Xiaomi's auto factory in Beijing.

Sitting in the vehicle, in which commands can be voice activated, Vucic asked the in-car voice assistant: "Do you have any Serbian songs?"

Serbia's national anthem, *Boze pravde*, then began to play.

"I have learned a great deal here, above all about the achievements China has made. This place is amazing — I have never seen anything like it," Vucic wrote on social media. "Everything is automated. Two thousand robots operate everything, and in two shifts they produce 1,500 cars. We invited them, if they start considering investment in Europe, to choose Serbia, and we also invited them to showcase their products at EXPO 2027."

The factory was Vucic's third stop on Tuesday. Earlier in the day, he delivered a speech at Tsinghua University and visited the Museum of the Communist Party of China.

After tracing China's journey from poverty to prosperity at the museum, Vucic wrote in the guest book that the "visit to the museum was a unique chance to deepen my knowledge of the development of China under the leadership of the CPC".

"I used to watch *Back to the Future* and think that flying cars, smart machines and technology that understands humans were only the stuff of movie imagination. Today, as I toured this incredible time capsule of Chinese achievements, I felt as if I had, in some way, experienced that film myself," Vucic wrote in a social media post.

He added that everything he saw seemed so advanced that, at one point, he thought his phone belonged in a technology museum.

Speaking to about 130 students and faculty members at Tsinghua University, the Serbian president said that China's progress should not be taken for granted.

While people living in China may regard daily changes as ordinary, he said that the nation's transformation remains striking to an outside observer, even over a short period of time.

He added that he has strong confidence in China's continued prosperity and bright future.

During the exchange with students, Vucic said that China-Serbia friendship is rooted in mutual support at difficult moments and in concrete results, rather than diplomatic rhetoric.

He cited Chinese participation in Serbia's infrastructure projects and the Smederevo Steel Mill, where a Chinese company's takeover helped preserve about 5,000 jobs, as examples of cooperation that have brought real benefits to local people.

Vucic also linked China's development to its openness, saying that the country offers cooperation opportunities to partners from different regions. He added that China's progress is not accidental, but is the result of knowledge, hard work, education and long-term effort.

Turning to the young audience, Vucic urged the students to remain open to the world, gain broader experience and believe in their values and principles. He said young people in China possess qualities that many countries have lost, including diligence, conviction, vision and a strong desire to succeed.

Hard work, education and perseverance will never become outdated, he said, adding that such qualities help make a country strong and enable it to keep moving forward.

Contact the writers at mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

Taste: Everyday food highlighted in film

From page 1

Huang said that every dish in the film reflects the resilience and wisdom of Chaoshan people.

In the film, Chaoshan-born Ye Shurou travels to visit Xie Nanzhi in Thailand, bringing a basket of fresh green olives as a gift. When the elderly Xie, suffering from Alzheimer's disease, instinctively reacts to the taste, it becomes one of the film's most heart-wrenching moments.

"Olives are very common in Chaoshan," Huang explained.

"They are used in daily cooking. They are also important offerings in ancestral worship and ceremonies."

Another recurring ingredient in the film is the Indian gooseberry, known for its initially bitter taste followed by lingering sweetness.

To Huang, that flavor reflects the spirit of Chaoshan people who leave home to seek opportunities elsewhere: Bitterness may come first, but sweetness always lingers.

The film also highlights *wumiguo*, rice-less cakes made from sweet potato starch. Created during difficult times, the cakes were made with simple ingredients. Today, they are a ceremonial staple in many households.

As the executive chef of Dingzhenhui, a high-end Chaozhou cuisine restaurant in Shanghai, Huang now serves these traditional dishes to his patrons. By maintaining the labor-intensive, slow-cooking methods passed down through generations, he aims to offer an authentic taste of the culinary heritage of his ancestors.

The film also highlights everyday Chaoshan food, like pickled olive vegetable. Modest in appearance, the dish has the taste that migrants miss most.

Throughout the film, *gongfu* tea appears constantly, serving as more than just a drink. In Chaoshan culture, it is a symbol of hospitality and connection.

Pakistani PM honored for promoting agricultural ties

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif was awarded the title of honorary professor by the Chinese Academy of Agricultural Sciences on Tuesday in recognition of his contributions to promoting agricultural science and technology cooperation between China and Pakistan.

Speaking at the ceremony, Sharif said that agriculture remained a key topic of discussion during his meetings with Chinese leaders.

Pakistan hopes to learn from China's development experience and expand cooperation in crop breeding, animal husbandry, climate-smart agriculture, agricultural machinery and agricultural product processing to improve productivity and value-added capacity, he said.

Sharif announced that Pakistan will launch the second phase of its "Thousand Talents Plan" to send 1,000 more young people from Pakistan to Chinese agricultural institutions for studies and training. "I propose sending 1,000 students and fresh agriculture graduates from all provinces of Pakistan to Chinese universities for formal courses and modern agricultural training," he said.

Sharif's four-day official visit to China, which concluded on Tuesday, is an important high-level exchange between the two countries as this month marks the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations. His announcement was warmly welcomed by Pakistani students at the academy, many of whom view China's agricultural modernization as a model for Pakistan's rural development.

Nadeem Sarwar, a Pakistani scholar who is pursuing his PhD in agricultural water resources and environment at CAAS, said the initiative would create valuable opportunities for more young people in Pakistan.

"More Pakistani graduates will have the opportunity to gain knowledge, experience and exposure at Chinese institutions. When they return to Pakistan, they can contribute to developing the agricultural sector there," he said.

Sarwar's research focuses on improving the efficiency of agricultural water use, an issue he said is particularly important for Pakistan.

"China has made great progress (in agriculture), especially in improving water-use efficiency," he said, adding that he hopes to bring China's technologies and experience to improve Pakistan's agricultural productivity and resource management.

Muhammad Shahzad, also a PhD scholar at CAAS, who is studying animal genetics, breeding and reproduction, described the occasion as "a really big day" for Pakistani students. "It is a matter of great pride for all Pakistanis that China truly acknowledges Pakistan and values our friendship."

Shahzad noted that Pakistan's livestock industry plays a major role in the country's agricultural economy, and scientific breeding remains crucial for improving productivity. "Our animals are resilient to hot weather and diseases, but we need more scientific breeding," he said.

Huang Sanwen, president of CAAS and an academician of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, said that CAAS has established multiple joint platforms with Pakistani partners, including laboratories for cotton biotechnology, sustainable crop pest control and molecular breeding of wheat.

The agricultural sciences academy has also promoted cooperation in crop breeding, prevention of animal and plant diseases, water and soil resource management, and agricultural product processing, Huang said.

CAAS has trained more than 300 Pakistani students over the years and established a China-Pakistan Agricultural Technology Working Group with the Pakistan Agricultural Research Council, in order to institutionalize cooperation and strengthen capacity-building efforts, he added.

He Zhonghu, a researcher at the academy's Institute of Crop Sciences, who has worked with Pakistani researchers for more than two decades, said that China and Pakistan have already achieved remarkable results through joint agricultural research.

A wheat variety developed by Chinese and Pakistani researchers was recently approved in Pakistan following years of field testing.

The variety yields about 10 percent more than local varieties, matures earlier than them and has strong resistance to lodging (stem bending or breakage), said He, who is also an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering.

"We are very happy to contribute what we can to Pakistan's agricultural development and food security," he added.

The researcher, who has trained 10 Pakistani PhD scholars and a number of agricultural technicians at the institute, said that future training methods should place greater emphasis on the application of new technologies rather than focusing only on basic research.

"For example, students studying genetics or wheat breeding should also be taken to experimental fields, seed companies and flour mills for hands-on experience," he added.

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Consumption: Analysts say upgrade can benefit world

From page 1

Analysts said that China's consumption upgrade and efforts to expand demand are critical, not only to China's growth, but also for the potential to serve as a stabilizing anchor for global demand, as protectionist winds sweep through major economies.

Louis Kuijs, S&P Global Ratings' chief economist for the Asia-Pacific region, said the economic policies of big players like China, and particularly how the country stimulates consumption, are closely followed by overseas analysts, as these policies hold significant implications for driving global economic growth.

The "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative, launched by the Ministry of Commerce, is in full swing, with a series of events this year designed to meet rising domestic demand for quality foreign goods while offering global exporters a stable outlet.

Supachai Junkeiat, president of TCP China, the Thai conglomerate behind the energy drink brand Red Bull, said the company has always been optimistic about the upgrade potential of China's supersized consumer market.

"Going forward, we will continue to closely track the country's consumption trends and leverage product innovation to precisely meet new demands for consumption upgrades," he said.

Nevertheless, China's overall retail sales of consumer goods from January to April rose 1.9 percent year-on-year, down from 2.4 percent in the first quarter, the NBS said.

Economists expect consumption to continue its gradual recovery, but the pace will depend on how quickly income growth catches up, how effectively social safety nets reduce precautionary saving, and whether the property market stabilizes more broadly.

Nobel laureate economist Michael Spence told China Daily that income in the economy flows to government, corporates or households. "If you want consumption to rise, you need to shift more of that flow toward the household sector," he said.

One viable route, according to Spence, is to have State-owned enterprises pay out higher dividends, redirecting to the people some of the income that now flows to the government.

Spence also pointed to a "well-built social security system" as a way to offset Chinese households' deep-rooted propensity to save, reducing the precautionary share and unlocking more consumption potential.

"Restoring stability in the real estate sector matters as well because it's a big part of household net worth," Spence said, calling Chinese government efforts to stabilize the sector "a step in the right direction" for shoring up spending.

In March, policymakers vowed to unveil an income growth plan for urban and rural residents this year, with a range of practical measures to boost the earnings of low-income groups, increase property income and refine the social security systems.

Zhang, the economist, said that raising people's incomes is of fundamental importance in China's endeavors to meet people's aspirations for a better life, and called for efforts to uphold market-oriented resource allocation and foster a more supportive institutional environment for entrepreneurship and employment to boost people's wage growth.

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WORLD



George Retelas (second from left), a US film director, works with Chinese volunteers at a Doolittle Raider parachute landing site in Jiangxi province in December 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

US filmmaker explores forgotten chapter of WWII

Work revisits history of Chinese civilians who risked lives to rescue downed airmen

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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Inside an abandoned building in a town in Jiangxi province, George Retelas felt something before anyone told him what had happened there.

His hosts guided him inside and told him: two US airmen had sheltered here in 1942, cared for by local villagers until someone who spoke some English could be found to help them escape. When Japanese soldiers swept through, they executed 14 people on the spot and burned the building to the ground.

"The chilling part is they didn't tell me what had happened until I was already inside," Retelas said. "As soon as I walked into that space, I could feel it."

That moment has marked Retelas' journey through a chapter of World War II history that many in the US have never heard about.

It is a story of a wartime alliance of ordinary Chinese civilians who risked and often lost everything to protect strangers from the US who fell from the sky. And it is a story that Retelas, a filmmaker from Silicon Valley, has spent years working to bring to light.

While in college, Retelas discovered a journal and photographs tucked inside a camera bag he had inherited from his grandfather who had served as a US Navy mechanic at Alameda Naval Air Station in California.

One night in early 1942, his grandfather had been rousted from his bed and ordered to help load 220-kilogram bombs onto a mysterious aircraft carrier loaded with Army planes. He did not learn until later that the ship was the USS *Hornet*, and the bombers were the Doolittle squadron bound for Tokyo.

That discovery sent Retelas down a path of research, then filmmaking, then travel — first across the United States to track down the men who had served alongside his grandfather in Navy Air Group 11, then, eventually, across the Pacific.

"Growing up in Silicon Valley, where everyone's thinking about the future, what's the next big thing, I found myself wanting to go back to the past," Retelas said. "Because I feel like I don't know how to answer the questions of the future until I learn more about where I came from."

He directed his first documentary, *Eleven*, in 2014, built around the journal he had found. His second, *Sundown to Eleven*, followed Richard "Dick" Miralles, the last surviving member of Air Group 11, in his mission to honor his fallen comrades. Miralles passed away on Nov 13 last year, at age 101. In keeping with his dying request, Retelas released the film for free on YouTube on Pearl Harbor Day, Dec 7.

But even as he completed that work, Retelas was being pulled across the Pacific, and toward a viewpoint he realized he did not yet grasp.

"I wanted to understand the other side, instead of just getting the American perspective of the Pacific War," he said. "Now, I want to know who it affected on the other side of the world."

In April 1942, just four months after Japan attacked Pearl Harbor, US President Franklin Roosevelt ordered a retaliatory strike on the Japanese home islands.

The attack, involving 80 men in 16 Army B-25 bombers, was planned and led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle.

The mission was nearly suicidal in its ambition: Because the aircraft carrier USS *Hornet* was not close enough to Japan for the bombers to make the return trip, they would bomb Tokyo and other Japanese cities, then pray they made it safely to allied China before they ran out of fuel.

Eighty men bailed out or crash-landed across the provinces of Zhejiang, Jiangxi, Fujian and Anhui. Chinese farmers, villagers and townspeople took them into their homes, fed them and helped them escape until 64 of the 80 made it to safety.

Japanese forces, enraged that the local population had sheltered US forces, swept through the region. An estimated 250,000 Chinese civilians were killed in Zhejiang-Jiangxi campaign in retaliation by Japan for the Doolittle Raid, according to multiple sources.

In the United States, the Doolittle Raid is remembered as a daring act of national defiance. The role of China, and the sacrifice made by ordinary Chinese people, are often overlooked.

"For American students and young people, it's not really well known," Retelas said of the Pacific War broadly.

Exchange of artifacts

In April 2025, Retelas traveled to Quzhou, a city in Zhejiang province, as part of a cultural exchange between the USS *Hornet* Museum in Alameda, California, where he has volunteered for years.

The Doolittle Raid Memorial Hall in Quzhou traded an eight-inch piece of steel torn from a B-25 bomber with the Hornet Museum. In return, the museum sent an original reel of 16-millimeter film showing the Doolittle Raiders training for their mission. Retelas, who proposed the exchange, carried the film to China and brought the steel fragment home.







Top: George Retelas (right) and Yu Jun, a representative of the Quzhou Society for the History of the Doolittle Raid exchange artifacts during a ceremony in Quzhou, Zhejiang province, in April 2025.
Above from left: Retelas displays his grandfather's journal and photographs hiking to one of the parachute locations in Jiangxi province in December. Retelas meets with a Chinese villager in Jiangxi province in December. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"This exchange was about much more than artifacts," he said. "It was about honoring a shared history and building relationships that continue to matter today."

While in Quzhou, Retelas met and interviewed several elderly Chinese men who were children when their families sheltered US airmen.

Retelas returned to China in December. By then, the people he had met in Quzhou were no longer strangers.

He visited sites in Jiangxi province where US airmen had parachuted down more than 80 years ago, now marked with small memorial markers put together by a group of Chinese volunteers who have spent years scouring the countryside for B-25 wreckage and honoring the spots where the flyers touched down.

"There was a group of volunteers that, over the last few years, have made it their personal quest to go and find fragments of the airplanes and help put together little memorial sites," Retelas said. "They are an amazing group of men and I consider them all great friends now."

The markers moved him in ways he had not anticipated. In France, he knew, there were sites where US pilots bailed out and French villagers came to their rescue, places marked in English, visited by tourists, and written into the popular memory of the war. The Chinese sites felt different: quieter, less known, more quietly tended.

"For me, it was very touching to see Americans from 80 years ago being remembered, and seeing these markers in English," he said.

"The volunteers who put those sites together — you could see the passion in their eyes. It was like looking at someone who cares as much as I do, but from across the ocean. We went to dinner every night, kept ordering more beer, kept talking. I've never felt closer to so many people who live so far away from me."

To the silver screen

Out of both trips came the outlines of a film. Retelas is now in the early stages of development of *The Torch Dragon*, a coming-of-age war drama that imagines the Doolittle Raid from the perspective of the people on the ground.

The film tells the story of four village children who discover a wounded US pilot who parachuted into their lives in war-torn China in 1942. They believe him to be the mythical Torch Dragon, a protector sent to shield them from invading Japanese forces. Retelas has completed a first draft and plans to return to China later this year to meet with studios interested in backing the project.

It is his first feature-length live-action film, and was inspired by his initial visit to China.

"That first cultural exchange in China involving the Doolittle Raid was very meaningful for me, because knowing my grandfather helped with that mission and where it led — it's like opening a door to another part of history," he said.

He is also assembling footage from his December trip into a YouTube documentary for a US audience. The film draws on the interviews he conducted with descendants of the Chinese families who sheltered the airmen.

Cultural ties

Retelas serves as director of media marketing at Menlo College in Silicon Valley, and the work he has done in China has rippled back to his campus life.

Menlo's international student body includes a large number of students from China — the second most represented international country on campus, with students from abroad making up nearly a quarter of enrollment.

On his first China trip, he brought along Menlo College student Mathias Durfee, a marketing major who participated through an internship with the USS *Hornet* Museum and documented the visit through photography and video.

"Being part of this cultural exchange was an incredible experience," Durfee said. "It allowed me to apply what I've learned at Menlo in a real-world, international setting while documenting history that still resonates today."

During his December trip, Retelas connected with Chinese students at Menlo College who were home for the holidays. Zhou Yanxi, an AI and analytics major, was among them. "I am extremely grateful there are people at Menlo College, like Mr Retelas, who take the initiative to learn about my home country and its culture," Zhou said.

Retelas said such exchanges have helped inform his engagement with the students. "I love working with young people and mentoring them, but the Chinese students particularly always tend to be a little bit more reserved and kind of shy," he said. "But once they knew I went to China, they're so warm and opening up."

He is also mentoring a group of high school students who are writing a book about the Doolittle Raid. "I am very excited to help the young people of the US and China know about this story," he said.

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WORLD

Foreign minister calls for defending UN Charter

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi speaks at a Security Council high-level meeting at the United Nations headquarters in New York on Tuesday. ZHANG FENGGUO / XINHUA

Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday called for renewed commitment to the United Nations Charter and warned against unilateral actions and "double standards", amid growing geopolitical tensions and challenges to multilateralism.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks while presiding over a Security Council high-level meeting on upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and strengthening the UN-centered international system.

Wang said the current international situation is undergoing the most complex and profound changes seen since the Second World War, stressing that the challenges confronting the world today test the international community's conviction to safeguard peace, its resolve to uphold justice, and its courage to pursue reform and innovation.

"We must unite and take action to uphold, revitalize and strengthen the United Nations," he said.

The meeting, held under China's rotating presidency of the Security Council for May, was attended by representatives from more than 100 countries, including more than 20 foreign ministers and high-level delegates.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Tuesday also delivered a briefing on the current international situation at the meeting.

Wang urged the international community to reaffirm the spirit of the UN Charter, saying that the surging global conflicts are "not a sign of the Charter's obsolescence", but from failures to uphold the international order and basic norms of international relations established under it.

"Major countries in particular should shoulder their responsibilities, uphold the rule of law and fairness, and reject double standards, exceptionalism and selective application of rules," he said.

On the role of the Security Council, Wang said council membership is "not a privilege, but a responsibility", and urged members to "rise above national self-interest".

He called for improvements to the council's working methods to ensure objectivity, fairness and inclusiveness in draft resolutions and initiatives, and urged permanent members to strengthen coordination and seek consensus on major issues.

On international development collaboration, Wang urged the United Nations to coordinate global action and mobilize global resources, providing greater financial, technical and intellectual support to countries of the Global South in priority areas such as poverty reduction.

Wang said China "supports a greater UN role in the political settlement of hotspot issues and is open to exploring a comprehensive mediation model involving the UN, regional organizations, stakeholders and professional institutions".

On revitalizing the effectiveness of the UN system, Wang said that the organization's role "must be strengthened, not weakened" and its standing "must be upheld, not replaced".

He urged member states to fulfill their financial obligations to the United Nations and support its work.

Following the meeting, Wang told reporters that China has maintained communication and coordination between the United States and Iran, as well as important regional and international partners.

"We believe that the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of all countries in the region must be respected, that civilian and non-military targets must be protected, that the security of passages and energy infrastructure must be safeguarded, and that the provisions of the nuclear non-proliferation regime must be implemented," he said.

Wang said the key to the situation lies in talks between the United States and Iran. He welcomed mediation efforts by countries including Pakistan and voiced support for diplomatic efforts by both sides.

Wang also outlined China's position regarding the qualifications required for the next UN secretary-general.

"To sum up, commitment to the UN Charter; outstanding competency; integrity and impartiality; and initiative to take responsibility and deliver," he said.

"Going forward, China will work with others and take a responsible attitude to participate in the selection process of the next secretary-general," he told reporters.

Xinhua contributed to the story.

Friendship reflected in Sharif's visit

PM's trip to help further enhance economic cooperation, experts say

By **XU WEIWEI** in Hong Kong
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Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif's visit, which coincided with the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Pakistan and China, is timely, significant, and reflects the depth of a friendship that has stood the test of time, analysts said.

They said Sharif's talks with Chinese leaders will further strengthen the ironclad brotherhood between the two nations, especially economic relations and the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, or CPEC.

President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang met Sharif in Beijing on Monday after he arrived in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on Saturday. Sharif also attended an event marking the 75th anniversary of diplomatic relations, before leaving on Tuesday.

The high-level engagements in Beijing demonstrate the mutual trust and strategic understanding that continue to define relations between the two countries, said Khalid Taimur Akram, executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad.

"Such exchanges are essential for strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, technology, and regional connectivity," Akram noted. In his opinion, this next phase of CPEC has the potential to create new opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and long-term prosperity for Pakistan.

Akram said the investment and business conference led by Sharif in China signals a transition from infrastructure development to broader economic cooperation in areas such as technology, industrial development, agriculture, and innovation.

Sharif's visit has been widely regarded as purposeful and forward-looking, setting the stage for progress, including greater socio-economic prosperity and financial integration, said Mehmood Ul Hassan Khan, president of the Center for Knowledge and Public Policy in Pakistan.

"These developments have significantly enhanced political understanding, diplomatic consultations, economic cooperation, industrial collaboration, and, above all, the revitalization of CPEC 2.0," he said.

"The visit, therefore, provided a major boost to Pakistan's economy, steering it toward greater stability, sustainability, and modernization, with the relocation of high-quality industries set to play a pivotal role."

> "Such exchanges are essential for strengthening cooperation in trade, investment, infrastructure, technology, and regional connectivity."
>
> **Khalid Taimur Akram,** executive director of the Pakistan Research Center for a Community with Shared Future in Islamabad

In international relations, timing, gestures, and events signify the importance and depth of the relationship, said Shakeel Ahmad Ramay, CEO of the Asian Institute of Eco-Civilization, Research, and Development in Pakistan.

Ahmad said it is good that the Chinese and Pakistani leaders exchanged views, coordinated their positions, and devised future policies and courses of action to navigate the new world order and multipolar world together.

"Pakistan pins high hopes on securing good deals (with China) to foster Pakistan's economic growth and development," he said.

Financial sector cooperation is crucial for Pakistan amid the ongoing financial crisis and extreme pressure from international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, he said.

Sharif's visit can definitely help the country find new opportunities, especially in the financial sector, such as bonds and mechanisms, to ease financial pressure, and to strengthen cooperation with China, he said.

Imtiaz Gul, executive director of the Center for Research and Security Studies in Pakistan, said China's warm reception of Sharif's visit underscored the unflinching nature of bilateral relations.

He said the new agreements on cultural exchanges and educational cooperation signed during the visit can "certainly help deepen Pakistanis' knowledge of rich Chinese culture, values of hard work, perseverance, and the phenomenal strides that China has made in science and technology".

Students share passion for China through contest

By **HOU JUNJIE** in Tokyo
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A growing number of young people in Japan are developing an interest in China, attracted by the country's long history, rich cultural heritage, and rapid technological advances, with many choosing to study Chinese as a gateway to a deeper understanding.

Those aspirations were on display on Saturday at the Japan finals of the 19th "Chinese Bridge" competition for secondary and high school students, where 16 contestants from across the country shared personal stories about learning Chinese and their impressions of China.

Anna Takahashi, who lived in China for three years, recalled feeling anxious and uncertain when she first arrived in a foreign country. But the kindness she received from teachers and strangers in China gradually eased her fears and left a lasting impression.

"That experience made me truly fall in love with China," she said during her speech.

After returning to Japan, Takahashi said she was saddened to hear negative stereotypes about China, including claims that "China is dangerous". She added that she often felt frustrated for being unable to counter such comments effectively.

Through the competition, she hoped to encourage others not to judge a country solely based on fragmented information online, but to experience it firsthand.

"Before rejecting something, try to understand it first," Takahashi said, adding that she hopes to become a translator in the future and help build mutual understanding between Japan and China.

Another contestant, Uta Moriyama, said her fascination with China began with the hit Chinese drama *The Untamed*, which inspired her interest in traditional Chinese culture and landscapes.

Having studied Chinese since the age of 6, she described the language as "a pair of wings" that allows her to explore a broader world and experience the charm of Chinese civilization across time.

She said she especially enjoys Chinese classical literature such as *Romance of the Three Kingdoms*, as well as the rhythm and beauty of classical Chinese poetry.

Beyond culture, Moriyama is also closely following China's technological developments, particularly in robotics and artificial intelligence, and hopes to visit China in the future to witness the country's innovation firsthand.

The competition also featured cultural performances by contestants, including Chinese martial arts, tai chi, diabolo, paper-cutting, and *erhu* performances. The *erhu* is a traditional Chinese two-stringed musical instrument.

Tian Lulu, minister counselor of the Chinese embassy in Japan, said the "Chinese Bridge" competition, which has been held in Japan for more than two decades, has helped many students broaden their horizons by learning Chinese and step onto larger international stages.

Deepening interest

She encouraged participants to showcase their language abilities and share stories about their connections to China and the Chinese language, while continuing to deepen their interest in Chinese culture.

Tokuichiro Utsunomiya, president of the Japan-China Friendship Association, said that people-to-people exchanges, especially among younger generations, are essential to the future of Japan-China relations.

"Learning Chinese is not only about mastering a language, but also an important pathway to understanding China's history, culture, and way of thinking," he said.

Utsunomiya also said he hoped the students would use Chinese to share their dreams, deepen mutual understanding through cultural exchange, and contribute to future China-Japan friendship.

In Japan, more than 70 universities and over 600 high schools now offer Chinese-language courses.

This year marks the 25th anniversary of the "Chinese Bridge" brand, which is organized by the Center for Language Education and Cooperation under China's Ministry of Education and supported by Chinese embassies and Confucius Institutes worldwide.

Dressed to impress



A model wears traditional Tajik clothing at a costume show in Dushanbe, Tajikistan, on Monday. LI RENZI / XINHUA

Unity celebrated amid fresh concerns over xenophobia

JOHANNESBURG — South Africa on Monday marked Africa Day amid renewed concerns over xenophobia, as the government called for African unity and condemned violence against foreign nationals.

Speaking at celebrations held at Moruleng Stadium in North West Province, Minister of Sport, Arts and Culture Gayton McKenzie rejected claims that South Africa is xenophobic, while acknowledging growing public frustration over illegal immigration.

The event took place as tensions over the treatment of foreign nationals continued to attract attention across the continent.

South African Minister of International Relations and Cooperation Ronald Lamola on Saturday reiterated the government's opposition to attacks against migrants, saying the government remained firmly opposed to any attacks targeting foreign nationals.

He said he had been engaging with several African countries, including Ghana, Nigeria and Malawi, to address concerns over the safety of their citizens.

The minister acknowledged that South Africa faces challenges related to illegal migration and undocumented foreign nationals, stressing that immigration laws should only be enforced by authorized law enforcement agencies.

Former South African president Thabo Mbeki warned that rising anti-immigrant sentiment threatens both the country's constitutional values and broader African unity.

Speaking ahead of Africa Day, Mbeki said economic hardship and unemployment should not be used to scapegoat migrants, calling on political leaders, civil society organizations, and communities to reject divisive rhetoric and work together to address migration and economic challenges peacefully.

Safety concerns also affected diplomatic participation in this year's Africa Day celebrations.

According to local media, Andre Nzapayeke, ambassador of the Central African Republic, said some African ambassadors collectively decided not to attend the event due to security concerns.

He said that with large crowds expected at the event, diplomats could not confidently guarantee the safety of African migrants attending the celebrations.

Ghana's High Commissioner to South Africa Benjamin Quashie said that tensions surrounding undocumented migration could damage South Africa's relationship with other African nations.

In late April, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa condemned xenophobia and vigilantism during Freedom Day commemorations, stressing that concerns about undocumented migration should never lead to prejudice against fellow Africans.

Over the past two decades, South Africa has faced repeated outbreaks of xenophobic violence, with foreign nationals often blamed for unemployment, crime, and pressure on public services.

XINHUA



People from migrant rights groups demonstrate on Africa Day, protesting against xenophobia, in Cape Town, South Africa, on Monday. ESA ALEXANDER / REUTERS

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COMMENT

Editorials

Foreign investment drawn to advantages of country's high-standard opening-up

The State Council Information Office announced on Tuesday that the seventh Qingdao Multinationals Summit will be held in Qingdao, Shandong province, from June 15 to 17, and that more than 350 foreign executives from 36 countries have confirmed their attendance.

This latest event, along with a flurry of recent international trade and investment promotion activities, highlights the confidence of foreign companies in the world's second-largest economy. The sustained influx of foreign investment into China, even as global foreign direct investment trends downward, is a testament to China's unique positioning in the world economy.

China's allure as a destination for foreign investment is evident in the latest data from the Ministry of Commerce: from January to April this year, 20,113 new foreign-invested enterprises emerged nationwide, a 6.8 percent increase year-on-year. This growth is not merely a fleeting trend but part of a broader trajectory that has seen the number of foreign-funded enterprises in China rise consistently over the past three years, surpassing 530,000 and collectively channeling over $3.6 trillion into the economy.

More than 3,000 foreign-funded enterprises further expanded their investments in China during the same period, a trend also recorded last year which saw more than 8,000 foreign-funded companies make additional investment in China, up more than 10 percent year-on-year.

Against the undercurrents of the "decoupling" from China rhetoric and sluggish world economic growth, the latest data underscore that in a turbulent world, the Chinese market stands out as a beacon for foreign investors due to its predictability, reliability and steady growth.

The improvement of China's business environment — characterized by an increasingly shorter negative list, the rule of law and nondiscriminatory treatment — is another key factor driving the influx of foreign investment.

From January to April, the actual use of foreign capital in high-tech sectors reached 116.33 billion yuan ($17.14 billion), reflecting a significant 20.3 percent increase year-on-year. These sectors alone accounted for 40.4 percent of the total foreign capital utilized in the country, up by 10.3 percentage points from the previous year. Within this realm, areas such as R&D and design services, computer and office equipment manufacturing, and electronics and communication equipment manufacturing have witnessed remarkable growth, with year-on-year increases of 108.4 percent, 22.9 percent and 20.2 percent respectively. These statistics highlight a shift in foreign investment patterns, moving away from traditional manufacturing toward more innovative and technologically advanced industries.

As China continues to enhance its industrial foundation and research and development environment, it is ready to attract even more foreign investment eager to tap into its comprehensive value chain advantages in emerging technologies and new industries. This shift from "quantity" to "quality" in foreign investment is a clear indicator of China's evolving economic landscape, where innovation and high-end manufacturing are becoming the new pillars of growth.

The country's proactive approach is reshaping China's role from being the global manufacturing hub to a central node in the global value chain. The country's commitment to opening its market, particularly in the service industry, is evident as it accounts for over 70 percent of the actual use of foreign capital. The Ministry of Commerce has outlined plans to expand market access and create new advantages to attract foreign investment, particularly in sectors such as green transformation, intelligent manufacturing and digital services.

This is reinforced by the trend of investment from developed countries increasingly producing in China and utilizing advanced technologies developed by local Chinese companies to enhance the competitiveness of their entire operations.

This diversification reflects the broader transformation in China's economic development, driven by continuous market opening, reduced barriers to foreign investment, and the implementation of national treatment policies.

There is no doubt that China remains a magnet for foreign investors seeking growth and opportunity in an increasingly difficult global economy.

It is high time some in the West put to rest their parochial ideology and bias against China, and did more to build bridges than put up barriers. By recognizing the strategic importance of the Chinese market, businesses and policymakers can navigate the complexities of globalization in a way that promotes shared prosperity and sustainable growth.

Innovative response to choke-point chip tech

Moore's Law has been a cornerstone of the rapid advancement of digital technology over the past decades, although it is now confronting physical limits and diminishing economic returns.

For an industry conditioned to equate progress with nanometers, the Tau Scaling Law disclosed by Huawei on Monday is a challenge to the organizing logic of the semiconductor ecosystem.

Instead of continuing the increasingly expensive race to shrink transistors, Tau Scaling proposes that future chip performance gains can come from compressing the signal propagation time through architectural and timing innovations. Huawei has set a target of reaching a chip density equivalent to 1.4 nanometers by 2031.

Washington's export restrictions have attempted to cut China off from advanced lithography equipment, leading-edge foundries and portions of the global event-driven architecture software stack. Such measures were designed to slow China's progress in advanced semiconductors.

That is where Tau Scaling enters the picture. Instead of shrinking transistor dimensions from 3 nm to 2 nm and beyond, Huawei is extracting more performance from mature process nodes such as 5 nm and 7 nm by means of architectural optimization, timing compression, logic folding and system-level coordination.

Much of the underlying research — including asynchronous computing concepts, wave pipelining, and timing optimization techniques — can be traced back decades. What Huawei has done, under conditions where the traditional scaling route became inaccessible, is to revisit those ideas, combine them, enhance them and industrialize them.

In that sense, the emergence of Tau Scaling reflects a broader historical pattern in technology. Constraints often redirect innovation rather than stop it. So, if chip performance can be improved through architecture rather than lithography alone, then the balance of competition changes. The key question becomes not simply who owns the most advanced EUV machines, but who can design the most efficient systems using available manufacturing capabilities.

It would be premature, though, to declare that the arrival of Tau Scaling heralds the post-Moore era. Semiconductor history is filled with elegant concepts that struggled once they encountered manufacturing economics, ecosystem inertia, or commercial realities. Huawei's proposal faces several important ceilings.

Architecture cannot completely replace physics. Timing optimization can reduce inefficiencies, but signals still obey physical propagation limits. As chips become larger and workloads more complex, interconnect delays and synchronization overhead remain major bottlenecks.

Logic folding and time-domain optimization introduce their own complexity penalties. The more aggressively a design compresses timing, the harder verification, debugging and manufacturing become. Commercialization will determine whether Tau Scaling becomes an industry framework. For Huawei's approach to become influential, other companies must adopt it, customers must validate it and developers must build around it. That process will take years, not conference announcements.

Even so, the broader lesson already stands. The semiconductor industry is entering a phase where innovation no longer relies exclusively on brute-force scaling and trillion-dollar capital expenditures. Architectural intelligence, software-hardware codesign, advanced packaging and system optimization are becoming increasingly important.

For China, that shift creates both an opportunity and a responsibility. The country still faces major gaps in lithography, materials, EDA tools and manufacturing equipment. But Tau Scaling demonstrates something equally important: when external pressure blocks one route, researchers will look for alternative routes and solutions can emerge through persistence, engineering discipline and targeted input.

The semiconductor race is no longer just about making things smaller. Increasingly, it is about making systems smarter. The challenge now is for more Chinese companies and engineers to push beyond incremental imitation and focus on resolving genuine choke-point technologies with the tools they already possess.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Reckless showboating ignores real risk of triggering trip wire

That warships from extra-regional countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia, glide through disputed waters in the South China Sea is purposeful showboating. The Report on the Military Activities of Non-US Extra-Regional Countries in the Western Pacific in 2025, published on Tuesday by the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, an international research network that recorded their appearances, reads more like the record of the cast performing on an increasingly crowded stage.

According to the think tank report, about 200 warships from 18 extra-regional countries operated in the region in 2025, while their military aircraft logged more than 20,000 sorties. These operations appear designed to mislead audiences back home rather than meet the actual security needs of the region.

A destroyer sails through contested waters, officials issue carefully worded statements about "shared values", commentators praise "firmness", and ministers collect photographs that project "toughness" without, theoretically, requiring sacrifice.

The problem with symbolic military gestures is that they rarely remain symbolic forever. International relations theory has long warned that countries frequently drift toward confrontation not because anyone actively wants war, but because each side interprets the other's actions through entirely different emotional and strategic lenses. And once that spiral begins, every "routine" operation acquires an increasingly sharp edge.

Modern military systems are fundamentally ambiguous. A surveillance aircraft gathering information today may be viewed as mapping targets tomorrow. A destroyer exercising "navigation freedom" may also look like the opening scene of a blockade rehearsal. Military hardware does not come with subtitles explaining peaceful intent. Before long, these extra-regional countries will find themselves trapped inside an escalating choreography that nobody fully controls anymore. What makes the current trend particularly striking is how little many of these countries actually stand to gain.

One wonders how these same nations would react if distant countries began conducting naval patrols and military reconnaissance near their own coastlines, not to mention with equal intensity and frequency. That is why the moral certainty surrounding many of these operations feels increasingly detached from strategic reality. The Western Pacific is not an abstract chessboard for symbolic posturing. It is a densely interconnected economic artery where even minor military incidents could send shock waves through global trade, supply chains and financial markets.

And history suggests that accidents happen most often in environments where everyone insists they are merely exercising their rights. The reality is that most countries in the region are far more interested in economic growth, trade and stability than in becoming supporting actors in an endless maritime pressure campaign. What they do not need is an expanding cycle of military theater masquerading as "strategic necessity".

There is a profound difference between maintaining stability and repeatedly testing how much pressure a volatile environment can absorb before something breaks.

And when that happens, the countries treating the Western Pacific like a stage for symbolic power projection may discover that applause is much harder to obtain once real consequences arrive.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Major step toward rules for global carbon market

Editor's note: *Earlier this month, China, Brazil and the European Union — founding members of the Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets — held the first high-level meeting of the coalition in Florence, Italy. Dong Xiucheng, executive dean of the institute for international carbon-neutral economy at the University of International Business and Economics, and Weng Yuyan, an associate researcher at the Institute of Energy, Environment and Economy at Tsinghua University, spoke to People's Daily Overseas Edition about the coalition's role in the development of a global carbon market. Below are excerpts of the interviews. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Currently, the global carbon markets are characterized by uneven development and fragmentation. Countries have adopted different rules and standards for carbon pricing, and there are substantial barriers to cross-border carbon trading.

The establishment of the Open Coalition on Compliance Carbon Markets marks a significant step in implementing the consensus reached at COP30 in Brazil last year. The coalition aims to harmonize carbon market rules across countries, unify accounting standards, promote cross-border recognition of carbon credits, build a platform for policy discussions, share experiences in carbon market development, regulate international carbon trading and address the issue of market fragmentation.

The coalition's key focus areas include cooperation on monitoring, reporting and verification systems for carbon emissions, carbon accounting methods and rules for using high-integrity offsets.

The official launch of the coalition will promote the alignment of carbon pricing systems across countries, reduce regulatory conflicts and lower the costs of cross-border trading. This is aimed at establishing a fairer and more transparent global carbon pricing system.

The coalition will facilitate cross-border carbon trading, enhance coordination among countries in meeting their emissions reduction commitments and support the achievement of nationally determined contributions.

It will also accelerate the low-carbon transition of various countries through market-based approaches and guide the cross-border flow of green capital. By leveraging economic tools, the coalition will help the world achieve the temperature-control goals set out in the Paris Agreement, pool multilateral efforts for emissions reduction, and ultimately achieve the carbon neutrality target.

Carbon markets across the world have been designed differently. Given that developed and developing countries are at different stages of growth, the coalition adheres to the principles of openness, inclusiveness and voluntary participation. This approach promotes dialogue and cooperation among members on core aspects of carbon markets, helping to form a common framework for their development and further enhance global cooperation on carbon pricing.

The coalition will promote the effective implementation of Article 6 of the Paris Agreement by encouraging member states to coordinate on carbon emissions accounting and high-quality carbon credit standards. That China, Brazil and the EU — major economies from different regions — are working together to advance carbon market cooperation demonstrates their resolve to uphold multilateralism and jointly address climate change. This offers a new model for cooperation on global climate governance.

It is worth noting that members of the coalition differ in their carbon reduction foundations, economic development levels and available resources, which may pose challenges to the coalition's operations.

The international community needs to formulate unified rules for carbon accounting, carbon credit certification and trading. Developed countries should scale up technological and financial support for developing countries to narrow the gap between carbon markets in the Global South and Global North. Efforts should focus on expanding multilateral dialogue, encouraging more countries to join the coalition and improving the regulatory system for global carbon trading.

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VIEWS

Nataša Stanojević

China-Serbia cooperative leap from roads to robots



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic's visit to China from May 24 to 28 comes at a time when China-Serbia economic cooperation has become a central pillar of Serbia's development strategy.

During the talks with Vucic on Monday, President Xi Jinping said that against the backdrop of a new scientific and technological revolution and industrial transformation, the two sides should expand cooperation in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence, the digital economy, green energy and advanced manufacturing to foster new growth drivers.

The two countries signed more than 20 cooperation documents covering areas such as trade and economic relations and technology.

These developments indicate the evolution of China-Serbia cooperation and will inject fresh momentum into it.

Nowadays, direct Chinese investments in Serbia have reportedly exceeded 7.2 billion euros ($8.35 billion), with the total value of infrastructure and economic projects, including loans, surpassing 14 billion euros.

This influx of capital has had a transformative impact on Serbia, impacting infrastructure, industry, employment and trade. China is now one of Serbia's two largest investors and a leading foreign trade partner.

Ahead of his visit, President Vucic highlighted artificial intelligence, robotics and new technologies as key areas of cooperation, marking a new phase in bilateral economic relations.

China-Serbia cooperation initially focused on infrastructure, particularly under the Belt and Road Initiative. Serbia, a landlocked country strategically positioned between Central and Southeast Europe, faced the problem of outdated transport corridors.

Chinese projects in roads, bridges, railways and energy facilities helped Serbia improve physical connectivity, strengthen links with regional corridors, expand production and attract investment. These infrastructure projects laid the groundwork for a broader economic agenda, reducing logistics costs and making Serbia more attractive for production and export.

The key question now is how to transform this infrastructure into industrial capacity, export growth and higher value-added production. The next phase of cooperation should be measured by how well connectivity supports manufacturing, technological upgrading and Serbia's integration into regional and global value chains.

This transition is already visible. Chinese economic engagement in Serbia has expanded into industries such as mining, metallurgy, rubber production and automotive components.

These manufacturing investments have a deeper long-term impact than infrastructure alone, creating employment, expanding exports and supporting supplier networks.

Serbia's industrial base, skilled labor and proximity to European markets make it an attractive destination for Chinese companies seeking to connect with European and regional supply chains. Notable industrial projects include Zijin in Bor, HBIS in Smederevo, Linglong in Zrenjanin, Minth in Loznica and Šabac, Xingyu in Niš and Yanfeng in Kragujevac.

Zijin's investment in the Bor copper complex has significantly increased copper production and strengthened the role of copper in Serbia's export structure. In 2018, the Serbian government accepted Zijin's offer to acquire a 63 percent stake in RTB Bor, with the total investment package valued at $1.26 billion.

Exporting raw copper ore has a limited effect on industrial development. But processing refined copper into plates, sheets or pipes creates higher value, requires more skills, supports related industries and strengthens the domestic industrial base. This is why the next stage of cooperation should focus on value-added production.

But a recent study shows that there is a shortage of skilled labor in Eastern Serbia and insufficient processing capacity, so a rapid shift toward an export structure based on processed copper products is unrealistic. A more practical strategy would be to strike a balance between raw material exports and processed copper exports.

A similar logic applies to the steel sector. The acquisition of the Smederevo steel plant by HBIS was a significant example of Chinese participation in Serbia's existing industrial capacities.

The steel plant was long plagued by unstable production and heavy losses. HBIS acquired the plant in 2016, reviving production and exports, and reestablishing the company as one of Serbia's most important exporters.

This shows that Chinese investment has not only created new projects, but also helped modernize Serbia's existing industrial capacities.

Another example is Shandong Linglong's tire plant in Zrenjanin, one of the largest Chinese greenfield investments in Serbia valued at 800 million euros.

Linglong started building its tire factory in Zrenjanin in 2019, showing that Serbia is not only a destination for acquiring existing enterprises, but also a potential production base for new capacities.

Alongside Linglong, investments by Minth, Xingyu and Yanfeng point to a broader trend of Chinese engagement in automotive components.

Though smaller than Zijin or HBIS, these investments are significant because they connect Serbia more directly with European automotive and industrial supply chains. This is especially relevant for Chinese investors.

If the first phase of China-Serbia economic cooperation focused on infrastructure, and the second on industrial production, the coming phase may go beyond traditional manufacturing and emphasize high-technology and innovation-oriented sectors.

Recent announcements indicate that robotics, AI, digitalization and advanced industrial technologies are becoming part of the bilateral agenda.

The cooperation announced with the Chinese company AGIBOT Innovation in humanoid robots is especially noteworthy. While relevant statements suggest that Serbia could soon become a base for the mass production of humanoid robots, Vucic also announced that a robot factory could open in a few months in Šabac. This would be a qualitatively new type of Chinese investment in Serbia.

The China-Serbia joint laboratory for green steel manufacturing, jointly launched by the HBIS Group and the University of Belgrade, shows that cooperation in traditional sectors such as steel can gradually move toward cleaner production, research cooperation and technological upgrading. It connects the older industrial pillar of cooperation with the newer priorities of sustainability, innovation and green transformation.

This initiative is important for Serbia because it diversifies cooperation with China, strengthens the country's export base and creates the possibility for deeper supplier linkages, technology transfer and skills development.

The strategic value of Chinese investment in Serbia lies in linking infrastructure, manufacturing and trade into a single development platform.

Roads and railways improve connectivity, but their full effect appears only when they support production, exports and industrial integration.

Mining and metals increase output, but their impact is greater when they move toward processing and higher value added. Greenfield investments create new jobs, but their importance depends on whether they become embedded in local supplier networks and regional value chains.

This is why the next phase of China-Serbia cooperation shifts from connectivity to productive capacity.

Infrastructure remains the foundation, but manufacturing is the test of maturity. If Serbia can use Chinese investment not only to build but also to produce, process, export and innovate, the cooperation will have a stronger and more sustainable effect on the country's development.

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

Syed Hasan Javed

An enduring Sino-Pakistani friendship for a shared future

As China and Pakistan celebrate the 75th anniversary of their diplomatic relations, many expressions are being used to describe their enduring friendship.

This is not surprising, given that the region now known as Pakistan has historically served as a bridge linking South Asia, Central Asia, the Middle East, Europe, and Africa, facilitating China's trade and exchange of ideas, goods, and philosophies since the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220).

From ancient times, the people of this region have been fascinated by Chinese culture, particularly its silk, herbal medicine, food, tools and crafts.

Stories dating back 3,000 years, including the legend of the Queen Mother of the West, or Xi Wang Mu, and her peach banquet, are remembered by the people of Hunza in northern Pakistan, where they grow longevity peaches.

These fables and folk traditions have been passed down through generations, reflecting the deep bonds between the two countries.

The exchanges are evident not only in legends but also in the names and nomenclature of spices, herbs and medicines that persist to this day. Even sustained efforts by the colonial powers to erase these identities proved futile.

Pakistanis have always admired the Chinese values of hard work, humility, positivity and good neighborliness.

Chinese wisdom, which is rooted in common sense, has long been used to resolve complex problems. These cultural imprints are important, as they nourish the many values that unite the people of the two countries.

Like China, Pakistan is also an ancient civilization, being the cradle of the Indus Valley Civilization, as well as the Harappa and Gandhara civilizations.

Mahayana Buddhism was among this region's earliest cultural exports to China. Famous Chinese travelers Faxian and Xuanzang journeyed through what is now modern-day Pakistan in search of authentic Buddhist sutras.

Xuanzang's journey later became the inspiration for the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) novel *Journey to the West* by Wu Cheng'en, highlighting the bonds that unite the two peoples.

Today's generation in both countries is reenacting that history. The intelligentsia has a common responsibility to help future generations know about their common heritage in order to build a community with a shared future for humanity.

China's remarkable advances in technology, the economy, artificial intelligence, national defense and governance — underpinned by its deep cultural traditions and distinct development model with Chinese characteristics — have become an important reference point for many countries in the Global South, particularly its "ironclad brother" Pakistan. The successes achieved so far in bilateral and multilateral cooperation underscore the strength, resilience and strategic depth of this multi-dimensional relationship.

The successful implementation of projects during the first phase of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor has been a major milestone. This success raises hopes that the second phase of the CPEC will be even more successful.

It is important to note that China-Pakistan cooperation extends far beyond the domains of the CPEC into strategic areas such as defense projects, the peaceful use of nuclear energy, renewable energy, mining, automobiles, maritime monitoring capabilities, space exploration, AI and human resource development.

For example, Pakistan's integration into the Chinese supply chain and its adept use of Chinese aviation technology, such as the JF-17 Thunder and advanced J-10C aircraft, have made the Pakistan Air Force a global ambassador for these technologies.

A new world order is emerging as the old one crumbles. With Asia on the rise, the unique relationship between China and Pakistan baffles many, particularly in the Western world.

Both countries enjoy a harmonious relationship built on trust, goodwill and cooperation. China has never interfered in Pakistan's internal affairs or exerted pressure. Instead, it has assisted Pakistan without any expectation of a quid pro quo.

As steadfast allies, both countries always work closely to ensure peace, prosperity and stability in Eurasia, West Asia, the Gulf and South Asia.

The second quarter of the 21st century marks the beginning of a multi-polar world, with China and Pakistan seeking a just, equitable, peaceful, harmonious and prosperous global order.

China's vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, under the Belt and Road Initiative, is the next phase of globalization.

As an ancient civilization, China follows the "prosper thy neighbor" philosophy, sharing its experience with all countries of the Global South.

Pakistan is ideally positioned to benefit from this partnership.

The author is the former director of the China Studies Centre at Pakistan's National University of Sciences and Technology and a former ambassador. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Zhou Shuchun

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Huge potential of tiny tokens powering AI revolution

In recent months, the term "token" has leapt from obscurity into everyday life as a buzzword alongside intelligent agents such as Lobster or OpenClaw. But this token is not the blockchain-based cryptocurrency unit.

Rather, it is the unit of measurement for large language model text processing. Just as we measure prose in letters or numbers, AI processes information by first breaking data down into bite-sized manageable tokens. Think of a token as the smallest Lego brick — the atomic particle — of AI-generated content.

Every time we use AI — whether asking a question or writing code — we invoke these atoms of AI language. Tokens, therefore, are an indicator of AI activity.

In this sense, token data not only reflect the dynamics of an economy in the AI era but also give rise to a new kind of economic logic.

At the beginning of 2024, China's average daily consumption of tokens was 100 billion. This shot up to a staggering 100 trillion by the end of 2025, and is now over 140 trillion.

This explosive growth of more than 1,000 times in a little over two years far exceeds the global average. Liu Liehong, head of the National Data Bureau, said, "The massive increase in daily token call volume indicates that China's AI development has entered a phase of rapid growth."

On the demand side, the token consumption frenzy indicates the widespread and frequent use of AI applications, reflecting the depth and breadth of AI empowerment across industries. It also points to a maturing ecosystem, hinting at a breakthrough in AI commercialization. As the world's largest internet economy, China is poised to be the epicenter of token economics.

The more powerful the computing capacity, the faster the token processing speed, the lower the unit cost, the higher the model quality, and consequently, the more frequent the token calls.

On the other hand, this surge in token consumption reflects a supply-side momentum anchored in computing power. In the digital economy, data is the raw material while computing power is the production tool. Every token call consumes computing power.

The more powerful the computing capacity, the faster the token processing speed, the lower the unit cost, the higher the model quality, and consequently, the more frequent the token calls. The explosive growth in token consumption or call volume provides grounds for optimism regarding computing power supply prospects, while also sounding a warning that it is a scarce resource in the AI era.

With the development of the Metaverse, the Industrial Internet, and the proliferation of AI agents, the surge in demand might lead to a perpetual shortage in computing power. Computing power supply is constrained by investments in hardware and infrastructure such as chips, servers and data centers. With "AI+" becoming a national strategy, China must vigorously strengthen the supply-side infrastructure.

In the AI era, computing power is akin to national strength. Recent developments bode well for China's computing capacity. Beyond companies like Huawei Ascend, Cambricon, and Hygon Information Technology launching acceleration chips and CPUs, the completion of China's largest AI computing cluster in Zhengzhou is a milestone in domestic computing infrastructure.

Developed countries are racing to build AI for Science (AI4S) computing facilities, marking a new stage of global tech competition. The cluster in Zhengzhou, located at the core node of China's Supercomputing Internet, integrates 60,000 acceleration cards. It is a super brain tailored for Chinese scientists and signifies a breakthrough in the country's computing infrastructure.

What gives China greater confidence is the energy support behind computing power — the bottom layer of what NVIDIA CEO Jensen Huang calls the "Five-Layer Cake of AI". At the end of AI lies electricity; tokens are driven by watts.

China has the world's largest and most advanced power supply system, with a total installed generation capacity of 3.95 billion kilowatts — three times that of the United States and 13 times that of Japan. The continued expansion of green power promises the sustainable development of computing power.

Under the framework of token economics, China's two major initiatives — computing-electricity synergy project and "East Data, West Computing" — are increasingly significant. The former ensures power supply for computing centers through coordinated planning of computing infrastructure and power systems.

The latter channels dense computing power demand from the east to the electricity-rich west. Both are vital for consolidating and upgrading China's intelligent computing scale, now the second largest in the world.

As Liu of the National Data Bureau noted, "tokens are not only the value anchor of the AI era but also the settlement unit connecting technology supply with commercial demand, providing quantifiable possibilities for the implementation of business models."

Token economics is still in conceptual infancy, and its integration with the real economy has yet to crystallize into a mature model. Regardless of whether an industrial revolution centered on tokens has already begun, as some analysts speculate, establishing a new value assessment system around tokens — a core variable reshaping the digital economy landscape — is an inevitable requirement for the development of the AI industry.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

BERNARD DEWIT

Long-standing partnership

With careful stewardship, open dialogue and a focus on shared interests, Belgium-China relations can continue to evolve as a force for good



WANG XIAOYING/ CHINA DAILY

The 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between Belgium and China comes at a time of renewed global uncertainty, but also of opportunity. The visit of Belgium's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Maxime Prévot to China at the invitation of Foreign Minister Wang Yi in April underscored the enduring importance both countries attach to dialogue, cooperation and pragmatic engagement. This milestone is not merely a symbolic anniversary, but a strategic moment to reaffirm shared commitments to mutually beneficial economic ties.



Over the past 55 years, Belgium-China relations have evolved from modest diplomatic exchanges into a multifaceted partnership. According to Chinese Ambassador to Belgium Fei Shengchao, even amid shifting geopolitical dynamics, this relationship has been marked by consistency and resilience. As a founding member of the European Union and home to its main institutions, Belgium has long served as a gateway between China and the EU. And China has become one of Belgium's most important trading partners outside the EU, reflecting deepening economic interdependence.

From the perspective of global peace and development, this year carries broader implications. In an increasingly fragmented international landscape, stable bilateral relationships such as that between Belgium and China provide an anchor for constructive engagement. Both countries have consistently supported multilateralism, international law and dialogue over confrontation. These principles are essential at a time when global challenges — ranging from climate change to economic volatility — require coordinated, cross-border solutions.

Economic cooperation remains at the heart of this partnership. Belgium's open economy, strategic logistics infrastructure and expertise in sectors such as pharmaceuticals, chemicals and advanced manufacturing complement China's scale, innovation capacity and rapidly evolving domestic market. The Port of Antwerp-Bruges and the airports in Brussels and Liege, for example, have become key hubs for trade flows between Europe and Asia, illustrating how connectivity can translate into shared prosperity.

Looking ahead, there is significant potential for collaboration in areas that are critical to both countries' futures. Technological innovation offers fertile ground for joint ventures, particularly in fields such as biotechnology, artificial intelligence and clean energy. Belgium's strong research institutions and China's growing investment in R&D create natural synergies. At the same time, the green transition represents both a necessity and an opportunity. As countries work toward carbon neutrality, partnerships that combine European regulatory expertise with Chinese industrial capacity can accelerate progress while creating new economic value.

From a European perspective, EU-China economic cooperation is both essential and complex. The EU seeks to balance openness with strategic autonomy, ensuring that cooperation with China remains fair and reciprocal. Belgium, as an EU member state, supports this balanced approach. Engagement with China should not be viewed through a purely competitive lens, but rather as a partnership where differences are managed through dialogue and common interests are actively pursued.

China's economic transformation over the past several decades has lifted hundreds of millions of people out of poverty and contributed significantly to global growth. Today, China remains a key engine of the world economy, accounting for a substantial share of global GDP expansion. For European businesses, including many Belgian companies, China represents both a vast market and an increasingly sophisticated innovation ecosystem.

At the same time, China's initiatives in infrastructure development and connectivity — particularly through international cooperation frameworks — have the potential to enhance global trade and development. When implemented transparently and sustainably, such initiatives can benefit not only participating countries but also the broader international community.

In terms of regional and global stability, China plays an increasingly important role. As a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council, China is well-positioned to contribute to conflict resolution and peacekeeping efforts. Belgium, with its long-standing commitment to diplomacy and international cooperation, shares this objective. Both countries recognize that stability is a prerequisite for development, and that dialogue remains the most effective tool for managing differences.

However, it is equally important to acknowledge that constructive cooperation requires trust, transparency and mutual respect. Differences in political systems and economic models should not be ignored, but neither should they prevent collaboration where interests align. The Belgium-China relationship demonstrates that it is possible to maintain a pragmatic partnership while engaging in open and honest dialogue.

US President Donald Trump recently completed a very important visit to China, during which he held talks with President Xi Jinping on forging stable and constructive relations between China and the United States, which are of utmost importance to global economic confidence and geopolitical stability. The way they interact has a direct impact on international trade, investment flows, financial markets, supply chains and global governance. Europe, Belgium in particular, naturally benefits when the relationship between these two countries is predictable, pragmatic and based on dialogue rather than confrontation.

As Belgium and China mark the 55th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the message is clear: Bilateral relationships rooted in mutual benefit and respect can serve as building blocks for a more stable and prosperous world. For the two countries, the path forward lies in deepening economic ties, expanding cooperation in emerging sectors and reinforcing their shared commitment to multilateralism.

The next chapter of Belgium-China relations might present challenges, but it also holds immense promise. With careful stewardship, open dialogue and a focus on shared interests, this long-standing partnership can continue to evolve as a force for good in an increasingly interconnected world.

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ONDREJ DOSTÁL

A reset point for Europe

The war on Iran may represent a decisive moment for the EU if it has the wisdom to seize it



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

The war launched by the United States and Israel on Iran has exposed Europe's failure to fulfill its most basic responsibility: defending international law and protecting European interests. The economic consequences of the conflict could lead to a vastly different European Union — one in which member states reclaim control, and Brussels is weakened.



After the renewed US and Israeli aggression on Iran, most decision-makers in the EU quickly aligned themselves with Washington, largely limiting themselves to criticizing Iran's military response rather than addressing the initial surprise escalation. The principle of self-defence, it seems, is applied selectively in Brussels.

In the face of this serious violation of international law, which resulted in heavy Iranian casualties, widespread devastation across the country, and further destabilization of the Middle East, only a handful of European leaders spoke in defence of the United Nations Charter. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez was among the few who openly named the aggressor and took concrete action, closing Spain's airspace to any aircraft involved in the conflict and withdrawing the Spanish ambassador to Israel.

Europe has faced similar moments before. During the Iraq War in 2003, several European governments supported Washington's illegal campaign despite widespread public opposition. The overthrow of the Libyan government in 2011 followed a similar dynamic, initially framed as a humanitarian mission but ultimately helping turn Africa's most prosperous nation into a failed state, which is still struggling to recover 15 years later.

Then and now, nothing good ever came out of such military adventurism for Washington's European allies. In addition to the tragic toll in military casualties and the waste of billions in taxpayer money, Europe was also confronted with skyrocketing energy prices, as well as millions of refugees who have placed significant strain on Europe's social services, labor markets, education systems and local communities. But while the Iran conflict is not an isolated incident, its gravity and economic impact may surpass anything seen before.

The Strait of Hormuz, through which roughly one-fourth of global oil and one-fifth of global liquefied natural gas passes, will remain a source of instability even under a ceasefire. Shipping risks, higher insurance costs and damaged infrastructure will constrain supply for years. Key LNG facilities in the Gulf, including parts of Qatar's Ras Laffan complex — the largest LNG terminal in the world — have suffered damage, with QatarEnergy's CEO Saad Sherida al-Kaabi warning that this could affect LNG supplies to Europe "for up to five years".

Europe's vulnerability is compounded by its misguided energy policy since 2022, most notably the self-imposed sanctions on Russian gas. By cutting off a major and reliable supplier, the EU exposed its economies to wholly unnecessary risks, forcing reliance on expensive and unstable US and Middle Eastern LNG. The result is soaring energy costs, rising living expenses and a sharp erosion of industrial competitiveness. Energy-intensive sectors, from chemicals and steel to fertilizers and heavy manufacturing, are already under severe strain, with external competition growing and ongoing exposure to energy volatility threatening long-term decline.

The consequences are visible across key sectors. Germany's chemical industry — long a backbone of European production — has been hit hard by soaring energy costs, with major producers such as BASF, Lanxess and Wacker Chemie raising prices and slowing investment. In 2025, investment in Europe's chemical sector fell by over 80 percent, plant closures doubled, wiping out around 17 million tons of capacity and threatening roughly 20,000 jobs.

Even though the impact of the Iran crisis has not fully unfolded, industrial gas and electricity prices across the EU are already two to four times higher than in major trading partners, undermining competitiveness and making European factories less attractive than sites in the US or Asia. In France, energy-intensive sectors, such as chemicals, fertilizers, metallurgy, glass and plastics, report cost increases of up to 40 percent, with some struggling to maintain production.

In this sense, rising energy prices are not abstract statistics, but a force translating into factory closures and growing uncertainty for millions of workers and small businesses across the continent.

Consequently, Europe's response to the Iran crisis should not be seen merely as inadequate geopolitical maneuvering; it raises a more fundamental question: Is European leadership prepared to prioritize the continent's economic survival and long-term stability over Washington's interests?

Many European citizens are skeptical of foreign military interventions and question whether European governments are acting in the continent's own interests. This gap between Europe's political elites and public sentiment is likely to continue widening in the coming years. As energy shortages and industrial decline intensify, this disconnect will evolve into a broader legitimacy crisis for European institutions and mainstream political leadership.

As a result, Europe is likely to witness the emergence of new political forces, alongside a gradual reorientation of mainstream parties. Pragmatism and the pursuit of national economic interests will increasingly challenge Europe's automatic transatlantic alignment.

Such developments would reshape the balance of power within the EU. The current vision of a tightly integrated, uniformly aligned Europe would give way to a more flexible and pragmatic structure, in which EU member states reclaim meaningful control over foreign policy, energy strategy and economic partnerships. Integration would continue where it delivers clear advantages, but strategic decisions would increasingly reflect national priorities rather than come from Brussels. In practice, this shift would mark the rise of a more plural, multi-vector Europe, moving decisively away from the largely undemocratic, top-down model that has dominated EU governance for decades.

A multi-vector Europe would be better positioned to navigate a multipolar world. The EU could maintain relations with the US, but without automatically subordinating European interests or joining every US military venture. At the same time, Europe would be free to deepen economic and diplomatic ties with the Global South, including the BRICS nations, fostering cooperation that benefits both European citizens and the peoples of partner countries.

For now, Europe still possesses enormous strengths: advanced industry, technological expertise, a large internal market, a well-educated workforce, and world-class cultural and academic institutions. Decline is not inevitable. The continent can adapt to a changing global order and remain an important economic and political actor — but only if it develops the wisdom to defend its own interests.

In this sense, the Iran war may ultimately be remembered not only as yet another US aggression against a sovereign Middle Eastern state but also as a turning point in the EU's strategic trajectory.

The author is a member of the European Parliament. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS



Visitors record a humanoid robot performance staged at the booth of Unitree Robotics during a high-tech expo in Beijing on March 20. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Unitree gearing up for IPO; Shanghai review next week

China's leading humanoid robot maker posts 1.7 billion yuan in yearly revenue

By **CHENG YU**
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60.13 percent
gross margin from Unitree Robotics' core business in 2025

Chinese humanoid robot maker Unitree Robotics will face Shanghai's listing committee next week for its planned STAR Market initial public offering, as the company reported surging revenue growth, expanding margins and accelerating overseas deployment of its products.

The Shanghai Stock Exchange said it would meet on Monday to review Unitree's IPO application, formally moving one of China's highest-profile robotics startups closer to a public listing.

Unitree simultaneously disclosed updated 2025 financial data, showing revenue rose to about 1.7 billion yuan ($236 million), as China's humanoid robotics sector draws growing investor attention amid a global race to commercialize embodied artificial intelligence.

The Hangzhou, Zhejiang-province based firm said gross margin from its core business climbed to 60.13 percent in 2025, up nearly 16 percentage points from 44.22 percent in 2023, helped by increasing vertical integration and in-house manufacturing. Unitree said more than 90 percent of its core components are now self-developed and self-produced.

The company sharply increased research spending as competition in humanoid robotics intensifies. Unitree said its 2025 research and development investment more than doubled from a year earlier, rising 107.04 percent.

The filing comes as investors increasingly view humanoid robotics as one of China's next major strategic industries, alongside AI, electric vehicles and semiconductors.

Unitree has rapidly expanded its product lineup in recent months. It debuted earlier this month the world's first mass-produced piloted mech suit, marking the company's boldest step yet — from robot dogs and humanoid robots to science-fiction-style human mobility machines.

The machine, named GD01, starts at 3.9 million yuan. In a video released on Tuesday, Unitree founder and CEO Wang Xingxing was seen personally climbing into the cockpit and driving it across mixed terrain, with the footage presented in real time and without playback acceleration.

Meanwhile, Unitree's overseas push has begun moving beyond demonstrations into real-world industrial testing.

Codeveloped humanoid robots recently entered Tokyo's Haneda Airport for trial operations launched by Japan Airlines, the company said.

The robots are being tested for ground handling operations including baggage loading and unloading, cargo transport and conveyor coordination, with trials scheduled to continue through 2028.

Unitree said its G1 robot's flexibility, load capacity and force control capabilities allow it to adapt efficiently to complex airport environments while helping ease labor shortages and reduce worker burden.

The company described the deployment as the first commercial application of a Chinese humanoid robot inside a major global aviation hub.

Wei Kai, head of the AI research institute at the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, said: "China's humanoid robots have made significant strides in motor control capabilities, which can be seen in recent events. The evolution of the 'brain' is also very fast. Hierarchical models and end-to-end models have progressed under data-driven paradigms."

Wei said China has established 27 data-collection sites nationwide to support training of embodied AI systems, signaling an effort to industrialize the learning pipeline behind the hardware.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said China had more than 140 humanoid robot manufacturers by 2025, launching over 330 product models. In 2026, more than half of China's provinces and cities have incorporated embodied intelligence and robotics development into their government work reports.

'Durian freedom' spreads as prices dip across nation

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Consumers select durian at a supermarket in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, on May 11. JIA MINJIE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Durian prices are tumbling as booming imports, faster logistics and a wave of seasonal fruit make the tropical fruit increasingly affordable for consumers.

Prices for some durian varieties have fallen 10 percent to 20 percent from a year earlier, according to wholesale market data and retailers. Durian that once sold for as much as 300 yuan ($44) to 400 yuan each can now be found for less than 100 yuan in some markets, fueling social media buzz around achieving "durian freedom" — a phrase used by Chinese consumers to describe "unlimited" access to previously expensive foods.

Thailand's Monthong durian, the dominant variety in the market, traded at an average wholesale price of 24.15 yuan per 500 grams at Beijing Xinfadi wholesale market on Tuesday, roughly flat from a year ago, but down 14 percent from early April.

Vietnamese Monthong durians have seen steeper declines, with wholesale prices dropping to about 18 yuan per 500 grams, down more than 40 percent from the previous month and over 30 percent from a year earlier, according to market data.

Retailers are passing on the savings to consumers. Membership chains including Sam's Club are selling Thai Monthong durians for around 199 yuan per 3 to 3.75 kilograms.

"Overall sales volume has definitely increased by more than 20 percent year-on-year," said He Huaxin, head of community group buying at Beijing Xinfadi wholesale market. "Durian from multiple countries are now entering the market, with Vietnamese varieties showing particularly strong growth momentum."

China is the world's largest durian importer and consumer, accounting for an estimated 82 percent of global consumption.

The country's appetite for what is often called the "king of fruits" has prompted producing nations across Southeast Asia to rapidly expand cultivation and exports.

Analysts said falling prices also reflect improvements in the country's logistics and distribution infrastructure, particularly the expansion of cold chain transportation tied to the government's efforts and push for a more integrated domestic market.

The durian price slide is part of a broader correction in the premium fruit market in the country as summer harvests accelerate. Cherry prices have nearly halved from earlier this year, while lychee prices have also dropped sharply amid surging supply. According to price tracking data from Chinese resale platform Dewu.com, 1,000-gram packs of Grade 3 domestic cherries sold for about 189 yuan in early March. By May, during peak harvest season, prices for the same product had fallen to around 108 yuan, a decline of nearly 45 percent.

Meanwhile, in Hainan province, one of the major lychee-producing regions, daily outbound shipments have repeatedly exceeded 10,000 metric tons. Cumulative shipments since late March reached nearly 88,000 tons as of May 8, up almost 289 percent from a year earlier. Sam's Club has set the retail price of a 2.5-kilogram box of lychees at 66.6 yuan.

Dajin Heavy bags 6.17b yuan in overseas orders

By **ZHENG XIN**
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Marking a pivotal shift from basic manufacturing to high-end maritime engineering, China's offshore equipment sector is rapidly cementing its indispensable role in the global green energy supply chain.

This accelerating trajectory was underscored on Sunday, as Dajin Heavy Industry Co Ltd announced that its subsidiary has secured a $156 million shipbuilding contract with a subsidiary of the renowned Dutch shipowner Jumbo Maritime.

According to the corporate filing, Dajin Heavy Industry will be responsible for the overall design, construction and delivery of two 25,000 DWT (deadweight tonnage) vessels, bringing a new generation of green, smart and multi-purpose heavy lift ships to the European market.

Scheduled for phased delivery in 2028 and 2029, the ships will feature high-end heavy-duty cranes. A single crane boasts a rated lifting capacity of 1,200 metric tons, while dual cranes operating in tandem can achieve a maximum lifting capacity of 2,400 tons.

Characterized by their massive load capacity, robust lifting capabilities and energy efficiency, the vessels are extensively suited for multi-scenario operations, including the transport of heavy offshore wind power equipment and deep-sea engineering construction, it said.

Remarkably, this marks Dajin Heavy Industry's fourth major overseas order secured within a single month, bringing its recent cumulative contract value to approximately 6.17 billion yuan ($908.8 million), with all delivery windows firmly locked between 2028 and 2029.

The company said this heavy lift vessel contract represents another mainstream core vessel type achieved in the high-end offshore vessel sector, following its successful development of deck carriers and non-propelled semi-submersible barges.

This milestone further perfects the company's full-spectrum layout of offshore vessel manufacturing, solidifying the foundation of its shipbuilding business, it said.

Since its establishment in 2000, Dajin Heavy Industry has deeply engaged in wind power steel structure manufacturing. Its product line encompasses core equipment such as offshore wind monopile foundations, transition pieces, jackets, floating foundations and towers, offering clients comprehensive one-stop solutions.

The company's robust financial performance mirrors its overseas success. In 2025, Dajin reported revenue of 6.17 billion yuan, a year-on-year surge of 63.34 percent, with net profit reaching 1.1 billion yuan.

Overseas revenue hit 4.59 billion yuan, climbing 165 percent and accounting for 74.46 percent of total revenue. By the end of 2025, cumulative overseas orders exceeded 10 billion yuan, covering key European offshore wind regions. This high-growth trajectory persisted into the first quarter of 2026, generating revenue of 1.9 billion yuan, a 67.17 percent increase.

Dajin's momentum is a microcosm of China's broader renewable energy footprint.

According to Qin Haiyan, secretary-general of the Chinese Wind Energy Association (CWEA) under the China Renewable Energy Society, China exported approximately 8 million kilowatts of wind turbine capacity in 2025, jumping about 50 percent year-on-year to hit a record high.

By the end of 2025, China's cumulative wind turbine export capacity surpassed 28 million kW, a 13-fold increase over the past decade. Exported to over 60 countries and regions — including Vietnam, Saudi Arabia, Egypt and Brazil — Chinese innovation has been a driving force behind a 60 percent reduction in global wind power costs over the last 10 years, cementing the nation's vital role in the global green energy transition, he said.

Central SOEs urged to ramp up digital efforts

By **REN QI**
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China's centrally administered State-owned enterprises have made substantial progress in both industrial digitization and digital industrialization, boosting their roles in ramping up the country's digital economy development, experts said.

The State-owned Assets Supervision and Administration Commission of the State Council recently emphasized the need to deeply implement the "AI+" special action among central SOEs. It urged enterprises to accelerate their digital and intelligent transformation based on their specific conditions, aiming to build a batch of emerging pillar industries.

Li Zhen, SASAC vice-chairman, said the commission will launch a new round of special transformative actions to this end.

"We will guide SOEs in the tiered cultivation of smart factories, strengthen independent innovation in digital technologies and deepen the integration of the digital economy with the real economy," Li said, adding that these efforts will drive the upgrade of traditional industries and accelerate the development of new quality productive forces.

With massive scale and diverse operational scenarios in key sectors, SOEs have become the core vehicles for moving artificial intelligence technologies from laboratories to industrial applications.

This aligns with a guideline on the "AI+" action issued by the State Council in August. The document set a target for 2027 to achieve deep integration of AI in six key areas, with the application penetration rate of new-generation smart terminals and agents exceeding 70 percent.

By 2030, AI is expected to comprehensively empower high-quality development with a 90 percent penetration rate, making the smart economy a major growth pole. By 2035, China aims to fully enter a new stage of smart economy and society, providing strong support for the basic realization of socialist modernization.

Against this backdrop, central SOEs are rapidly ramping up their infrastructure. In late April, China Mobile announced full operation of its Chengdu, Sichuan province hub node as a trusted data space for State-owned enterprises.

As one of the three major business hubs for this data space, the Chengdu site was closely aligned with the country's "East Data, West Computing" project. Equipped with 50,000 cores of general computing power and 1,675 PFLOPS of intelligent computing power, it provides stable and efficient support for data storage, intelligent analysis and AI model training for SOEs.

Similarly, CHN Energy is actively promoting the digital and intelligent upgrading of its industries by deepening cooperation with various market players, said a company executive.

Notable achievements include jointly developing rapid coal quality testing technology with Hikvision, deploying the "MineHarmony" operating system in its mines in collaboration with Huawei, and pioneering an unmanned coal mining model with industry partners.

The energy giant has also codeveloped a domestic building information modeling platform for the power sector, rolled out its self-developed iDCS system, and built the country's first 5G-powered smart power plant and cloud-based hydropower station.

Despite various challenges ahead, central SOEs are the most likely group to approach the 2027 target of a 70 percent application penetration rate for smart terminals and agents, said Li Jin, chief researcher at the China Enterprise Research Institute.

"To maintain this momentum, these State-owned giants must continue to break down data silos and foster open innovation ecosystems," he said, adding that increased investment in digital talent and robust cybersecurity frameworks will be crucial as these enterprises navigate the complexities of a fully integrated, AI-driven industrial landscape.

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BUSINESS

China key to MSC Air Cargo growth

Firm operates seven freight aircraft on more than 30 routes weekly, serving over 17 destinations

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai
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Viewing Shanghai as a strategic cornerstone of its global network, MSC Air Cargo is well positioned to serve its strategy of growing alongside the Chinese market following the establishment of a cargo station in Shanghai and the rapid expansion of its operations in China, said a top executive of the company.

"If you look at the global trade lanes and trade corridors, China is very much a core component in the globe. So we selected Shanghai as one of the strongest additional markets to support any growth of products for MSC Air Cargo," said Jannie Davel, CEO of MSC Air Cargo, the air cargo division of Geneva-headquartered MSC Group, during an exclusive interview with China Daily.

"We strongly believe that Shanghai has the capability to continue to be one of the strongest places," said Davel on his visit to Shanghai in late April. The company launched the Shanghai station last month.

Regarding Shanghai's ambition to become a global shipping center, Davel said he sees immense opportunities, given Shanghai's status as one of the world's largest trading ports.

"Shanghai and Hong Kong are two of our biggest gateways. (The launch of) the Shanghai station is very much part of our China gateway strategy in terms of growing with China," Davel said.

Globally, MSC Air Cargo has five major gateways, which are Hong Kong, Shanghai, Malpensa of Italy, Liege in Belgium and Mexico City.

"Every decision we have made over the past two years, from our partnerships to our route development, has been shaped by our belief in the importance of this market," he said.

According to Davel, the agreement signed with the logistics unit of Shanghai Airport (Group) — also known as Shanghai Airport Authority Logistics Development Co — in November has helped MSC Air Cargo grow through adding two new flights, including two weekly in Shanghai, and four in Ezhou, Hubei province.

"Shanghai Airport Authority Logistics Development Co was a very key partner in helping us facilitate our establishment here ... They have been very instrumental for us in helping us start in such a great market," said Davel.

Established in October 2022, MSC Air Cargo has grown rapidly from a single aircraft into a scalable intercontinental platform operating a fleet of seven cargo aircraft on more than 30 routes weekly, serving over 17 destinations in Asia-Pacific, Europe and the Americas.





Above: Two driverless vehicles haul cargo near the smart logistics warehouse at an airport in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province, on March 13, 2025.
WANG GANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE
Left: Wuhu Customs staff members inspect export goods on the maiden international cargo route of Wuhu Xuanzhou airport in Anhui province on June 28, 2024.
XIAO BENXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

5.1 percent
year-on-year growth of the country's total social logistics value

> "Every decision we have made over the past two years, from our partnerships to our route development, has been shaped by our belief in the importance of this market."
>
> **Jannie Davel,**
> CEO of MSC Air Cargo

"China is very much part of our strategy to continue to grow. More than half (16) of the routes are from or to Chinese destinations," Davel said.

According to Davel, the Chinese mainland contributes between 17 and 18 percent of global air cargo business in terms of tonnage, and that of the Chinese market (including Hong Kong) is between 20 and 21 percent.

"You have to be part of that growth, and we continue to see opportunities," Davel said.

Since his first visit to China back in 1999, Davel said that over the past few decades he was impressed with the quality and speed of China's development.

China's total social logistics value expanded 5.1 percent year-on-year to 368.2 trillion yuan ($54.23 trillion) in 2025, and the nation's logistics sector generated a combined revenue of 14.3 trillion yuan during the same period, up 4.1 percent from a year ago, according to data from the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing.

China's logistics sector has gone through effective growth during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period. The fact that it has retained the title of the largest logistics market in scale globally for the tenth consecutive year fully demonstrates China's strengths as a supersized market, and such advantages have played a positive role in supporting the nation's economic development, Cai Jin, president of the China Federation of Logistics & Purchasing, was quoted as saying by CCTV news.

In December 2022, MSC Air Cargo kicked off its first operation in Xiamen, Fujian province. The company currently operates in six Chinese cities including Hong Kong, Ezhou, Shanghai, Xiamen, as well as Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province.

"Our presence in China is built on trust, mutual respect and a shared belief that strong local partnerships are the foundation of reliable global logistics," Davel noted.

Leaps seen in value of Chinese brands

By **ZHOU WENTING** in Shanghai
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The value of Chinese brands listed among the 2026 list of the top 100 most valuable global brands has leaped by 32 percent year-on-year, significantly surpassing the global average growth rate, according to a report released by consulting firm Kantar.

Chinese brands are not only showcasing their innovative vitality and global competitiveness, but also transitioning from mere scale expansion to capability enhancement, according to the report released on May 14.

Chinese brands excel at making decisive judgments and acting swiftly in the early stages of emerging trends, and they effectively translate insights into tangible value through continuous iteration and experience optimization, according to the report. Such agility is becoming a crucial competitive advantage in an increasingly uncertain market environment, it stated.

For instance, Tencent, ranked eighth on the list, continues to leverage its ecosystem to enhance monetization capabilities through games, video account advertisements and cloud computing services. Alibaba, positioned at 19th, has stabilized its brand value through business structure optimization and user experience upgrades.

Huawei, ranked 41st on the list, defines artificial intelligence as the most certain strategic opportunity for the next decade, focusing on the definite demand for computing power and connectivity to enhance user lifecycle values. Also, Haier, positioned at 53rd, has embraced AI comprehensively throughout its processes, continuously strengthening its competitiveness in the internet of things ecosystem.

In addition to the 13 Chinese brands that made the top 100, another 14 Chinese brands and their related sub-brands are listed in global industry sub-rankings in the fields of alcohol, apparel, automobiles, food and beverages, media and entertainment, retail, and home care. These brands include Wuliangye, Anta, BYD, Nongfu Spring, WeChat, Pinduoduo and Liby.

"Behind the strong rise of Chinese brands, there exists a clear main line, which is to continuously expand the value boundary of the brand in consumers' lives. The brands begin with their existing advantages and precisely extend into more new growth spaces," said Zhang Lin, executive managing director of Kantar China.

Zhang said that in the process of globalization and long-term brand building, Chinese brands have been demonstrating sharper judgment and more decisive action, setting new references for global brand growth.

Kantar has stated that this year's list sends a clear signal that AI is rapidly reshaping the global brand value system, with brands unable to adapt to AI-driven transformations losing their competitive advantages.

Meanwhile, AI-native brands are rapidly emerging. Claude entered the global top 100 for the first time, ranked 27th with a brand value of nearly $100 billion. ChatGPT became the fastest-growing brand of the year, with its brand value increasing by an impressive 285 percent year-on-year.



A livestreaming host promotes Chinese makeup to Western audiences on TikTok in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, on Sept 24.
LYU BIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Technology brands are showing strong dominance in the global top 100 rankings. Google reclaimed the top spot, with Nvidia, Amazon and Tencent making it into the top 10.

The total value of the annual top 100 most valuable global brands reached $13.1 trillion, up 22 percent from the previous year. Brand growth is entering a new acceleration cycle, said the report.

In this AI-driven global brand restructuring, Asian brands have been continuously expanding their influence in both domestic and international markets, with 23 Asian brands making the list this year, accounting for nearly a quarter of the global top 100.

Plant for fossil-free plastics planned

By **WANG YING** in Shanghai

China has been chosen as the site for the world's first plant for the production of fossil-free plastics from green methanol, reflecting among other factors the country's manufacturing strengths, commitment to green transformation, and promising development prospects, according to a top executive of Swiss-based fossil-free plastic company Vioneo.

China's manufacturing strength and its 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which prioritizes green chemicals and industrial decarbonization, prompted Vioneo to bring its 1.5 billion euros ($1.74 billion) investment to China, said Alex Hogan, CEO of Vioneo, during a recent interview in Shanghai.

"China has shown strong commitment to sustainability, with the latest five-year plan supporting green methanol and zero-carbon technologies. That is one of the main reasons for coming here," he said.

According to Hogan, the world's first newly built plastics plant powered by renewable electricity and green methanol is expected to cut carbon dioxide emissions by about 1.5 million metric tons a year versus oil-based production, and the figure could double if coal is used as the raw material.

"We are at the beginning of the journey identifying China is the right place, because our feedstock sources are here. China is decades ahead of other regions on green methanol," he said.

The European chemical start-up, owned by A.P. Moller Holding, announced in January that it would abandon plans to build the plant in Belgium and decided to invest in a similar project in China.

"We took a very conscious decision to put the first plant in China," said Katja Wodjereck, chief commercial officer of Vioneo, adding that the availability of green methanol at scale and on a competitive basis in the future was a big plus.

"Moving the first plant here is a supply chain decision and also a commercial decision, because that way we cannot make this even more — from the supply chain — closer to where our feedstock is," said Wodjereck.

"But we are also making this more cost-attractive, with a better supply chain and greater CO2 savings. It also opens up, which I find very interesting in my role, access to Asian customers in the future," she added.

According to Wodjereck, the future plant is expected to have annual capacity of about 200,000 tons of fossil-free polypropylene and 100,000 tons of fossil-free polyethylene.

"There are other reasons, but you need to look at what the most important ones are. The most important reason is to reduce the price of our final product, and the (15th) Five-Year Plan is stimulating the green ethanol market," said Hogan.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan outlined its commitment to comprehensively advancing green transformation at a faster pace, with the country's green and low-carbon industrial scale expected to double to exceed 20 trillion yuan ($2.94 trillion) by the end of 2030, CGTN reported.

The target of achieving carbon neutrality is not simply a commitment to cutting emissions, but also a profound transformation involving green buildings, zero-emission plants and industrial parks, green energy, green products and green trade, the report added.

Scheduled to officially begin production by 2030, Hogan said the company is still in talks over the final site selection and is expected to make a formal announcement in about one to two months.

"I'm counting on China speed. Everything I hear is that the country is amazing at delivering large-scale projects quickly, so maybe a little earlier than 2030," Hogan said.

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CHINA

Call to enhance global ocean governance

Policies aimed at promoting renewable blue economy and conservation efforts

By **ZHANG YI** in Xiamen, Fujian and **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou

Experts gathered in the coastal city of Xiamen for the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2026 Roundtable Meeting have called for broader efforts to enhance global ocean governance through multilateral cooperation.

The two-day event, which concluded on Tuesday, hosted about 150 delegates, including officials from the Ministry of Ecology and Environment, leaders of Fujian province and Xiamen, council members, international partners, and representatives from research institutes and enterprises.

At this year's roundtable, themed "Harmony Between Humanity and the Ocean: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth", participants shared the council's latest research findings and policy recommendations on the sustainable blue economy, biodiversity conservation, low-carbon transition and green international development.

Discussions focused on promoting synergies among multilateral conventions to advance global ocean governance, accelerating the green and low-carbon transition of marine industries to foster a renewable blue economy, and deepening "Beautiful Bay" construction to support high-quality economic development in bay areas.

During the event, attendees visited Wuyuan Bay and local mangrove ecological zones for a first-hand experience into Xiamen's progress and innovative practices in marine ecological restoration.

Guillermo Ortuno Crespo, co-lead of the IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas High Seas Specialist Group, said Xiamen stands as an example of how population and economic growth can coexist with ecological sustainability, addressing one of the world's biggest challenges.

"This is a fantastic opportunity for us to learn from each other and to learn more about the Chinese vision for future ocean governance," Crespo said. "If great countries like China can demonstrate that nature does not come second to economic development, but can instead be placed front and center through the vision of ecological civilization, that would send a positive message to the region and the world."

The event came at a critical turning point for global marine policy after the BBNJ Agreement — the agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction — entered into force on Jan 17, marking a new chapter in global ocean governance.

On Jan 16, China officially submitted a note verbale to the UN secretary-general, applying to host the agreement's permanent secretariat in Xiamen.

According to China's official proposal, Xiamen pledged support to ensure the secretariat's smooth operation, including the provision of a dedicated 15-story modern office building, full waivers of utility fees for the first five years, and a special fund to support the capacity-building efforts and participation of developing countries.

Dimitri de Boer, director for China at ClientEarth, an environmental law organization, spoke highly of Xiamen's potential as the host city, adding that the prospect of a UN secretariat based in Xiamen to help manage the shared oceans has drawn widespread attention.

"Having visited the city several times, Xiamen feels to me like the most beautiful city in China, and it is truly wonderful," he said. "With landmarks like Xiamen University and Gulangyu Island, beaches across the city, a comfortable climate and strong marine technical capabilities, it is an ideal location.

"Xiamen is a highly suitable choice, given China's strong commitment to environmental protection. This would also be a monumental milestone for Xiamen's internationalization," he added.

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Participants of the roundtable meeting visit the Wuyuan Bay wetland park in Xiamen, Fujian province, on Tuesday.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Building friendship

Children from China and Russia shop for souvenirs with their families during a China-Russia family culture exchange event in Heihe, Heilongjiang province, on Monday. The event features a four-day program for cultural interaction and friendship-building among 60 families from both countries.
QIU QILONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Ambitious solar thermal power project gets ready

By **DAQIONG** in Lhasa and **ZHENG JINRAN**

In a solar thermal power project designed to provide stable electricity for the northern Xizang autonomous region, the installation of nearly 16,000 heliostats — mirrors that concentrate solar energy — has been completed, marking a key step toward the opening of the world's highest-altitude tower-type solar thermal plant in Nagchu's Amdo county later this year.

The 100-megawatt project is being developed by the Xizang Development Investment Group as the region's first tower-type solar thermal power station, part of Xizang's renewable energy development plan under the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25). The company said all 15,927 heliostats — the plant's solar concentrators — have now been installed, and the project is progressing toward grid-connected operation in October.

Unlike conventional photovoltaic systems, the plant uses molten-salt tower thermal technology, which concentrates sunlight to heat molten salt to temperatures of up to 560 C. The stored thermal energy is later converted into electricity through a heat exchange system, allowing the plant to continue supplying electricity after sunset — a key advantage for grid stability in northern Xizang, the company said.

The site receives more than 2,800 hours of sunshine annually. The heliostats are spread across about 800,000 square meters and reflect sunlight toward a central receiving tower.

The project, with a total investment of more than 2 billion yuan ($295 million), is expected to generate around 255 million kilowatt-hours of electricity annually, saving about 60,000 metric tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by roughly 165,000 tons, said Du Jun, an on-site manager for the company.

"The station will provide stable clean electricity and help address shortcomings in the stability of the northern Xizang power grid," he said.

Developers said construction on the high-altitude Qinghai-Tibet Plateau posed major challenges, including extreme cold, strong winds and weak grid connectivity. To mitigate these conditions, the project team optimized construction methods and introduced intelligent control systems to support operations and maintenance in the harsh environment.

The project has also generated significant economic benefits for local communities. During construction, training programs for farmers and herders are expected to increase combined incomes by about 118 million yuan.

Xizang's clean energy sector has expanded rapidly in recent years, with renewable sources now accounting for more than 96 percent of installed power capacity and almost all electricity generation, according to the region's energy administration.

Karma Tsetan, chairman of the region, said the clean energy sector has rapidly emerged as a key pillar industry, according to a report by Guangming Daily.

Xizang's installed and under-construction power capacity was expected to exceed 33 million kilowatts by the end of 2025, while operational installed capacity would surpass 13 million kilowatts. Electricity transmission from Xizang has expanded to more than 10 provincial-level regions, including Shanghai, Beijing, as well as Hunan and Jiangsu provinces.

The work report of the regional government delivered in late January said industrial upgrading and the strengthening of industry chains have been identified as key tasks for Xizang this year under a broader strategy to develop plateau-specific competitive industries, with clean energy a major focus.

The report said Xizang will accelerate the development of large integrated hydropower, wind and solar bases in the upper reaches of the Jinsha River, southeastern Xizang and the upper Lancang River area.

The region will also push forward power transmission corridors and grid infrastructure, aiming to reach 20 million kW of installed capacity. It also called for the development of equipment manufacturing and clean energy industries, while advancing pilot projects for green hydrogen and oxygen production and related industrial applications.

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Summer school reinforces need for healthy ecosystems

By **LI WENFANG** in Guangzhou and **LI MENGHAN**

International experts are convening in China this week to explore how healthy ecosystems can be harnessed for sustainable development amid intensifying global risks. At the opening ceremony of the second Nature-based Solutions Summer School in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Tuesday, participants also underscored the importance of enhanced global sharing and cooperation, and recognized China's notable progress in the field.

Led by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, the 10-day event has brought together more than 40 experts from different fields for theoretical learning, case studies, group discussions and field visits across Guangzhou and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

"We are at a critical inflection point in human history. The planet faces an unprecedented convergence of crises — climate change, biodiversity loss and widespread land degradation. These are not isolated problems but deeply interconnected and mutually reinforcing," said Stewart Maginnis, deputy director-general of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

Maginnis stressed the importance of transforming policy landscapes to reflect ecological interdependence, with a core focus on nature-based solutions — actions that protect, sustainably manage and restore ecosystems while addressing societal challenges.

Against this backdrop, the summer school was established in 2025 to build capacity, "because knowledge is only capable of driving meaningful change when it is shared and applied", he said.

"Over the next 10 days, through courses, exchanges and field visits in both Guangzhou and Hong Kong, you will not only expand your knowledge but also build a community of practice that breaks down silos, fosters trust and bridges sectors and disciplines," he said to attendees. "In doing so, you will contribute to advancing nature-based solutions across Asia."

For Amandine Heger, deputy director of the Ministry of the Environment, Climate and Biodiversity of Luxembourg, this is her first visit to China, and she said Guangzhou has given her a profound sense of the country's scale and speed of implementation.

"This is a country that does not merely discuss ecological transformation. It implements it, rooted in an ancient philosophy that sees humanity not above nature, but as part of it. China has translated this vision into actions at every scale," Heger said.

She cited examples where Guangzhou has restored barren hills to green, established ecological corridors and advanced large-scale mangrove restoration along its coastlines.

Wu Jun, deputy director-general of the Ministry of Natural Resources' Department of International Cooperation, said Guangzhou and Hong Kong were selected to host the second summer school due to their proven practices, noting that the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is a pioneer in green development and cross-regional ecological synergy governance.

Wu expressed hope that participants would share their perspectives and regional practices to accelerate the global implementation of nature-based solutions.

China will continue to implement the "Two Mountains Theory" — a concept emphasizing that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets — in advancing nature-based solutions and contributing Chinese wisdom to global ecological governance, she added.

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Mine blast victims given psychological counseling

By **YANG ZEKUN** and **ZHU XINGXIN** in Qinyuan, Shanxi and **WANG XIAOYU** in Beijing

Medical workers have rushed to provide mental health support to people affected by a mine accident in northern China's Shanxi province to help them cope with trauma.

The gas explosion that struck the Liushenyu coal mine in Qinyuan county, Changzhi city, on Friday evening killed 82 people, with two still missing. A total of 128 people were injured, including four in serious or critical condition.

At Changzhi People's Hospital, all 31 injured patients have received systematic psychological assessments and intervention and are generally in stable condition, said Zhao Bing, a psychologist at the hospital, in an interview on Tuesday.

"We began evaluating their emotional and mental status on the very first day they were admitted, after doctors checked their physical condition and confirmed that their vital signs were stable," she said.

Along with therapists and psychiatrists dispatched from higher-level hospitals, Zhao said medical personnel are conducting daily ward rounds and one-on-one interviews to monitor patients' mood changes, sleep patterns and psychological recovery progress.

"Most of them are now eating and sleeping normally and resting well without much distress," she said, adding that their physical condition is also stable, though a few still experience mild dizziness or headaches, likely resulting from exposure to carbon monoxide.

Zhao said mental health workers are paying special attention to signs of anxiety, depression, repeated recollection of the accident scene, as well as nightmares, and are developing tailored recovery plans.

"Their most critical psychological need is to reestablish stability in environmental safety, personal safety and physical health, as well as a sense of trust in family care, social support, government assistance and medical treatment," Zhao said.

Cui Hongwei, a psychologist at the people's hospital in Qinyuan county, said many patients were worried about lingering physical symptoms, and their most urgent concern was full recovery.

"For miners who have survived a major disaster, rebuilding confidence is the most important thing," he said. "We want to help them slowly emerge from the shadow of the accident and return to normal life."

Cui said the hospital is carrying out daily one-on-one psychological interventions and prioritizing patients who tend to experience mood swings, repeatedly recall the accident or suffer from insomnia.

He added that after all patients are discharged, the hospital will continue to provide follow-up consultations for at least one week and up to three months.

Under the guidance of the National Health Commission, a total of 10 psychologists have been dispatched by the province to support psychological relief work, according to local authorities.

At the same time, two social workers are accompanying each victim's family, providing emotional support and counseling. Detailed compensation and assistance plans are being formulated, authorities said.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate announced on Tuesday that it would supervise the handling of the case involving the explosion.

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A medical worker tends to a miner injured in the gas explosion accident at the Liushenyu coal mine in Changzhi, Shanxi province, on Sunday. YANG CHENGUANG / XINHUA

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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's note: *The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.*

Lai's two years in office plagued by failure

Island leader pushes Taiwan toward becoming 'powder keg'

By **LI SHANGYI**
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JIN DING / CHINA DAILY

After two years in office, growing evidence suggests Lai Ching-te has been consolidating his political power and advancing the "Taiwan independence" separatist agenda at the expense of the Taiwan people's livelihoods and regional stability.

While Lai promised to "make Taiwan a better place" two years ago, critics have pointed out a sharp contrast between the sweeping promises made in his inaugural address and his actual governance.

Of Lai's 227 campaign pledges, only two have been fulfilled, representing a 99 percent failure rate, according to Ko Ju-chun, a lawmaker from the Chinese Kuomintang, the largest opposition party in Taiwan. This lack of progress has led critics on the island to label Lai a "liar". Recent polling in Taiwan indicated that his dissatisfaction rating has remained above 50 percent for five consecutive months.

Despite failure to fulfill his pledges, the Lai administration has introduced measures such as the "mass recall" campaign targeting opposition lawmakers and restrictions preventing Taiwan residents from taking group tours to the Chinese mainland. Political analysts argued that what Lai has brought to the island is deepening internal political confrontation and straining cross-Strait relations.

Escalating tensions

Since taking office in May 2024, Lai has pursued a political agenda centered on "Taiwan independence". His administration has moved away from the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle and has long served as the foundation for cross-Strait relations.

The Chinese mainland has dismissed this separatist agenda as a mere "illusion". His approach has also faced pushback from opposition parties within Taiwan and has failed to gain recognition from the broader international community.

The Lai administration has taken provocative actions such as military expansion and reliance on external forces to advance its separatist agenda, moves widely seen as fueling political confrontation in Taiwan and across the Strait.

In March last year, it released the so-called 17 measures, which labeled the mainland as a "hostile force" and imposed restrictions on cross-Strait exchanges.

While repeatedly emphasizing the "importance of peace", Lai has continued to push for an increase in the island's "defense" spending to more than 3 percent of GDP, with a target of reaching 5 percent by 2030.

In November last year, he also proposed a special "defense" budget worth $40 billion for arms purchases from the United States. After being blocked several times by opposition lawmakers, the proposal was eventually reduced to $25 billion in May.

Zheng Jian, a professor of Taiwan studies at Xiamen University in Fujian province, said the Lai administration's strategic shortsightedness and blind obedience with the belief that paying "protection fees" can buy security will not bring peace, but instead risk turning Taiwan into a powder keg of geopolitical rivalry.

He added that Lai's so-called defense is mortgaging Taiwan's future and tying its 23 million people to his "Taiwan independence" chariot.

Li Zhenguang, dean of the Taiwan Research Institute at Beijing Union University, said that "Taiwan independence" provocations have created heightened risks of military conflict in the region, which are the greatest threat to peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait.

Societal divisions

On May 19, an impeachment vote against Lai was held in the island's "legislative yuan" on the eve of the second anniversary of his term, marking the first such vote targeting a Taiwan leader.

The impeachment procedures were initiated by the two opposition parties in December last year after the Lai administration refused to promulgate an amendment to the government revenue allocation plan enacted by the legislative body.

The move of the Lai administration was regarded as negating legislative power and undermining the separation of powers in the government.

Although the impeachment motion failed to reach the required threshold, the 56-50 vote in favor of the proposal still reflected strong public dissatisfaction with Lai's administration, opposition parties said.

Cheng Li-wun, chairwoman of the KMT, said on May 20 that the Lai administration's disregard for Taiwan's laws and democratic institutions has become the most significant source of instability on the island over the past two years.

When Lai was elected as the regional leader in 2024, his Democratic Progressive Party failed to secure an absolute majority in the legislative assembly. Out of the 113 representatives in the "legislative yuan", 52 are from the KMT, 51 from the DPP, eight from the Taiwan People's Party and two are non-party candidates.

Facing this unfavorable balance of power, the Lai administration has attempted to overturn election results while intensifying efforts to suppress opposition parties and dissenting voices in Taiwan.

An unprecedented "mass recall" campaign was launched by the DPP authorities in July and August last year, targeting 31 KMT lawmakers and a former mayor of Hsinchu from the TPP in an attempt to remove them from office before the end of their terms. However, none of the recall efforts succeeded.

Under Lai's administration, partisan tensions between the DPP and opposition parties have also led to frequent stalemates over policy proposals and public budget bills in the legislative body, contributing to low government efficiency.

The mainland has described his administration as "incapable of governing but highly adept at political infighting".

Following the "anti-mainland" stance, the Lai administration has also required public officials and employees in education to sign a declaration stating that they do not hold mainland household registration or identification.

These people also need to obtain approval before traveling to the mainland and to provide detailed reports of their itineraries and purposes upon returning to Taiwan. Violations may result in demerits and dismissal from their posts.

Many residents in Taiwan have expressed deep concern over a tightening political and social atmosphere, describing a "chilling effect" akin to a new "green terror", a reference to the signature color of the DPP.

Among those most severely affected are mainland-born spouses living in Taiwan, a community of over 400,000 people. Last year, the DPP authorities expelled several mainland-born spouses, who are social media influencers, after DPP supporters reported them for making pro-mainland comments online. One of these influencers, Liu Zhenya, was forced to leave Taiwan, separating her from her three children on the island.

The DPP authorities also issued an administrative order requiring mainland-born spouses to submit a document certifying the renunciation of their mainland household registration. Those who do not comply face the risk of having their Taiwan residency or settlement permits revoked.

Zheng, the professor, called the governing approach "dictatorial", under which "those who obey will prosper, while those who oppose will perish".

He said that such practices of intimidating dissenters fully expose the hypocrisy of "wanting not democracy but the DPP to dominate".

Deceptive 'resilience'

Taiwan's economic growth rate reached 8.68 percent last year, the highest level in the past 15 years, while per capita nominal GDP surpassed $39,000, which was highlighted by Lai in his anniversary speech on May 20.

However, recent data released by Taiwan's accounting authorities showed that nearly 70 percent of employed workers on the island earned less than the average salary in the first quarter of this year, marking a record high.

The strong economic figures contrast sharply with the growing public perception of "poverty" on the island. Kuo Cheng-liang, a former lawmaker and political commentator, said the gains from economic growth have largely been concentrated among corporations rather than shared with ordinary workers.

Meanwhile, inflation still weighs on households and businesses. Amid the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East, businesses are facing the combined pressure of rising oil prices and currency depreciation. According to market researcher CRIF Taiwan, the real purchasing power of the New Taiwan dollar has declined by about 3 to 5 percent since the outbreak of the conflict, further intensifying imported inflationary pressures.

The impact has also been reflected in consumer prices. Products such as imported beef, dairy products and fruits have seen price increases of around 8 to 12 percent in supermarkets due to higher air and sea freight surcharges.

Disruptions to energy shipping routes in the Strait of Hormuz have also created challenges for Taiwan's heavily import-dependent energy supply. Power suppliers and oil refiners on the island have suffered significant losses while attempting to stabilize energy prices.

Compared to the administration's strong focus on political agendas, critics said it has shown indifference to the island's economic and industrial challenges.

In April, the mainland introduced 10 policy measures to promote cross-Strait industrial and infrastructure cooperation. While industry groups in Taiwan have called on the DPP authorities to respond, the administration labeled the package as "united front tools" and declined to implement the measures.

At the same time, the Lai administration has been accommodating demands raised by the US in a proposed trade framework, including expanding Taiwan Semiconductor Manufacturing Company operations in the US, increasing investment in US technology industries, and expanding imports of US agricultural products.

Local media reported that tariff-free access for US agricultural goods could pose risks to Taiwan's farmers, while eased import requirements for products such as sprouted potatoes have also raised concerns over food safety.

Zhu Fenglian, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said at a news conference in February that the DPP made excessive concessions in trade negotiations with the US in an attempt to seek external support for their separatist agenda, at the cost of Taiwan's industrial development prospects and the interests of people on the island.

Professor Zheng said the so-called economic achievements are nothing but a mirage built on a single industry. "Once the external environment changes, Taiwan's economy could face a painful hard landing," he added.

Completion nears on quest to retrace ancestral roots

By **ZHANG YI** and **HU MEIDONG**
in Fuzhou


Lai Hanzhong displays a handwritten genealogy book of the Lai clan in Xintian village, Fujian province, in September 2022.
ZHANG JINCHUAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

At a time of heightened political friction across the Taiwan Strait, a monumental four-year grassroots project to bridge the lineage of 100,000 divided clan members is nearing completion in a small village in Fujian province — counting Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te's own family among its historical branches.

In Xintian village of Pinghe, Fujian, the historical point of departure for generations of Chinese mainlanders moving to Taiwan, an eight-volume, co-compiled genealogy book will be unveiled this October.

For Lai Hanzhong, secretary-general of the local Lai Clan Association, the completion of this text is more than a historical record; it is an urgent reminder of shared identity.

"Every time our Taiwan compatriots visit, they bring their own branch genealogies to cross-check records with ours, searching for where they belong," Lai Hanzhong said.

It's estimated that over 60,000 descendants from the village now live in Taiwan.

Lai Hanzhong launched the mass genealogy project in 2022 in an attempt to piece together the Lai clan's history. He organized more than 100 local sages to compile a comprehensive genealogy.

The initiative quickly echoed across the water. Taiwan clan members eagerly joined in, establishing a team of 27 elders to gather historical data scattered across Taiwan and send it back to Lai Hanzhong.

After four years of collaboration, the eight-volume genealogy is nearing completion, with a grand presentation ceremony scheduled for October. A large contingent of Taiwan relatives are expected to attend.

Years ago, Lai Hanzhong visited the old residence of Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te in New Taipei City, meeting his relatives. "They strongly identified with their roots, openly acknowledging they are from Pinghe, and were very warm," Lai Hanzhong said of Lai Ching-te's relatives in Taiwan.

Standing inside the ancestral hall, Lai Hanzhong pointed to the family commandments carved on the wall.

"Our ancestral motto says: 'Children must be filial; those who are unfilial commit the greatest sin against nature,'" Lai Hanzhong said, in the hope that Taiwan clan members remember these teachings.

"As Chinese people and descendants of the Lai clan, one must recognize their ancestors and possess a Chinese heart," he said. "I hope Lai Ching-te can refrain from saying things that hurt compatriots and please adversaries. I hope he can do more good for national reunification. This is the common aspiration of our entire clan and all mainland compatriots."

To Lai Hanzhong, the urgency of his work is best reflected in the younger generation of Taiwan compatriots, who often try to track down their roots guided only by the name Xintian carved on their families' ancestral spirit tablets.

Lai Hanzhong recalled a case in 2022 involving a young Taiwan woman surnamed Lai who was working in Beijing. With a centuries-old address provided by her father, she posted a plea for help on the social media platform Xiaohongshu. Netizens quickly guided her to Xintian village.

When she arrived at the ancestral hall, she was anxious. Her family records used the characters Shentian instead of Xintian, though both sound identical in the local dialect.

"She desperately wanted to know if her ancestor was in our genealogy," Lai Hanzhong said.

"I quickly found him: Dengfang, a 14th-generation ancestor of the Lai clan who migrated to Taiwan."

The woman instantly shared photos of the ancient page with her father via WeChat. "The emotion of that moment is still vivid in my mind," he said. "It showed that when young people from Taiwan find their roots, the excitement is truly unforgettable."

For members of the Xintian Lai clan on the island, the roots also manifest daily in a shared faith, such as the annual cultural festival honoring Emperor Baosheng, a revered deity of medicine and healing.

The incense used in Yuanbao Temple in Taichung, Taiwan, was originally brought from Xintian Temple, honoring the life-preserving deity in the Fujian village. In April, a 200-member pilgrimage group from Taichung traveled to Xintian to pay tribute.

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Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY



Qu Guanlin (front right), a member of Shengyu Tongxin, teaches students musical theater choreography during a volunteer activity in Qingdao, Shandong province, in 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

POP PULSE

Dear You is a Mandarin and Chaoshan-dialect family drama released in mainland China on April 30. The film follows a Chaoshan grandmother and her grandson, who travels to Thailand in search of his long-absent grandfather, only to uncover a decades-old secret hidden in overseas letters.

Letters that carry home

Without big-name stars, dazzling visual effects or slogan-like messaging, *Dear You* tells the story of generations of overseas Chinese through one of the simplest forms of love: a letter sent home.

In the film, a letter is never just a letter. It carries longing, responsibility and love. For many overseas Chinese families, such letters were once a fragile bridge between survival and belonging.



Veldesen Yaputra

As a Chinese Indonesian student in China, I felt this story deeply. The phrase "overseas Chinese" often brings to mind images of success and wealth. Yet the real history of overseas Chinese communities is often far more ordinary, and therefore far more touching: many were workers, shop owners or teachers who left home just to survive.

They crossed the sea with uncertainty, worked in unfamiliar environments, and saved money little by little. Even a small remittance sent home could represent years of hardship. That is why *Dear You* moved me: it portrays love not as something loud or dramatic, but as endurance — writing, saving, sending, waiting and remembering. Its strongest emotion lies in quiet responsibility.

The film also made me rethink what "home" means for overseas Chinese. For those of us who grew up outside China, identity is not always simple. We may speak different languages at home, live in another country and only partially understand the traditions passed down by our grandparents. Sometimes, we may even feel distant from the culture we inherited. Yet one film, one dialect, one old letter or one family story can suddenly bring us closer to where we come from.

Dear You reminds me that the connection between overseas Chinese and China is not only cultural, but also emotional. That feeling is difficult to explain, but the film gives it shape. It suggests that the Chinese homeland is more than a place on the map: it is a memory preserved in family history and a sense of belonging quietly waiting to be awakened.

For that reason, I hope *Dear You* reaches more overseas Chinese communities around the world. Some viewers may have never visited their ancestral hometowns, known their families' exact villages, or spoken their ancestors' dialects. But when they watch this film, they may still feel something familiar — and realize that the connection has never completely disappeared.

Dear You tells us that home is not only a place we return to, but also something we continue to carry inside us. And perhaps, for many overseas Chinese, this is not only a film to watch — it is a letter to open.

Written by Veldesen Yaputra, an Indonesian graduate student in architecture at Tsinghua University. He has long been engaged in green building, rural revitalization and cultural heritage projects between China and Indonesia. He also serves as president of Tsinghua University International Concerned Architects, where he works to connect youth, design and public-interest practice across cultures.

A stage for every child

A student-led arts project uses musical theater to give rural children space to express emotions, cooperate and find their voices.

By GUO JIATONG
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Cai Dongjun raised one hand gently, humming the opening notes of a melody as sunlight streamed into a rural classroom. In front of him, the children watched closely before beginning to follow his lead — a small turn, a lifted arm, a line sung softly at first and then with growing confidence.

For Cai, a 22-year-old vocal performance major at the Communication University of China (CUC), the scene has become a familiar part of his public welfare work. Since 2022, he has been introducing musical theater to rural children who have limited access to arts education.

During those visits, Cai encountered a reality that left a deep impression on him.

"Not every child receives quality education or emotional support," he said. "Some come from difficult family backgrounds, and you can sometimes sense a kind of silence in them that is hard to describe."

The experience felt personal to Cai. As a child, he also struggled with insecurity and self-doubt, but music gave him a way to express himself and gradually rebuild his confidence.

That personal connection inspired him to found Shengyu Tongxin, or Voices Healing Young Hearts, a public welfare initiative that brings musical theater and arts education to rural children. The program is designed not only to teach performance skills, but also to create a space where children can express themselves, learn to cooperate and grow emotionally.

Over the past four years, the initiative has expanded from a small volunteer effort into a broader program. Cai and his fellow volunteers have traveled to 18 regions across China, worked with more than 40 rural schools and reached over 1,500 children.

At the center of the initiative is an original musical, *Yuyan Laixin*, or Letters from the Swift, developed by Cai's team. The one-hour production is made up of several interconnected scenes based on the everyday experiences of left-behind children, touching on themes such as family separation and struggles to fit in at school.

To make the production accessible to children with varying abilities, the team revised the work repeatedly.

"The first version took about four months to complete," said Shi Yuming, a core team member from CUC. "We then adapted it many times with guidance from professional composers, teachers and psychological counselors to make it better suited to children."

The team simplified the vocal ranges, shifted more of the performance into ensemble scenes and adjusted the staging so that more children could participate comfortably. Rather than focusing on polished technique, the program emphasizes self-expression and the joy of being on stage.

That goal is often reflected in small changes.

In Huozhou, Shanxi province, the team worked with a boy whose teacher had described him as disengaged and struggling academically. Instead of allowing that label to define him, the volunteers encouraged him to take on a small leadership role in the chorus.

Over time, he became more involved in rehearsals and began to show a stronger sense of responsibility. By the final performance, he had been cast as one of the main characters and carried the part with confidence.

For Cai, moments like this make the demanding work worthwhile.

"There were times when I felt completely exhausted," he said. "In every session, I was fully involved — demonstrating melodies, correcting pitch, teaching movements and encouraging the children to step onto the stage. But all the effort has proved deeply rewarding."

A broader view

As the project has expanded, it has attracted a growing network of student volunteers and young professionals to help with teaching, coordination and outreach.

Among them is Liu Yukuan, a 21-year-old broadcasting and anchoring major at CUC who works directly with children in the classroom. He has noticed that while some children are eager to participate, others need more time before they feel ready to sing, move or perform in front of others.

Rather than pushing them, Liu adjusts his approach based on each child's temperament, offering patience and encouragement as they gradually become more comfortable.

"I've learned to slow down and see things from their perspective," he said. "Sometimes what they need is not pressure, but time and support."

Another volunteer, Zhu Zhu, a musicology major at CUC, helps coordinate resources and organize activities. Although she is not directly involved in teaching, she sees her role as essential to keeping the program running smoothly.

"I'm not the one on stage teaching or performing, but I find great fulfillment in working behind the scenes," she said. "It helps ensure that music and arts education resources are available to children in need."

For Zhu, public welfare should not end with a single visit or performance.

"It requires long-term commitment. What matters is making sure these resources continue to reach the children," she said.

According to Cai, the project has also built partnerships with institutions such as Beijing Normal University, bringing in students specializing in music, education and media to create a more structured support system.

For the volunteers, the mission is simple: to give more children the opportunity to experience art — and, through it, gain confidence in their own voices.

"Art should be accessible to everyone," Liu said.



Cai Dongjun (center), founder of Shengyu Tongxin, interacts with children from a charity school in Beijing during a Children's Day performance in 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Personal meaning reshapes spending

From color analysis to museum guides and cultural dolls, young buyers are seeking services that feel personal and meaningful.

By **XIONG XINYI** and **GUI QIAN**

At Oni Color, a color analysis studio in Shijiazhuang, Hebei province, Wang Lifan drapes a white cloth over a client's hair and clothes, studying how different fabric swatches look against their skin.

She asks about the client's style preferences, makeup habits, and desired impression, then reviews their makeup bag to see what works and what does not.

As a film student in South Korea, Wang used to follow fashion trends, but none of them felt quite right. One day, a local friend asked her about her "personal color". After trying color analysis herself, Wang finally found a style that suited her.

After university, Wang worked as a photographer in China, then returned to South Korea for training after spotting a gap in the local market. She opened her studio in June 2024.

At first, Wang worried about whether the business would work in a smaller city. But after she posted about the studio on Xiaohongshu, also known as RedNote, she gained 2,000 followers in two weeks and was fully booked for three months before the studio even opened. "There is demand here," she said.

A one-hour session costs 680 yuan ($100) per person. According to Wang, her clients are not simply paying to follow trends. They are paying for a visible transformation, and many see the experience as a long-term investment. Clients who work in fields such as teaching and medicine, for example, often want to look more professional and confident.

Wang's studio reflects a broader shift among young Chinese consumers, who are increasingly willing to pay for products and services that feel personal, emotionally rewarding, and tied to identity. Across beauty, culture, and lifestyle consumption, value lies not only in what they buy, but also in what the experience helps them discover or express.

Wang said the phrases she hears most often from clients are "finding myself" and "it completely changed how I saw myself".

One client, a doctor under constant work pressure who rarely found moments of joy in daily life, told Wang that discovering a style that suited them brought genuine happiness.

To better adapt the Korean color analysis system for Chinese clients, Wang added facial structure and natural contrast to her assessments. For ethnic minority clients, she often recommends richer colors and warmer tones instead of the muted grays commonly suggested in South Korea.

Driven by customer demand, Wang has expanded into bone-shape assessment and bridal styling, aiming to build a one-stop service that combines color analysis, makeup, and professional photography.

Decoding culture

The desire for personalization is not limited to appearance. For many young people, the same expectation is now shaping how they learn, travel, and engage with culture.



Top: A visitor uses an AI digital guide developed by Aikesheng Digital Cultural (Beijing) Co Ltd at a museum. **Left:** Wang Lifan (behind) conducts a color analysis session with a client. **Second from top:** A doll headpiece designed by Ji Yingqi and her team blends ethnic styles. **Bottom:** A Yao ethnic-inspired doll outfit. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

At the National Maritime Museum of China in Tianjin, a marine biology student in his early 20s visited to study fossil patterns and artifact restoration. During the trip, he asked an AI digital guide developed by Aikesheng Digital Cultural (Beijing) Co Ltd more than 20 specialized questions and received clear, accurate answers. He said the guide made his visit more than twice as efficient, and later recommended it to his classmates.

The story was one that stayed with Chen Zhenfeng, vice-president of Aikesheng. Chen said the idea for the guide came during a museum research visit in 2023, when the team noticed that many young visitors struggled to engage deeply with the exhibits because suitable guided tours were unavailable. Some left within 20 minutes.

> "Youth are willing to pay for museum services, but not generic ones. They want something shareable, conversation-worthy, and novel."
>
> **Chen Zhenfeng,** vice-president of a digital cultural company

> "Growing national pride has drawn more young people to our products. They do not hesitate to express their love for ethnic cultural elements."
>
> **Ji Yingqi,** founder of a handicraft workshop

"That's when we realized that cultural communication in museums needs to adapt to the way people experience culture in the new era," Chen said.

The team turned that observation into a visitor journey built around curiosity.

After scanning a code, visitors can choose a digital companion and select a route based on their interests. They can stop at any point to chat with the guide or scan an object that catches their attention.

The guide can also generate captioned photos for social media, offer interactive games, and send visitors a personalized record of their museum journey.

"Youth are willing to pay for museum services, but not generic ones. They want something shareable, conversation-worthy, and novel," Chen said.

Crafting belonging

Beyond digital experiences, this search for meaning is also appearing in physical products, especially those that allow young people to project identity, emotion, and cultural pride onto objects they love.

Ji Yingqi, founder of a handicraft workshop in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, has turned ethnic heritage into doll clothing. Her best-selling items include fridge magnets and plush toys featuring imitation Miao silver ornaments and Zhuang brocade.

Building on the popularity of the magnets, Ji's team adapted the motif into miniature Miao-style flower crowns and Zhuang-style headpieces. After testing them on Pop Mart figurines, they created their first line of doll hats.

While decorating their workspace, Ji's team dressed plush toys in Zhuang-style outfits. The outfits became an instant hit with visitors, who soon began asking whether the team could make similar clothes for their own dolls.

"That's when it clicked," Ji said. From there, the process became more interactive. Customer participation became central to the business. Ji describes the process as "co-creation".

"Every doll is different," she said. From necklines to accessories, each design is shaped by customer preferences.

"Many of them see their dolls as companions, even like 'children'. They bring them to meals, on walks and trips, even to concerts."

Meanwhile, designs were simplified to fit dolls of different sizes while still preserving key cultural elements. The range of designs now includes Yi, Yao, and Bai ethnic styles.

Bai-style hats, for example, draw inspiration from the natural scenery of Dali in Yunnan province — wind, flowers, snow, and moon — blending tradition with playful design.

"Growing national pride has drawn more young people to our products. They do not hesitate to express their love for ethnic cultural elements," Ji said.

"Some customers studying or living abroad come back and make a point of bringing their dolls to us," she added. "They take photos with the dolls around the world, bringing Zhuang-style clothing to more places."

Across a color studio, a museum, and a doll workshop, what young people are buying is not just color palettes, digital guides, or handmade accessories. In a market crowded with choices, meaning may be what keeps people coming back.

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Z WEEKLY

Alumni bridge China and world

International alumni turn their studies in Shanghai into opportunities for careers, cooperation and deeper cultural understanding across borders.



Le Minh Quan celebrates his graduation from Shanghai University in 2007.

By WANG XIN in Shanghai
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When Muhammad Majid Riaz arrived in Shanghai on a rainy night in November 2017, he saw the city first through the windows of the airport, not knowing that it would become the place where he would study, work and build a future.

Nearly a decade later, the 32-year-old Pakistani radio frequency engineer still remembers that night as the beginning of his China story.

Riaz came to Shanghai through a language education opportunity supported by the Pakistani government. His interest in China had been sparked by the professionalism of Chinese colleagues he had worked with in Pakistan, as well as by his curiosity about Chinese culture.

The two-year language program at Shanghai University gave him the foundation he needed to continue his studies in China. In 2019, he was admitted to a master's program at the university, marking another important step in his academic and personal development.

Outside the classroom, Riaz immersed himself in campus activities and traditional Chinese culture. He developed a particular interest in tai chi and martial arts and joined several summer camps that took him to different parts of the country.

"The diversity and inclusiveness of Chinese culture left a deep impression on me. By the time I graduated, I had traveled to more than 30 cities across China and experienced both the beautiful scenery and the dynamic development of different regions," Riaz said.

After graduation, he began working at a leading Chinese multinational company in the global wireless communications sector. He said his education and career in China have allowed him to contribute to practical cooperation between China and Pakistan in high-tech industries, trade and people-to-people exchanges.

Riaz is one of many international alumni of Shanghai University who have turned their study experience in China into careers linking China with the wider world.

According to Li Yingjie, dean of the College of International Education at Shanghai University, the university began enrolling international students in 1966. By the end of last year, it had educated more than 30,000 international students from over 160 countries.

These alumni now work in fields ranging from politics and diplomacy to business, trade, culture and education, playing active roles in exchanges between China and other countries, Li said.

Among them is Amzath Ahmed, Minister of State for Fisheries and Ocean Resources of the Maldives, who studied at Shanghai University for 12 years after arriving in 2003.

"Without the education I received at Shanghai University, I would not be who I am today," Amzath said at a campus celebration on May 15. "It gave us more than knowledge. It shaped our character, attitude, resilience and worldview. It taught us how to adapt to change, respect different cultures, think independently and serve society with a sense of responsibility."

In the business sector, Vietnamese alumnus Le Minh Quan, general manager of Mainland Group, found both his career path and his life partner during his years in Shanghai.

Le earned his bachelor's and master's degrees at Shanghai University between 2003 and 2010. His wife, Vu Tran Minh, another Vietnamese alumna, studied at the university from 2005 to 2013. Before she could speak fluent Chinese, Vu was already able to sing Chinese songs.

The couple met on campus, began their careers in Shanghai and later returned to Vietnam with their two children. They now run a business selling rubber products to the Chinese market.

"Shanghai gave me many opportunities," Le said. "When I was a student, I worked part time as a translator for Vietnamese business owners. I learned a lot from them, and those experiences helped guide my future direction."

Le said his familiarity with both Chinese and Vietnamese cultures has become an important advantage in business. Studying in China, he added, is not only about learning the language, but also about understanding the culture, business environment and way of thinking.

"China is a huge market and is taking the lead in many areas, including new energy vehicles, drones, robotics, artificial intelligence and 5G technology," he said. "I see more international students coming to China not only for education, but also for opportunities for cooperation."

The number of international students in China has continued to grow in recent years. According to education authorities, more than 380,000 international students from 191 countries and regions studied, conducted research or took part in training programs at more than 1,100 universities, research institutes and other educational institutions across China during the 2024-25 academic year, a 15 percent increase from the previous year.

Zamir Ahmed Awan, founding chair of the Global Silk Route Research Alliance and also an alumnus of Shanghai University, said China's development and growing international engagement have made it increasingly attractive to young people around the world.

Taking Pakistan as an example, Awan said about 30,000 Pakistani students are currently studying in China.

"International students are very important. They are young, and they are the future," he said. "Learning more about China and Chinese culture can greatly support their own careers and help them contribute to the future of the world."

For Riaz, the years he spent studying in Shanghai continue to shape his work, identity and understanding of cooperation between China and Pakistan.

"I developed my roots and grew in Shanghai and China, and it made me who I am today," Riaz said. "I will continue to act as a bridge between the two countries and help strengthen people-to-people connections."



Muhammad Majid Riaz, from Pakistan, visits Zhoushan, Zhejiang province, in 2021.

Shanghai University's international student choir performs at an event marking the 60th anniversary of the university's international student education program on May 15. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Friendship gallops across the Kazakh steppe

By LI YINGQING in Kunming
and **GUI QIAN**

Dressed in black, Tao Mingxiu gallops across the vast steppe in Kazakhstan, her left hand holding the reins and an eagle perched on her right arm. Her striking silhouette, captured in a short video, has earned millions of likes on social media.

Known to her fans as "Tao Tao", Tao is a horse-loving young woman from Kunming, Southwest China's Yunnan province, and a social media influencer with nearly 10 million followers across multiple platforms.

Over the past two years, she has visited Kazakhstan six times, traveling to major destinations including Astana and Almaty, as well as Akmola, East Kazakhstan and Mangystau regions. She has shared more than 100 posts about the country, attracting more than 1 billion views in total.

In May 2025, Tao was awarded the title of "Tourism Ambassador of Kazakhstan" by Kazakh Tourism. In April 2026, she received the Order of Dostyk (Friendship) II degree on behalf of the President of Kazakhstan. The honor recognized her contribution to promoting Kazakhstan in Chinese media, showcasing its cultural heritage and tourism potential and strengthening people-to-people ties between the two countries.

With 2026 designated as the China-Kazakhstan Year of Cultural Exchange, Tao said she felt deeply honored to receive the award. "I don't think this medal belongs to me alone," she said. "It represents the bond between China and Kazakhstan, and I'm proud to be part of that story."

Bonding on horseback

Born in 1997 into a rural family in Kunming, Tao developed a love of horses at an early age. As a child, she often observed horse-drawn carts in her village. On weekends, her mother would take her to nearby towns on one of those carts.

"I remember being amazed by their strength," she said. "Horses could pull a cart full of people with such steadiness. That image stayed with me."

But it was not until five years ago, when Tao rode a horse for the first time, that she discovered her true passion for riding. Since then, she has spent much of her time at horse farms, training intensively and honing her skills.



Through her passion for horses, Tao Mingxiu has built friendships and cultural connections between China and Kazakhstan. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"My total practice time is comparable to that of someone who has been riding for more than a decade," she said.

Over the years, Tao has been injured many times.

"A horse is not a machine. It has its own mind and temper," she explained. "One day it might be gentle, and the next it might be in a bad mood and refuse to cooperate."

Yet she has never thought of quitting.

"When you truly love something, you don't give up on it," she said.

Tao's videos are often simple: riding across open land, holding an eagle or experiencing local traditions in Kazakhstan. Yet their reach has been remarkable. Through scenes of landscapes, animals and everyday life, she has introduced Chinese audiences to places and cultures they may never have seen before.

"I hope Chinese audiences can discover the real Kazakhstan — a welcoming neighbor with a rich culture of its own," she said.

Her content has also evolved into a two-way cultural exchange, bringing Kazakhstan closer to Chinese viewers while sharing China's landscapes and ethnic traditions overseas.

For example, she has filmed falconers in Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and traditional lifestyles in Yunnan.

"I want the world to see the beauty of China," she said. "I hope people-to-people exchanges will become more regular in the future, with more youth programs as well as cultural and sports events, so that grassroots ties can take root in people's hearts."

Tao calls herself a "little horse handler". For her, horses are not only a personal passion, but also a way to bring people closer together.

"I believe the friendship between China and Kazakhstan will be like a steed on the grassland — running endlessly into the future, generation after generation," she said.

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SPORTS

TENNIS

But it's not all bad news, as China's other aces make racket with major opening wins

Wilting Zheng feels heat in Paris

By SUN XIAOCHEN
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China's Zheng Qinwen hits a forehand return to Maja Chwalinska of Poland during their French Open first-round match at Roland Garros in Paris on Monday. **Inset:** An emotional Zheng faces the media after struggling to cope with the Polish qualifier's punishing "moonballs" and falling to a 6-4, 6-0 defeat. XINHUA

Even with the early exit of "Queen Wen" catching fans off guard, Chinese tennis has swung off its French Open campaign with plenty to cheer about, as a group of its elite players launched their major comeback with flying colors in Paris.

The opening-round action at Roland Garros this year has served up several treats for Chinese fans, from talented men's ace Wu Yibing's first main draw win at the clay-court major to struggling woman Wang Xiyu's first tour-level victory this year.

Yet, it was the shock of fan favorite Zheng Qinwen's unexpected first-round loss to Polish qualifier Maja Chwalinska that has dominated the headlines, leaving fans with mixed feelings.

Zheng, a proud winner of China's first singles Olympic gold medal at the same venue at Paris 2024, was dealt a head-on blow in her attempt to regain her form at Roland Garros, following a long injury layoff, suffering a straight-sets defeat to Chwalinska in an early tournament upset on Monday.

Zheng, who in her deepest run at the French Open last year reached the quarterfinals, struggled to find her rhythm facing the 114th-ranked Pole, whose unique style of hitting top-spin, high-arc lob shots — or "moonballs" — that landed deep and bounced high, proved effective in neutralizing Zheng's aggressive baseline game, punishing the Chinese star's lack of patience, and apparently waning focus, with a 6-4, 6-0 win in just one-and-a-half hours on Court 7.

Too harried to be able to dictate the pace of the game and sway the battle toward her rapid-fire attack, Zheng committed 32 unforced errors against just five from Chwalinska.

The Chinese former world No 4, who has dropped out of the top 100 on the live women's world ranking, admitted with a pained demeanor that, maybe, it's time for her to rebuild her game from the ground up.

"Losing in the first round at Roland Garros was really, really tough for me," an emotional Zheng said in wavering voice at the post-match news conference, where she had to pause to wipe away tears of disappointment.

"Nerves and pressure today didn't allow me to play the tennis that I want," said the 23-year-old, who, since 2022, has won four WTA singles titles to go with her Olympic gold.

"I had a tailored tactic before the match, but her top spin was bouncing much higher than expected.

"At one point on the court, I even hit the line judge with my racket, because I couldn't move back any further," Zheng explained.

It was the first time that Zheng has fallen in the first round at Roland Garros, where she had maintained a 16-4 win-loss record, including the Olympic tournament, before Monday, providing her with a sobering reminder that, perhaps, a slower rebuild from the entry level might suit her better at the moment.

"I didn't pay much attention to my ranking (just yet), but, of course, I need to start all over again, and that's going to be different," said Zheng, who underwent right elbow surgery last summer, took a lengthy recovery period that forced her to skip the Australian Open and only, tentatively, returned to competitive matches on the WTA Tour in February.

"But, I think it's going to be kind of positive for me, because I need more matches to get into my rhythm," said Zheng, who's expected to have to start from the qualifying rounds at top-level WTA events after her French Open exit.

Also struggling with their respective injuries since the second half of last season, China's Wang Xinyu and Wang Xiyu have, conversely, fueled their resurgence with inspiring opening wins in Paris.

Wang Xinyu, China's current top woman, ranked 34th in the world, halted a four-match skid on clay at Tour-level events by battling past Austria's 2024 Roland Garros junior champion Lilli Tagger 6-3, 3-6, 6-4 to register her 20th Grand Slam main draw win on her least-favorite surface on Sunday.

Just over an hour later, Wang Xiyu, a former top-50 ace, nailed her first Tour-level win this year by beating Montenegro's Danka Kovinic in straight sets, making a strong statement of her solid comeback, from a four-month, injury-enforced hiatus since November, all the way from the lower-level International Tennis Federation circuit.

Perhaps the highlight of the Chinese legion's opening-round action, though, was former US Open boys' champion Wu Yibing, also the winner of Chinese men's first ATP singles title (2023 Dallas), who again proved that, when healthy enough, his game belongs among the elite echelons of the men's tour.

The 26-year-old Wu dominated Marcos Giron of the United States 7-5, 6-2, 6-4 on Monday to register his first French Open main draw victory and his fifth career win at the major level, breaking new ground for Chinese men's tennis on the Parisian clay.

Wu's rapid-fire game, which has helped him pull off major upsets in the past, including a defeat of former top-10 Russian Daniil Medvedev at the ATP250 Hangzhou Open in September, has evolved, even on clay, a surface he has struggled a lot with in the past. This was highlighted by his smooth movement up and down the dirt, smart drop shots and solid defense on the baseline.

A two-week training program in the backyard of the "King of Clay" has apparently paid dividends.

"The experience was really helpful, and perhaps I gained a small extra piece of Rafa's magic there," Wu said of his pre-Paris training camp at the Rafa Nadal Academy in Mallorca, Spain.

"Overall, I feel I am getting more used to playing on clay than before, and I've gradually picked up my confidence and started to play my game the way I want on this kind of surface," said Wu, who reached a career-high ranking of No 54 in May 2023.



China's Wu Yibing hits a return to Marcos Giron of the United States on the way winning his French Open first-round match, 7-5, 6-2, 6-4, on Monday. XINHUA

Wawrinka and Monfils bid farewell to the French Open after losing in first round

Stan Wawrinka and Gael Monfils waved goodbye to the French Open after they lost in the first round on Monday.

The curtain fell on Frenchman Monfils just before midnight when he lost to countryman Hugo Gaston 6-2, 6-3, 3-6, 2-6, 6-0.

It was the 39-year-old Monfils' final appearance at Roland Garros. Same went for the 41-year-old Wawrinka, who earlier lost to Jesper de Jong 6-3, 3-6, 6-3, 6-4 on another sweltering day.

Monfils and Wawrinka are retiring at the end of the year.

They made their respective French Open debuts 21 years ago.

Wawrinka went on to win three Grand Slam titles, and while Monfils has not reached a major final, his popularity remains high.

Monfils walked out onto Court Philippe-Chatrier to chants of "Ga-el! Ga-el!" He received loud encouragement throughout, demanding applause when he hit spectacular winners and raising his arm when he won the third set.

But he also looked tired, often hunching over with his hands on his knees. After clawing back a two-set deficit he had little energy left against an opponent 14 years his junior.

Monfils was joined in during an on-court ceremony by his former Davis Cup teammates Jo-Wilfried Tsonga, Richard Gasquet and Gilles Simon, and was also praised by his peers.





Left: Stan Wawrinka reacts during his French Open first-round loss to Jesper de Jong on Monday. **Right:** Gael Monfils holds a glass case containing part of a clay court as French Tennis Federation president Gilles Moretton looks on during a special ceremony on Monday. AP

"For me, you were a true inspiration. A great athlete," two-time reigning French Open champion Carlos Alcaraz said in video featuring several players. "But the most important thing, a great person off the court."

Monfils thanked his wife, Ukrainian tennis player Elina Svitolina, who looked tearful as she listened.

"Without her, I might not be here tonight," Monfils said. "We've been together for eight years, eight beautiful years ... (You) gave me the greatest gift in the world, our daughter. I love you."

De Jong finished off Wawrinka, the 2015 French Open champion and 2017 finalist, with a whipped forehand winner, then urged the fans to applaud Wawrinka, whose face was almost as red as the baking-hot clay.

Temperatures in sun-soaked Paris hit 33 C.

"It's hard, it's hard to say goodbye to you here," an emotional Wawrinka said. "It's because of Roland Garros that I wanted to become a tennis player."

He was given an ovation at Court Simonne-Mathieu, where he was scheduled to face Arthur Fils, but the rising French star pulled out of the tournament with a hip issue.

Wawrinka knows it will be hard to let go — although he still has Wimbledon and the US Open to come.

"For more than 20 years I experienced these emotions, you never want it to stop," Wawrinka said.

"I have given everything for this sport."

His stunning 2015 run to the title saw him defeat heavy favorite Novak Djokovic in the final after downing another all-time great, Roger Federer, in the quarterfinals. Wawrinka stood out that year, as much for his eye-catching pink-checkered shorts as for his destructive backhand.

Those shorts fed into his happy-go-lucky appearance, and he reinforced that image by celebrating with champagne long into the night. But as cavalier as he sometimes seemed, Wawrinka was anything but casual and always trained fiercely hard.

He was hugged on court by tournament director Amelie Mauresmo, before sitting and watching footage of his matches down the years. He was shown video messages from Federer, Rafael Nadal, Djokovic, men's No 1 Jannik Sinner, reigning champion Alcaraz, and Monfils.

At his physical peak, the barrel-chested Wawrinka had huge stamina and was one of the few who beat Nadal, Djokovic, Federer and Andy Murray at the Grand Slams.

Wawrinka beat Nadal in the Australian Open final in 2014 and downed Djokovic again in the US Open final in 2016, meaning all three of his majors were won against the No 1 player. Nadal, however, dispatched him in straight sets in the 2017 French Open final.

He was an Olympic champion in doubles alongside Federer in 2008, and they won the Davis Cup for Switzerland in 2014.

"You are a legend of our sport," said Monfils, who also lost his first-round match at the Australian Open in January.

Monfils reached the semifinals at the 2008 French Open and the quarterfinals on three other occasions.

But, ultimately, he fell short after being touted for a great career following junior titles at the French Open, Wimbledon and the US Open in 2004.

He never won better than an ATP 500 among his 13 titles, and lost 22 finals — including three at Masters level.

His reputation as a showman took precedence over his modest results.

"One of the most likeable, fun guys out there," Djokovic said. "There's no one that doesn't like you, Gael. I think that's your biggest victory."

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Fragile ceasefire
Fresh strikes, diplomatic friction test US-Iran truce
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Products to fight cognitive decline gaining popularity
CHINA, PAGE 12



Nature's care
Eco-art, fragrance therapy offer urban residents emotional relief
LIFE SHANGHAI, PAGE 14

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, JUNE 5, 2026

Healing touch



A doctor from Beijing examines a child on Thursday during a screening for congenital heart disease in Ngari prefecture, Xizang autonomous region. The screening is part of an initiative launched by the Chinese Red Cross Foundation in 2012. To date, more than 1.92 million children in the region have been examined and assistance has been provided to over 10,000 patients. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

Wider global role seen for RMB

China has ample room to expand currency's use as trade leverage increases, experts say

By **WANG KEJU**
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China has ample room to expand the global use of renminbi through trade and commodity settlement, supply chain finance and offshore market development, senior economists said, adding that the process will be gradual and largely hinges on continuing financial market reforms across the globe.

As the existing US dollar-dominated architecture sees an erosion of global trust and buckles under the strains of geopolitical conflict and the weaponization of financial infrastructure by some countries, the internationalization of the renminbi will help make the global monetary system more inclusive and resilient, they said.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund, said the trend of renminbi internationalization is "unstoppable", and the technical pathway is "already mapped out".

Zhu pushed back against a long-held assumption that the renminbi could not become a major international currency without full convertibility and a fully liberalized capital account. "We need to correct this old mindset," he said.

He pointed to the IMF's Special Drawing Rights basket, a collection of five major international currencies that gives the renminbi a 12.48 percent weighting after the dollar and the euro, as proof that such constraints are not necessarily insurmountable.

Expanding the use of the renminbi in cross-border trade settlement serves as a viable and crucial pathway toward its further internationalization, experts said.

"For a currency to become truly global, settlement is a critical gateway," said Miao Yanliang, chief strategist at China International Capital Corp. "And in that respect, China's trade leverage is growing."

Miao noted that China is the world's largest trading nation and largest crude oil importer, as well as a dominant consumer of copper, iron ore and soybeans. "That trade position gives China a unique advantage to gradually enhance the convenience and acceptance of renminbi settlement," he added.

In recent years, geopolitical shifts have accelerated the renminbi's adoption, with some commodity sellers increasingly exploring settling trade in renminbi.

The recent disruption of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz has highlighted vulnerabilities in the existing dollar-centric oil trading system, said Shi Kang, chair professor at the PBC School of Finance at Tsinghua University.

"In the coming period, we will see more oil trade settlement gradually shift away from the existing dollar-based system," Shi said.

Beyond trade settlement, Zhu, the former IMF official, noted that strengthening the renminbi's role as a "financing tool in global supply chains" would also bolster its international standing.

China accounts for nearly one-third of global manufacturing output, equaling the combined share of the United States, Japan, Germany and South Korea, yet its currency plays only a modest role in international finance, Zhu said, describing this as "a clear mismatch".

"The US' real economy has weakened, but it still underpins an enormous dollar system," he said. "Geo-economic shifts inevitably drive changes in finance and beyond."

See ***Renminbi,*** *page 3*

Long-term strategies help great green wall thrive

By **HOU LIQIANG**
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Unlike many ecological projects that falter due to short-term aid cycles, China's great green wall — the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program — thrives on long-term strategies and predictable funding, particularly incentivizing local people and businesses to invest in restoration.

This achievement was highlighted in articles recently published in the journal Nature, ahead of World Environment Day, which falls on Friday.

The articles also said that China's incentive mechanism ensures continued funding, transforming the effort into a shared socioeconomic endeavor.

According to the reports, drylands already cover 40 percent of the planet's total land area, and that share could expand by another 10 percent due to global warming before the turn of this century. While many countries and regions have launched programs to fight desertification, beyond China, green wall projects in India, Africa and the Gulf states have struggled to survive, they said.

The Three-North program is a large-scale ecological afforestation effort launched in 1978, covering 13 provincial-level regions across northwestern, northern and northeastern China. It nearly tripled forest cover — from about 5 percent to about 14 percent — by 2023, while soil erosion declined by two-thirds.

As most green wall projects fail due to a lack of continued finance and maintenance, China has repeatedly committed to spending, and its incentives for local investment have ensured that the stream of funding never dries up.

In the Kubuqi Desert, for example, enterprises and herders can obtain low-interest loans with tax reductions for sand control, which has attracted more than 3 billion yuan ($443 million) in investment since 2010. China also offers vulnerable communities short-term income through various work-relief programs.

Lu Qi, chief scientist at the Chinese Academy of Forestry, regularly visits the front line of the Three-North program, which currently covers 40 percent of China's total land area, witnessing firsthand how incentives drive its success.

"Everyone is rushing to take part, and their enthusiasm is irrepressible," he said after a recent visit to the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Lu, who visited the front line shortly after the Spring Festival holiday, noted that cold weather notwithstanding, sand control work started as early as Feb 28.

The foremost reason for this passion, he said, is the "pressing need to build a better home", adding that "the government's policies also enable local farmers and herders to see tangible benefits for themselves".

> "The government's policies also enable local farmers and herders to see tangible benefits for themselves."
>
> **Lu Qi,** chief scientist at the Chinese Academy of Forestry

An opinion piece published in Nature emphasized that China's financial strategies cannot simply be replicated in countries with different laws and fiscal capacities.

"A practical first step for any country is to elevate sand control from a short-term forestry project to a government-level long-term obligation," it stated. "External aid should be used to leverage domestic co-finance, rather than serve as a one-off cash injection."

China is also coupling renewables infrastructure directly with ecological restoration.

The article said that in lower-resource nations, smaller photovoltaic belts could be installed near high-value assets such as roads and water pumping stations. These projects require substantial upfront investment, but electricity sales could provide predictable revenue for maintenance, it added.

Another key lesson from China's experience is that governments in other countries need to view ecological restoration as an investment, not as a cost, the article said.

Lu noted that this investment has already paid off significantly in China, following a fundamental shift in the Three-North program's philosophy over time.

"In the beginning, we only cultivated trees that grew fast, tall, and offered good protection," he said, adding that the focus gradually shifted to integrating ecological conservation, production and livelihoods.

Growing plants under solar panels is a key example of this integration. The plants are mostly fruit-bearing ones, such as matrimony vine and sea buckthorn, as well as those used in traditional Chinese medicine like astragalus.

In some regions, the shade of solar panels is used for herding. Instead of letting cattle graze directly on the grass, strands are trimmed and taken away to feed the animals — an approach that poses no negative impact on the protective function of the plants.

"I see this as a major transformation — one that integrates ecology, production and people's livelihoods," Lu said. "It not only protects the land and provides income for farmers and herders, but also brings benefits to society as a whole."



A worker waters plants as part of a desertification control program in Horqin Left Wing Rear Banner, Inner Mongolia autonomous region, on April 19. LIAN ZHEN / XINHUA

BLUSHING PLUMS HERALD ONSET OF MIDSUMMER

Fruit offers connection with seasonal rhythms that have shaped Chinese life for generations

By **LI YINGXUE**
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In the mist-shrouded valleys of southwestern China, summer does not arrive with a date on the calendar; it arrives with a sound — the crisp snap of plums being plucked from their branches.

China Vibes — FOOD —

The harvest begins with *mang zhong*, or Grain in Ear, one of China's 24 traditional solar terms and a seasonal marker long associated with ripening crops and the onset of midsummer. As heat and humidity settle over the Chengdu Plain in Sichuan province, the hillsides of Dayi county come alive with activity.

Farmers gather in numbers to pick plums that have spent months maturing beneath dense green canopies.

Once sharply tart, the fruit has now turned plump, glossy and sweeter, carrying a faint blush and a fresh fragrance. This signals the start of Dayi's annual plum-processing season — a tradition that connects orchards, home kitchens and local wineries.



Plums are harvested in Dayi county, Sichuan province, in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Online
See more by scanning the code.

Nation's trade approach aligns with actual needs of Africa

WORLD WATCH
By Mabasa Sasa

A growing conversation is unfolding across Africa about the differing approaches of major powers in engaging with the continent, and the fundamental goals behind those engagements.

A clear contrast emerges when comparing China's new zero-tariff policy for African countries that have diplomatic relations with Beijing and the United States' African Growth and Opportunity Act — a contrast that highlights why China's approach is far more aligned with Africa's genuine development needs.

The historic new zero-tariff policy was fully implemented on May 1. Previously, China had already scrapped tariffs on 100 percent of tariff lines for 33 least-developed countries in Africa since Dec 1, 2024. The new zero-tariff policy will benefit relatively better-off countries such as Kenya, Egypt and Nigeria.

Launched in 2000, the US' African Growth and Opportunity Act was billed as a landmark initiative to integrate African economies into global trade. Its promise sounded attractive: duty-free access to the US market for eligible African nations.

More than two decades later, however, results have been uneven at best. The program's core flaw lies in its conditional design. Eligibility is determined by Washington's political and economic criteria, which can shift abruptly to suit US foreign policy priorities.

Currently, only 32 African countries qualify under the African Growth and Opportunity Act, leaving more than 20 nations — including Zimbabwe — excluded. The unspoken message is clear: Access to the US market comes with political conditions. Trade is offered, but with heavy political strings attached.

Crucially, the US program has never meaningfully transformed Africa's industrial base. Strict technical requirements and complex rules have prevented real economic diversification. The relationship has often felt less like genuine partnership and more like supervised, conditional access.

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INDEPTH





Left: Members of photovoltaic and renewable energy research team from the University of New South Wales introduce solar panel products at the 64th Smart Energy Conference and Exhibition in Sydney in May.
Right: Visitors pose for a photo at the booth of Chinese solar manufacturer GoodWe during the exhibition. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China, Australia bask in solar panel success

Collaboration on breakthrough tech, and production pushing green transition forward

By **XIN XIN** and **ALEXIS HOOI** in Sydney



About 10,000 attendees, 120 main exhibitors, and industry leaders participated in the event. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Andrew Forrest, chairman of mining giant Fortescue, gives a keynote speech at the conference in Sydney. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Electrician James Moore, who installed solar panels on the roof of his Sydney home two years ago, said the green energy move has helped him halve his household power bills.

When told that the equipment came from China, Moore was not surprised. "It's efficient and effective, very suitable for sunny Australia," he said.

Moore's words were fitting in more ways than one. The development of photovoltaic, or PV, technology, which converts sunlight into electricity and powers the growing use of solar energy in the country, can be traced to Australian research and innovation.

Ned Ekins-Daukes, head of the School of Photovoltaic and Renewable Energy Engineering at the University of New South Wales in Sydney, said the university's pioneering PV research helped nurture ties with Chinese industry and academics that continue to place them at the forefront of the field.

"UNSW has this extraordinary story of where we invented some photovoltaic technologies a long way ahead of the market being ready to accept them. During that time, many students came from China to study at UNSW and took some of the ideas back to China," the professor said.

Major contributions to the sector include work led by multiple-award-winning UNSW scientist Martin Green, who invented groundbreaking types of solar cells in the early 1980s. This helped fuel further research that has since accounted for more than 90 percent of worldwide silicon solar module production, according to the university.

One of Green's doctoral students, Shi Zhengrong, subsequently implemented a low-cost manufacturing transformation and went on to set up the first commercial solar cell producer of its kind in China. Serving as the Chinese company's chief scientist, Green and other research team members helped facilitate the rapid growth of the sector.

"What's happened in China is that, because of the scale of the manufacturing that's possible and the supply chain integration that's been built up over the last 20 years, the costs of those technologies have dramatically reduced," Ekins-Daukes said.

In China, there has been continuous improvement in the technology, he said. "In Australia, we demonstrated the concept, we demonstrated that these solar cell technologies could work well. But in China, the engineers have worked hard to actually (apply) those technologies for manufacturing and critically bring robotic automation into the manufacturing of silicon solar panels," he said.

UNSW now works directly with major PV companies to help them improve the technology and its practical applications in Australia and beyond, Ekins-Daukes said.

This "loop of innovation" between Australia and China will continue, he added. "China has huge manufacturing strengths, and the opportunity for Australia ... having a lot of space and a lot of sunshine, is to collaborate and help deploy solar at an enormous scale for the benefit of the Australian economy, in a partnership," Ekins-Daukes said.

Complementary strengths

The success of the China-Australia partnership in the solar energy sector offers a model of cooperation to tap into complementary strengths amid the global green transition.

China is the main supplier of solar equipment to Australia, which also tops the world's per capita uptake of rooftop solar, according to industry figures.

There were nearly 255,000 new rooftop solar installations across Australia last year, bringing the number of households using the systems to 4.3 million, according to the Clean Energy Council, the sector's peak body in Australia.

In the second half of 2025, rooftop solar energy contributed 14.2 percent of the total electricity generated in Australia, nearly double the amount in 2020.

In 2024-25, Australian households saved about A$3 billion ($2.18 billion), or A$125 per capita, on electricity costs by installing rooftop solar, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

China continues to lead the world in PV supply chains. Its top manufacturers account for most of the global production, and have helped bring down costs and offered "multiple benefits for clean energy transitions", according to the International Energy Agency. Industry analysts have also pointed to a shift toward high-quality growth through the leveraging of technology and scale to maintain global competitiveness.

With similar strengths in wind turbines and lithium batteries, China is cementing its leading role in renewable energy technologies that countries like Australia are increasingly keen to leverage as they face resource disruptions due to the Middle East conflict, while addressing other traditional fossil fuel challenges.

The federal government's "Future Made in Australia" initiative includes a renewable energy focus on a more resilient, low-carbon economy through increased investments in research and manufacturing.

At the 64th Smart Energy Conference and Exhibition held in Sydney on May 6 and 7, Australia's Climate Change and Energy Minister Chris Bowen highlighted the "era of clean power growth", with "renewables overtaking coal in 2025 and record growth in solar meaning that renewable energy met the vast majority of new demand growth in 2025".

Countries like China have similarly reduced fossil fuels' share of electricity generation significantly, helping push against climate change inaction, he said.

The major two-day event covering fields ranging from solar and storage to transport and technology drew about 10,000 attendees, 120 main exhibitors and industry leader conferences covering the latest energy trends.

In a keynote speech at the conference, mining giant Fortescue's chairman, Andrew Forrest, called for more to be done to adopt green technologies and electrification in a pillar sector still heavily reliant on diesel.

With most of Australia's diesel imported, prices could go up significantly amid the supply risks from shipping disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz in the Middle East, he said.

"So, for diesel, it's all bad news," Forrest said.

As part of its move away from fossil fuel dependence, Fortescue announced in April the acceleration of an integrated green energy grid rollout, including 1.2GW of solar capacity at the Pilbara area in Western Australia.

At a conference session on the importance of the Australia-China smart energy partnership, John Grimes, chief executive of Australia's Smart Energy Council, said the solar and other advanced technologies developed by the Sino-Australian cooperation mark a deep relationship. The council is a nonprofit with more than 1,000 members.

"What I see in China ... the engineers, the investors, the Australian connection is so strong. There is a massive opportunity for us to build on those firm and long-standing foundations," said Grimes, adding that "every solar panel makes a difference" in the global energy crisis.

"We're working with Chinese industry to take the world's lowest-cost, best technology and accelerate that ... throughout the Asia-Pacific region."

Tim Buckley, founder and director of Climate Energy Finance, a think tank focusing on Australia's green transition, told China Daily that it is "critical we work with China and learn from the best technology in the world".

"I'm amazed by the robotic advances," he said. "Australia worries about our high cost of labor, you don't have that problem in China because you're building the world's best robots, which means we can learn from China about robotics, engineering and supply chains, and partner together," he said.

"The more you build wind, solar, batteries and hydroelectricity toward energy efficiency, the less addicted to imported fossil fuels your country is. That's a really important lesson for us."

Dorothy Zhou, director at Chinese PV company Sunpro Asia, told China Daily that the Australian market offers significant investment opportunities with its various sectors like agriculture and resources suitable for energy projects.

"The energy transition for this market provides investment stability with clear demand, providing an upward trajectory," she said.

Zhu Sha, executive secretary-general of the Jiangsu Energy Storage Industry Association, told China Daily that Chinese companies are well-prepared to cater to overseas market demand, backed by advanced technologies, complete industrial chains and low-cost manufacturing advantages.

Their pace of going global is accelerating and the way they expand overseas is also evolving, said Zhu, who led a delegation to the Australian conference. The association, based in the East China province, promotes green energy transition with its more than 1,000 member units, using expertise in fields such as research and manufacturing as well as green finance.

"China's new energy industry is now shifting from products and trade-driven expansion to one-stop service and systems solution exports," Zhu said, adding that companies are also actively exploring markets in Southeast Asia, Africa and South America.

The Australian market remains attractive because it can help open up broader areas of development, she said.

"With Australia as a base, companies can also extend their industrial chains, or further expand into the European and US markets," Zhu said.

The next stage of development for Chinese energy storage products in Australia will focus on commercial and industrial use, grid-scale capabilities, and data center solutions, altogether presenting "both an opportunity and a challenge for Chinese companies", she added.

Australia-China research and development collaboration is already extending beyond its PV partnerships to other growth opportunities such as green hydrogen, fertilizer and steel.

"There are a lot of areas we can work on, to keep building on the momentum," Thomas Gao, senior manager at the Office of the Chief Scientist and Engineer, New South Wales, told China Daily.

"Many people play very important parts at different levels, taking us to where we are today. It's a continual journey," said Gao, whose organization helps bring academia, government and industry to drive the commercialization of research.

To that effect, a UNSW booth at the Sydney conference showcased the latest developments in the field that also continued its rich Australia-China partnership.

Professor Thorsten Trupke, a colleague of Ekins-Daukes at the university's photovoltaic school, explained his work on a state-of-the-art photoluminescence imaging system that inspects industrial solar panels through drones.

"We can now take these luminescence images from aerial drones on a large scale in operating solar farms," Trupke told China Daily.

Solar panels are made to last for about 30 years without any major degradation, but they can sometimes encounter problems, as with any mass-manufactured product, he said.

"We can detect those panels, and then necessary rectification can be done," said Trupke, adding that Chinese companies support the project by providing specialized samples for testing.

"The best drones in the world are from China and the ones we use are also from there. We are configuring these drones specifically for our needs," he said.

"Our school has collaborated with China for many years ... this collaboration will probably expand into the future."

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TOP NEWS

Experts warn against Japan's militarism

Latest round of alarmist rhetoric shows country's move to change security posture

By **LIU JIANQIAO**
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Japan has repeatedly hyped up the so-called "China threat" narrative in recent years to justify its expanding military agenda, said experts, warning that portraying neighboring countries as "threats" has historically been a recurring tactic of Japanese militarism.

They said that the latest round of alarmist rhetoric once again reveals the ambitions of Japan's right-wing forces to loosen postwar constraints, expand military capabilities and advance a broader transformation of the country's security posture.

Japanese media outlets on Wednesday disclosed an outline of the government's 2026 defense white paper, which continues to portray the regional security environment as "increasingly severe", while calling for enhanced development in unmanned systems and artificial intelligence.

According to the Asahi Shimbun newspaper, the upcoming annual defense report largely follows the narrative of the 2025 edition, arguing that the international community has entered a "new era of crisis", characterizing the security environment in the "Indo-Pacific region" as "increasingly severe", and hyping up the so-called "China threat" theory.

The white paper states that defense production and technological capabilities are directly linked to defense strength. It advocates creating an "environment of mutual support" by deploying the same defense equipment as allies and other "like-minded" countries, the newspaper said.

Meanwhile, Japan's public broadcaster NHK reported that the 2026 white paper introduces a new section on "emerging modes of warfare", which stresses the need to expand the use of unmanned aerial systems and AI in defense operations.

Liu Shuliang, an associate researcher at the Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences, said that Japan is moving beyond the bounds of its postwar defense posture and accelerating a broader remilitarization process associated with "new militarism" through measures such as revising its national security framework, enhancing offensive combat capabilities and integrating intelligence systems.

Through sustained lobbying by defense-related companies and capital groups, Japan's military-industrial complex has pushed for higher defense spending and fewer restrictions on arms exports, he said.

He mentioned that in early May, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi outlined Japan's revamped "free and open Indo-Pacific" vision during her visit to Vietnam. The policy line was later reaffirmed by Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi at the recent Shangri-La Dialogue, a major defense forum held in Singapore.

"By advancing a revised 'free and open Indo-Pacific' vision and redefining its regional role, Japan is moving to expand its military reach while enhancing its influence in regional affairs. The strategy reflects Tokyo's growing ambition to play a larger role in shaping the regional security order, a move that carries clear geopolitical implications and has raised concerns over its impact on regional stability," he added.

Chen Hong, director of East China Normal University's Asia-Pacific Studies Centre in Shanghai, said that Japan's continued hype surrounding tensions in the so-called "Indo-Pacific region" is aimed at fueling bloc confrontation and creating exclusive groupings that run counter to the region's need for openness, cooperation and stability.

By deepening economic and security ties with the Quad, a grouping of Australia, India, Japan and the United States, the Philippines and other so-called allies or "quasi-alliances", Japan has increasingly pushed regional countries to choose sides, aggravating bloc confrontation and adding to tensions in the region, he said.

Liu from Tianjin Academy of Social Sciences also said that Japan and the Philippines — a victim of Japanese militarism and invasion during World War II — stepped up military collaboration in early May, exploring the transfer of Japan Maritime Self-Defense Force vessels, including used destroyer escorts.

"The international community should clearly recognize the risks and potential destabilizing effects associated with Japan's accelerated remilitarization and its evolving security posture. It may therefore consider appropriate responses to address a more assertive and increasingly controversial direction in Japan's defense policy," he said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Lasting friendship



Thongloun Sisoulith, general secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and president of Laos, greets instructors during a visit to the Party School of the Communist Party of China Central Committee in Beijing on Thursday. Thongloun, who attended a month-long exchange program at the school in 2000, revisited the dormitory where he had stayed and met with Chinese teachers, program coordinators and Lao participants during his state visit to China. His five-day visit concludes on Saturday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

Services sector sees rapid expansion in May

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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Services activity in China expanded faster month-on-month in May, the latest RatingDog China General Services Purchasing Managers' Index figures showed, underlining the robust growth in new businesses and a rebound in overseas demand, despite uncertainties triggered by geopolitical tensions in the Middle East.

Analysts said the upbeat figures of the private survey, which was released on Wednesday, coupled with a further pickup in business confidence, pointed to a strong momentum in China's services sector, amid intensified policy efforts to "expand capacity and improve the quality of the sector".

Their remarks came as the reading, compiled by S&P Global, rose 1.8 percentage points to 54.4 in May from 52.6 in April, remaining above the 50-point mark that separates expansion from contraction and signaling the fastest pace of expansion in three months.

This was broadly in line with the official survey released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Sunday, which showed services activity returned to expansion mode at 50.3 in May from 49.6 in April. Compared with the official gauge, the RatingDog PMI tracks small, export-oriented companies more closely.

"The recovery in services activity indicates that earlier macro policy support has begun to take effect," said Lou Feipeng, a researcher at Postal Savings Bank of China. "Fiscal tools such as service consumption subsidies and interest subsidies for loans have helped cushion the sector and shore up business confidence."

Beating market expectations, the faster increase in activity was supported by improvements in new businesses, which expanded for the 41st consecutive month and at the fastest pace in three months, according to the RatingDog report.

Yao Yu, founder of RatingDog, said the strong performance was largely driven by improving domestic demand, continued business innovation and new client acquisitions.

Echoing Yao's view, Lou from Postal Savings Bank of China said the May Day holiday unleashed strong demand for travel, dining, cultural and leisure activities, helping lift the business climate in related consumer sectors.

External demand also regained momentum. The RatingDog report showed that new export businesses returned to expansion mode in May after mild contractions in the previous two months, lending further support to the sector's growth momentum.

Meanwhile, emerging growth drivers, represented by information services, have shown strong momentum and sound sustainability, said Wu Wei, an analyst at the China Logistics Information Center.

"Through continuous innovation and deeper integration with other sectors, the information services sector will continue to play a key role in fostering new quality productive forces, with broader development prospects ahead," Wu said.

The improvement also fed business confidence. RatingDog said business optimism across the services sector picked up in May, with the confidence reading reaching its highest level since February.

Yao said that improved sentiment, together with stable domestic demand, is expected to help keep both the services PMI and the broader composite PMI in expansionary territory in the months ahead.

Policy support has also strengthened expectations about the sector's long-term growth. In April, the State Council issued a new set of guidelines aimed at expanding capacity and upgrading the quality of the services sector, setting a goal for the sector's total scale to reach 100 trillion yuan ($14.8 trillion) by 2030.

However, analysts cautioned that the services recovery may not yet be on a firm footing, noting that rising cost pressures may warrant closer attention in the coming months. They said more targeted policy measures will be crucial to help the economy withstand external headwinds.

"Authorities should step up loan interest subsidies and credit enhancement support for small and medium-sized service providers to help ease operating pressure from rising input costs," Lou said.

He added that stronger support should also be directed toward producer services such as technology services, software and information services, and modern logistics, so that productivity gains can help absorb rising cost pressures.

Landmark victory



Kyrgyz Foreign Minister Jeenbek Kulubayev (second from left) reacts after Kyrgyzstan secured a place as a non-permanent member of the United Nations Security Council at the UN headquarters in New York on Wednesday, after edging out Philippines during multiple rounds of voting. The election marks the first time Kyrgyzstan will serve on the Security Council. DAVID 'DEE' DELGADO / REUTERS

Renminbi: Greater offshore supply urged

From page 1

A stronger renminbi is not only an inevitable choice for China's development, but also a necessity for global financial stability, Zhu stressed, saying that the renminbi could be used more extensively within global supply chains to align with China's manufacturing strength.

For a currency to become truly internationally strong, Zhu said, it must not only be usable for cross-border transactions, but also be held as a store of value and eventually repatriated or reinvested, all of which requires deep bond markets, robust derivatives markets and a liquid offshore market.

Miao, from China International Capital Corp, suggested that China could increase the supply of offshore renminbi, including expanding the availability of government bonds and high-grade renminbi-denominated bonds, to provide global investors with secure renminbi holdings and to support the domestic economy.

In another development, the Ministry of Finance plans to issue a total of 84 billion yuan ($12.4 billion) of renminbi-denominated sovereign bonds in Hong Kong this year. The first two issues, totaling 29.5 billion yuan, were made in February and April.

The world is facing an urgent need for more diversified safe-haven assets and liquidity, said Shi, from Tsinghua University.

That is a gap that the renminbi, backed by China's proactive institutional opening-up, is increasingly positioned to fill, Shi added.

"We do not want to replace the dollar system, nor are we trying to develop a separate system," Shi said. "China's goal is to address the weak links in the current monetary system, allowing more currencies to participate and thus enhance global financial stability."

Marc Uzan, executive director of the Reinventing Bretton Woods Committee, said that central banks are diversifying reserves, more energy deals are being priced in nondollar currencies, and countries are settling trade in local currencies. However, he acknowledged that the dollar's structural advantages remain significant, and "a swift end to dollar hegemony is unlikely". He said he expects a multipolar future in which the dollar, euro and renminbi will each play a larger role, alongside regional currencies.

Continent: Trade flows rooted in mutual benefit

From page 1

China's approach stands in stark contrast. It is inclusive, unconditional and development-centered.

China's zero-tariff policy covers exports from all 53 African countries that have diplomatic relations with Beijing. In simple terms, African goods gain broad, preferential entry into one of the world's largest markets — with no political conditions attached and no interference in internal affairs.

China frames this policy within the broader Belt and Road Initiative, emphasizing connectivity, infrastructure integration and expanded trade flows rooted in mutual benefit and shared development opportunities.

As President Xi Jinping has repeatedly emphasized, China pursues building a China-Africa community with a shared future, based on equality, mutual respect and win-win cooperation.

China's engagement with Africa centers on tangible infrastructure — roads, railways, power plants, industrial parks and trade corridors. These projects deliver visible, lasting development across the continent.

Bilateral trade reached a record $348 billion in 2025, and China has remained Africa's largest trading partner for 17 consecutive years.

For countries like Zimbabwe, the new zero-tariff policy is especially significant. Agricultural products, minerals and value-added goods now have a clear, stable pathway into China's vast market — without compromising sovereignty or aligning with external political agendas.

The choice for Africa is clear: win-win cooperation, not political dependence.

For decades, Africa has navigated partnerships where aid, loans and trade preferences often came with condescending lectures, shifting rules and political demands. China's model resonates because it is commercially driven, respectful and focused on development outcomes.

While all countries pursue their legitimate interests in international cooperation, China's engagement with Africa is fundamentally different from models that use market access as political leverage. China consistently upholds the principles of noninterference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit.

Africa is no longer seeking just any partnership. It is asking a more fundamental question: On whose terms is the relationship built?

Between the African Growth and Opportunity Act's politicized, exclusive and constraint-laden framework, and China's inclusive, unconditional, development-focused zero-tariff arrangement, the rational choice for Africa is clear.

The author is a political analyst and international affairs commentator based in Harare, Zimbabwe. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Fruit: Growing demand inspires new beverage products

From page 1

Dayi's natural conditions have made it one of China's major plum-producing regions. Fed by meltwater from Xiling Snow Mountain and shaped by significant temperature differences between day and night, the area produces plums known for their rich aroma, thick flesh and sharp acidity.

For 79-year-old farmer Wang Xiuhua, the harvest represents the culmination of months of careful work. "Plum blossoms open in the bitter cold of the twelfth lunar month," she said. "The hardest time comes in early spring. If snow or frost arrives when the trees are flowering, the blossoms fall and there will be very few fruits."

By the time *mang zhong* arrives, farmers are watching closely for signs of peak ripeness. "Once the plums turn golden, you have to pick them quickly," Wang said.

For generations, preserving the taste of summer has been a seasonal ritual in local households. Wang still follows a family recipe for making sugar-cured plums. The freshly picked fruit is washed and air-dried before being layered with white sugar in a glass jar. Over time, the plums release their juices and wrinkle, creating a concentrated syrup.

The fruit also plays a key role in Dayi's plum wine industry.

Hu Yao, founder of Chengdu Dahe Hongmei Wine Co and a practitioner of the region's traditional plum wine-making technique, said the Nanko variety of the fruit has a small pit and thick flesh. "When fully ripe, the aroma is especially intense, which gives the wine a strong fruity character."

Unlike products made by simply steeping fruit in distilled spirits, Dayi's traditional plum wine relies on pure fruit fermentation — a process requiring careful temperature and timing control. "If one step goes wrong, the whole batch can turn into vinegar instead of wine," Hu said.

While the plum itself has changed little over the centuries, the ways people enjoy it continue to evolve.

Growing demand among younger consumers for lighter, fruit-forward drinks has inspired new products ranging from jasmine- and chrysanthemum-infused plum wines to sparkling plum beverages and tea-based drinks.

For many consumers, plum-based drinks offer not only refreshment, but also a connection with seasonal rhythms that have shaped Chinese life for generations.

As summer settles across Sichuan and the orchards empty of fruit, the work after harvest continues in jars, bottles and fermentation tanks. A year later, when the weather turns hot again, the flavor of Dayi's plums will return in a glass of chilled drink, carrying with it the taste of a season that begins each year with the snap of a fruit leaving its branch.

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WORLD



Staff members count the ballots from South Korea's local elections at a counting station in Seoul on Wednesday. JUN HYOSANG / XINHUA

S. Korea ruling party wins polls

President Lee's DP scores big victory in local elections but loses Seoul race

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong
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South Korea's ruling liberals secured a landslide victory in quadrennial local elections held on Wednesday, while the main opposition party successfully defended the key Seoul mayoralty, official data showed on Thursday.

According to the National Election Commission, President Lee Jaemyung's ruling Democratic Party, or DP, won 12 out of 16 races for metropolitan mayor and provincial governor races.

The result marks a dramatic shift in voter sentiment from four years ago as the DP demonstrated nationwide dominance, a turnaround from the 2022 local elections when the then-ruling People Power Party, or PPP, claimed 12 out of 17 major gubernatorial and mayoral positions.

In the contest this week, the DP successfully flipped traditional conservative strongholds, including the crucial southeastern port city of Busan, while retaining its grip on the vital capital region of Gyeonggi Province, the western port of Incheon, and its traditional home turf in the South and North Jeolla provinces.

But the PPP managed to secure four races for mayors and governors, including the capital Seoul, the southeastern inland city of Daegu, and South Gyeongsang and North Gyeongsang provinces.

The parliamentary by-election was held concurrently on Wednesday. The DP secured nine out of the 14 contested parliamentary seats, further consolidating its majority role in the 300-member National Assembly. The PPP gained four seats, and one independent candidate was elected in Busan.

The elections were held exactly one year after President Lee took office last year, with many seeing it as the first test for his administration.

In a meeting with senior aides on Thursday, Lee said he would "humbly" accept the public sentiment reflected in the election results and pledged to cooperate actively with newly elected local governments regardless of their political affiliation, according to Yonhap News Agency.

Symbolic post

Losing the Seoul mayoral race is seen as a painful blow to the ruling party as it is a highly symbolic post that is often regarded as a key barometer of public sentiment.

DP leader Jung Chung-rae said in a news conference that he is grateful to the public for granting the party a major nationwide victory in the local elections but added that it was painful that the party failed in the Seoul race.

"I apologize for the disappointing election results," said PPP leader Jang Dong-hyuk in a Facebook post, adding that the party managed to keep the "spark of hope" alive in the challenging election and will find a new path forward.

"(The election) is a referendum not only on President Lee ... but essentially ... also a referendum on the behavior and attitude of the main opposition party," said Lam Peng Er, head of the Korea Centre and principal research fellow at the East Asian Institute at the National University of Singapore.

While the ruling party has emerged very strong both in terms of local and national power, the PPP also managed to avoid total annihilation by retaining key conservative strongholds and winning the race in Seoul, Lam told China Daily.

Still, Lam said the landslide win of the ruling party in both local and by-elections will provide political stability for Lee to pursue his domestic reforms.

He said the high voter turnout, the second-highest in South Korea's local election history, showed there are many voters who feel that the PPP had not really repented for the failed martial law declaration by former president Yoon Suk-yeol in 2024. Yoon was impeached the following year.

Over 27.2 million people cast their ballots in the June 3 local elections, with a final voter turnout of 61 percent.

Beijing imposes travel ban on New Zealand MPs over Taiwan visit

By **MO JINGXI**
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China warned on Thursday that anyone who crosses the line on the Taiwan question will "pay the price", after it imposed travel bans on several individual New Zealand lawmakers who visited the Taiwan region in disregard of the grave concerns and firm opposition of Beijing.

"We urge the individuals concerned to earnestly respect China's sovereignty and territorial integrity and strictly abide by the one-China principle," Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular news briefing in Beijing.

Mao made the remarks in response to a question about why China banned several New Zealand lawmakers from entering the country.

In a statement made earlier on Thursday, the Chinese embassy in New Zealand said that a small number of New Zealand lawmakers had visited the Taiwan region in their capacity as members of Parliament despite China's serious concerns, firm opposition and repeated prior warnings.

The embassy said that China had decided, in accordance with relevant laws, to take measures against the individuals concerned, such as the denial of entry into China, including the Hong Kong and Macao special administrative regions.

"Their action violates the one-China principle and interferes in China's internal affairs," Mao told reporters.

She stressed that the one-China principle, a prevailing international consensus and a basic norm in international relations, is also the political cornerstone of China-New Zealand relations.

On Thursday, Mao also responded to accusations by intelligence agencies from the so-called Five Eyes alliance, which includes the United States and the United Kingdom, that Chinese spies are using online job platforms to recruit people.

Mao said that as the world's largest intelligence cooperation network, the "Five Eyes" has long engaged in massive systemic espionage all over the world.

"It is ironic that such an organization is accusing China of 'spy threat'," she said.

Miraculous survival



Paramedics work to transport Dawa Sherpa, a climbing guide who went missing for several days on Mount Qomolangma, also known as Mount Everest in the West, from a helipad at HAMS Hospital in Kathmandu, Nepal, on Thursday. He was found alive after crawling alone, almost making it to base camp. NAVESH CHITRAKAR / REUTERS

Deadly derailment



Workers respond after a train derailed on Wednesday, near Victor, Iowa, United States. One person was killed and another seriously injured, authorities said. CHARLIE NEIBERGALL / AP

European Commission cries foul over new tariff threat

By **JULIAN SHEA** in London
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The European Union's executive branch, the European Commission, has hit back at what it calls "unjustified" threats of yet more tariffs from the United States, just as it closes in on implementing the much-disputed trade agreement reached last summer between Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and US President Donald Trump.

On June 16, EU lawmakers are expected to vote on the deal, which critics say is unduly weighted toward the US and will impose a 15 percent levy on EU goods, while the EU removes tariffs on US products.

However, less than two weeks before the vote, the EU has been named as one of 60 economies, including the United Kingdom, China, India and Canada, which could face additional new tariffs of up to 12.5 percent, with Washington's justification being that the countries and trade blocs named have failed to curb trade in goods made with forced labor, which is harmful to US commercial interests.

Those facing an additional 10 percent tariff include Canada, Mexico, the EU, the UK and Pakistan. Other countries, including China, India, Japan and Australia, could face 12.5 percent.

'Unacceptable' action

"The failure of our most important trading partners to address the importation of goods made with forced labor is unacceptable," said US Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. "This creates a dynamic where American workers are forced to compete globally on an unlevel playing field."

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning firmly rejected the remarks and said the threat was being used "as a pretext for political manipulation", while the EU said it already has some of the world's tightest restrictions around the trade of forced labor goods.

The US government's investigation, which led to the latest tariff threat, came about after February's US Supreme Court ruling that Trump had overstepped his authority as president by trying to use the International Emergency Economic Powers Act to impose duties on many of the US' leading trading partners.

The European Parliament's chief negotiator on the implementation of the EU-US deal known as the Turnberry agreement, Bernd Lange, said the latest threat was clearly a response to this "defeat before the Supreme Court", which had left the White House "desperately" looking for a new justification "to sustain its tariff policy".

"Accusing the EU of not doing enough against forced labor is absurd," he continued. Lange chairs the European Parliament's trade committee, which on Tuesday voted to accept the Turnberry agreement.

He said that the latest threat was not unexpected, adding that "the impression is increasingly emerging that a tariff measure is sought first, and only then is a suitable legal justification found".

Commission Deputy Chief spokesman Olof Gill said the Commission "will carefully analyze the preliminary findings of the investigation" but that "the EU considers tariffs imposed on these grounds to be unjustified".

Chinese-style clothing grows popular in US stores

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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A new trend of Chinese-style clothing, especially the so-called "Mandarin jacket", traditionally called *tangzhuang*, has become popular in the United States and abroad this spring and summer in clothing stores like Zara.

The aesthetic, dubbed "Neo-Chinese Style" in English, appears under the hashtag *xinzhongshi* on social media and has been declared a major 2026 fashion craze on TikTok and Instagram among Generation Z and other age groups.

"These jackets are clearly Asian-inspired," Desiree Jones, 55, from New York, told China Daily while shopping at a Zara store in Manhattan.

"I gravitate to that. It's fire. It pulls you in. It's the button placement and the structure of the jacket and the collar. That's where you really see that Asian cut. I see no problem with there being more Asian- or Chinese-inspired fashion in US stores because a lot of Americans are going to Asia, so it's nice we're mixing cultures."

The styles that are currently most popular adopt traditional Chinese tailoring such as Mandarin collars, *pankou*, or frog buttons, alongside Western tailoring. Horse-face skirts, known as *mamianqun*, are available for sale on Amazon.

Some of the most sought-after Tang-style jackets are being sold by Zara, a fast-fashion Spanish retailer with stores in at least 96 countries.

One sleek, black, stylish, Zara Mandarin jacket costs $149. Another white one was part of a prominent window display in New York.

Monica, 30, from Ecuador, was browsing through the racks of a Zara in Brooklyn midweek when one of the black Mandarin-style jackets caught her eye.

"I love this style," she said while trying it on. "I think of pretty Chinese models when I see this jacket. I want to look like that. I like the buttons, color, everything really. It's got a real Chinese vibe to it. It's very cool. I'll style it with light-colored jeans."

Summer trend

Lace, short-sleeved tops or shirts with a high collar and frog buttons are tipped to be a big trend this summer. So too are *qipao*.

Another viral, sporty offering is the Adidas Chinese New Year jacket, available in the US from May 1, which costs $150.

Before the jacket went viral worldwide on social media, it was exclusive to China, and then it was sold in Europe.

But while the latest look is a must-have among shoppers of all races, its sudden popularity has divided Chinese social media users.

Some like it, while others see it as cultural appropriation.

Vanessa Li, a 26-year-old Chinese Australian content creator, made a video in January with the opening words "my culture is not a trend".

Li's video has been liked over 71,100 times as of Monday.

She dislikes that *tangzhuang* is now predominantly known in the West as a Mandarin jacket.

She sees countless fashion brands selling the style but not acknowledging the culture it's from.

Li says she believes there is a "fine line between cultural appropriation and cultural appreciation".

While appreciation is welcome, she does not want to see brands profiting from other cultures without crediting their origins, or real names. "That's not appreciation, that's appropriation," she says in her video.

Instead, she encourages people not to view the latest fashion as just a trend but as part of thousands of years of Chinese history, craftsmanship and cultural meaning.

She also urges shoppers to support Chinese fashion designers.

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WORLD

New clashes strain shaky US-Iran truce

Kuwait under attack amid conflicting signals from Washington and Tehran

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

Fresh strikes and diplomatic friction have continued to strain a fragile truce between the United States and Iran, with Tehran confirming no tangible headway has been made in war-ending talks amid new hostilities.

In contrast to the downbeat Iranian remarks, US President Donald Trump voiced optimism again, telling reporters that "it could happen ... over the weekend".

"The talks are going very well actually," he said of the latest bid to end the war, which began on Feb 28.

However, US lawmakers dealt a political blow to the Republican leader on Wednesday when the House of Representatives passed a resolution directing withdrawal from the war.

The resolution, adopted by a vote of 215 to 208, with four Republican lawmakers siding with Democrats, remains largely symbolic, as Trump retains veto power should the measure clear the Senate.

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said lines of communication with the US were still open, but warned that any Israeli attack on Lebanon would trigger a "full-scale resumption" of the conflict.

"Any attack on Beirut will have grave consequences and will lead to a full-scale resumption of the war," he told Lebanon's Al Mayadeen TV on Wednesday, while highlighting the combat readiness of the armed forces.

Following a drone attack on Kuwait's international airport, authorities suspended air traffic and diverted arriving planes to other destinations, but later resumed Kuwait Airways flights. The airport, which only fully resumed services on Monday, has been repeatedly targeted throughout the conflict.

Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps denied orchestrating the attack, saying it was "an error in the American Patriot systems, which landed on the terminal after failing to intercept Iranian missiles".

The IRGC also accused US troops of provoking escalation by targeting an Iranian tanker and Qeshm Island. The US military rejected the claims, stating that Iranian drones had deliberately targeted Kuwait's airport.

Iran's Supreme Leader Mojtaba Khamenei said in a message on Thursday that Iran has delivered a "decisive blow" to the US and Israel, warning that Tehran's adversaries are now attempting to foment internal divisions after suffering battlefield defeats.

The fresh escalation was one of the sternest tests yet of the April 8 truce that paused more than a month of war sparked by the US-Israeli bombing of Iran, and has largely held despite sporadic exchanges of fire.

Trump played down the renewed hostilities, saying that "in that part of the world, a ceasefire is when you're shooting in a more moderate manner".

Hassan Ahmadian, a professor at the University of Tehran, doubted whether a shaky deal could permanently end Israeli and US military aggression.

"That's why they are resorting to power to make their own guarantees," Ahmadian told Al Jazeera, adding that the Iranian leadership is attempting to show that it is both ready for diplomacy and further military confrontation if necessary.

"If we're attacked, we'll hurt you back — that's the main Iranian message," he said.

Situation in Lebanon

Meanwhile, the path toward a lasting ceasefire between Israel and Lebanese militant group Hezbollah remained unclear as hostilities continued, despite Israel and Lebanon having reached a ceasefire after two days of direct talks.

The two countries agreed to create "pilot zones" in which Lebanese armed forces "will take exclusive control of the territory", barring all nonstate armed actors, a joint statement said. Further talks were planned for the week of June 22 to reach a "comprehensive" agreement.

Notably, Trump acknowledged having called Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu "crazy" during a reportedly expletive-filled call, saying he was "a little bit perturbed" that Israel's fighting with Hezbollah was hampering talks with Iran.

Contact the writers at cuihaipei@chinadaily.com.cn



Kuwait's Prime Minister Sheikh Ahmad al-Abdullah al-Sabah (second from right) inspects the damaged airport in Kuwait City on Wednesday. KUWAIT NEWS AGENCY VIA AFP

Pedal power



Cyclists hit the streets of Jakarta, Indonesia, on Wednesday to mark World Bicycle Day. The annual United Nations event, observed on June 3, aims to promote the health, social and environmental benefits of cycling. VERI SANOVRI VIA XINHUA

Trade remains key despite rising geopolitical tensions, expert says

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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International trade remains one of the most effective ways to create prosperity, strengthen economic ties and reduce conflict between nations, says a maritime and trade analyst, while warning that rising protectionism and geopolitical tensions are reshaping the global trading system.

Speaking at the centennial celebration of World Trade Week in Los Angeles last week, Peter Tirschwell, vice-president for maritime and trade at S&P Global Market Intelligence, emphasized the enduring value of international commerce at a time when tariffs, geopolitical rivalry and supply chain disruptions are increasingly influencing trade flows.

"We believe firmly in the value of trade to expand markets, create opportunities, create interdependencies and thus bring countries and societies together," he said.

"If they trade together, then they are less likely to go to war with each other."

Tirschwell, who previously served as editor-in-chief of the Journal of Commerce, said the publication has maintained a pro-trade perspective since its founding in 1827, reflecting the view that trade promotes economic growth, efficiency and international cooperation.

"The expansion of global commerce has helped lower costs, increase consumer choice and support job creation around the world," he said, highlighting the development of the European Union after World War II as one example of how economic integration can help foster stability and cooperation among nations.

The ports of Los Angeles and Long Beach provide another example of trade's economic benefits, he said. Together, the two ports form the largest container gateway in the Western Hemisphere and support hundreds of thousands of jobs throughout Southern California and beyond.

"The message being that trade creates jobs, it creates growth, it creates opportunity, it creates prosperity," Tirschwell said. "But sadly, that is not the message that we are hearing out of Washington, DC, right now."

His remarks came amid continued debate over US tariff policies, including the sweeping "Liberation Day" tariffs announced in April last year.

The measures, which imposed additional duties on imports from numerous trading partners, have contributed to uncertainty for businesses and supply chains while prompting legal challenges and broader discussions about the future direction of US trade policy.

Significant departure

Tirschwell said the current environment represents a significant departure from the decades following the establishment of the World Trade Organization in 1995, when globalization and trade liberalization enjoyed broad international support.

"I grew up in an era that was favorable to trade," he said. "There used to be a global consensus regarding the value of trade."

Today, however, governments are playing a much larger role in shaping trade flows, often using tariffs and industrial policies to pursue strategic and geopolitical objectives.

He cited a recent study by McKinsey & Company projecting that as much as one-third of global trade could shift to new trade corridors over the next decade.

Early signs of that trend may already be emerging. Tirschwell said global container volumes grew about 5 percent year-on-year for the first quarter, but United States containerized imports dropped by 5 percent. "Trade is diversified, and it could start to bypass the US on a long-term basis," he said.

He also pointed to growing pressures on global shipping networks. Traffic through the Suez Canal remains below historical levels because of security concerns in the Middle East, while tensions surrounding the Strait of Hormuz continue to create uncertainty for global logistics operators.

"Freedom of navigation is now under threat in ways that it has not been for decades," he said.

As a result, businesses are adapting to a "permanent state of disruption", requiring new approaches to supply chain management and investment planning, he said.

Despite the challenges, Tirschwell remained optimistic about the long-term outlook for international commerce.

Many regions, particularly Africa, are expected to grow faster than the US in the coming decades and are attracting increasing attention from shipping lines, freight forwarders and logistics providers, he said.

While acknowledging that global trade is entering a more complex era, Tirschwell said the continued investment by ports, airports and logistics operators demonstrates enduring confidence in international commerce and economic connectivity.

Briefly

BRAZIL

Lula refuses to bow to tariff offensive

Brazil will stand firm and not bow to pressure from the latest US trade offensive, President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Wednesday. At a cabinet meeting, Lula focused on the proposed 25 percent tariff on Brazilian goods announced by the Office of the United States Trade Representative two days ago. "We have decided that this country will no longer adopt a 'stray dog' policy toward the great powers," Lula said. "No one needs to be afraid of anything; we will not bow our heads. We are a democratic and sovereign country. We will not give in." Brazil will maintain its independent position and seek alternative partnerships, he said. "If (US President Donald Trump) doesn't want to buy, we'll sell to whoever does."

SPAIN

Record heat-related deaths seen in May

The deaths of 101 people in Spain in May were heat-related, the highest number for the month since such records began in 2015, the Health Ministry said on Wednesday. "This figure is 3.6 times higher than the average number of heat-related deaths recorded in May over the past decade," the ministry said, stressing "the significant health impact of heat episodes, even before the start of summer". Temperature records for the month were broken in several Spanish cities in late May, particularly in the north, according to the national meteorological agency Aemet, which said the figures marked "extraordinarily high temperatures for a month of May".

XINHUA—AGENCIES

South Africa looks to bioethanol for energy security

By **NDUMISO MLILO**
in Johannesburg
For China Daily

South Africa is ready to produce bioethanol from sorghum to reduce reliance on imported fossil fuels and cushion geopolitical risks, officials and business leaders say.

Josie Rowe-Setz, managing director of Blueprint Holdings, a company focused on the southern African market, said there is significant economic value in building a domestic bioethanol industry using locally grown sorghum and sugarcane.

Countries including Brazil, India, Kenya, the United States and Zimbabwe have established bioethanol industries, demonstrating the model's viability, she said. Sorghum is drought-tolerant, heat-resistant and well-suited to South Africa's agricultural conditions, she added.

"We have found that production of bioethanol is a viable industry. It will give us self-reliance, national energy sovereignty and fuel security," she said.

South Africa has the natural resources, market demand and regulatory framework needed to support bioethanol production, Rowe-Setz said. Developing the domestic bioethanol industry could also create jobs across the agricultural and manufacturing sectors, she said.

In countries where bioethanol industries succeeded, early investment was supported through targeted public finance mechanisms, and feedstock supply was strengthened through contract farming and guaranteed offtake arrangements, she added.

Landeni Kabini, acting director-general of South Africa's Department of Mineral and Petroleum Resources, said the government has come up with legislation aimed at removing obstacles in bioethanol production.

Authorities are prepared to work with industry players and other stakeholders to start the production of fuel derived from sorghum and sugarcane, she said.

"There was regulatory uncertainty, and we gazetted the regulations on what the price of biofuel can be, so that the industry can take off," she said. "As a government, we support the biofuels industry."

Irshaad Kathrada, CEO of the Localisation Support Fund, said South Africa has undergone a major shift from domestic fuel refining to imported finished fuels following the closure of its two largest coastal refineries between 2022 and 2023.

As a result, he said, the country now imports nearly three-fourths of its fuel from geopolitically exposed sources, leaving consumers vulnerable to global supply chain disruptions and price shocks.

"We have a credible near-term alternative, one grounded in South African soil, South African farmers and commercially proven technology," he said. "The economics are closer to viable than most people realize, the regulatory framework is finally in place, and the localization dividend is substantial."

The writer is a freelance journalist for China Daily.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Latest tariff proposal reveals US is caught in dilemma of its own making

The United States administration's latest tariff offensive targeting 60 economies including China was greeted around the world with something unusual: a collective shrug.

That is because Washington has been signaling for months that it needs a legal substitute for the sweeping tariffs struck down by the US Supreme Court earlier this year.

The White House's temporary global tariffs — imposed under Section 301 investigations after its earlier tariffs were ruled unlawful — are due to expire next month. Allowing a gap in tariff collection would be politically costly at a time when the US' fiscal deficit remains elevated and the midterm elections loom on the horizon.

The US administration therefore has a strong incentive to keep the tariff machine running. Tariff revenues, which exceeded $31 billion per month at their peak last autumn, have already declined substantially.

The result is a curious blend of continuity and retreat.

Compared with the tariff threats that dominated headlines last year, the new rates are lower. Most major economies face either a 10 percent or 12.5 percent surcharge rather than the much steeper penalties previously contemplated. The US administration has also expanded exemptions for a wide range of agricultural commodities, industrial inputs and products that the US either cannot produce domestically or cannot produce in sufficient quantities.

Economic gravity has a habit of asserting itself, sooner or later. For all the rhetoric about reindustrialization, economic reality has imposed constraints. Inflation remains stubbornly uncomfortable for US households. Consumer prices continue to weigh on public sentiment. Manufacturers and farmers have repeatedly warned that tariffs on imported inputs raise production costs. The situation has been further complicated by renewed instability in the Middle East.

The US administration thus finds itself attempting a delicate balancing act. On the one hand, it wants to preserve the tariff barriers that "protect" select domestic industries. On the other hand, it cannot ignore the political consequences of higher prices. Even the Federal Reserve's recent warning to continue shrinking its balance sheet underscores lingering inflationary concerns.

Against this backdrop, the groundless allegations of "forced labor" made by the Office of the US Trade Representative are merely a "politically correct" pretext for the proposed tariffs to go to congressional debate next month.

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning reiterated that China opposes all forms of unilateral tariff measures. No one benefits from tariffs or trade wars, and economic disputes should be resolved through dialogue and consultation based on equality, respect and mutual benefit.

She also rightfully rejected allegations of "forced labor" in China and criticized attempts to use the issue as a pretext for political manipulation.

The European Union, Canada and many other trading partners of the US have voiced opposition and concerns regarding both the substance and the justification of the tariff surge. Yet they have been measured rather than alarmed in their responses. That reflects a growing recognition that Washington itself is constrained.

Protracted trade negotiations have taught some US trading partners an important lesson: tariff threats are often as much about domestic politics as international economics. The latest proposals reveal a US administration struggling to reconcile strategic ambitions with economic realities.

The deeper problem for Washington is that tariffs have gradually ceased to function as conventional economic instruments based on market law. They have become political instruments that are difficult to calibrate. Raise them too aggressively and domestic inflation, legal challenges and business opposition intensify. Apply them selectively and their coercive power diminishes. Exemptions proliferate, contradictions multiply and credibility erodes.

Durable economic relationships cannot be built on coercion. Whether the issue is market access, supply chains or labor standards, progress ultimately depends not on tariff walls but on fair competition, candid negotiation and mutually beneficial cooperation.

'De-risking' is EU's pretext for protectionism

The European Union on Wednesday unveiled its "technological sovereignty" package, which includes the Cloud and Artificial Intelligence Development Act and Chips Act 2.0. The initiative seeks to bolster Europe's technological independence by reducing reliance on foreign technology.

The chips act favors "European-made" chips and seeks to create a closed digital ecosystem, which could fragment global supply chains. The Computer and Communications Industry Association's Senior Vice-President and Head of Office Daniel Friedlaender called the cloud and AI development act "a direct recipe for fragmented discrimination across Europe in 27 different ways".

The new law would be "effectively giving national capitals carte blanche to shut out trusted global vendors from every major technology-producing nation outside the union", he warned.

The EU's focus on "technological sovereignty" reflects a trend of some EU nations moving away from free, open and fair trade toward protectionism. It will unavoidably affect relevant Chinese entities.

As Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning noted in response to questions regarding the EU's latest move in a news conference in Beijing on Wednesday, the essence of China-EU economic and trade relations is mutual benefit and win-win cooperation.

She added that economic and trade issues should be properly resolved through dialogue and communication. Mao expressed the hope that the EU will uphold the fundamental principles of a market economy, including free trade, fair competition and open cooperation, refrain from adopting protectionist measures and remain committed to settling differences through dialogue and consultation.

The EU has in recent years introduced a series of measures as part of its "de-risking" strategy targeting China. Rejecting high-quality products and services from Chinese companies will not only result in financial losses for European countries, but also impede their own technological progress and economic growth.

Reportedly, the EU will leverage the G7 and EU summer summits to introduce new trade restriction instruments targeting China this month.

EU policymakers should understand that protectionism is not a solution to the problems that the EU is now facing, and open cooperation benefits both sides. This is because the economic and trade relations between China and the EU are deeply integrated and complementary. Disrupting these links would harm the interests of enterprises and consumers from both sides.

The latest survey report from the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China shows that a majority of the EU companies surveyed have chosen to maintain or expand their operations in China, while nearly one-third plan to further deepen their localization strategies there. This suggests that the "de-risking" narrative pushed by some EU politicians has not, in practice, become the prevailing choice among EU businesses.

At its core, China-EU economic and trade cooperation is the natural outcome of the interplay between comparative advantages and market competition. Complementary strengths do not constitute a risk, nor does the convergence of interests pose a threat, as Mao Ning said on Thursday.

Over the past five decades, the annual trade volume between China and Europe has surged more than 300-fold, while two-way mutual investment has approached $260 billion — figures that vividly demonstrate the strong momentum and vast potential of China-EU economic cooperation.

Trade protectionism runs counter to economic laws and is a self-defeating practice that harms all parties involved.

EU policymakers should view the bloc's economic and trade relations with China in an objective and rational light, and work alongside the Chinese side to narrow the list of outstanding issues, expand the scope of cooperation, and achieve win-win outcomes.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Classics transmission of meaning across generations

Nearly 100 Chinese scholars will attend the second World Conference of Classics in Athens on Tuesday and Wednesday. Their presence is symptomatic of a broader intellectual movement unfolding in contemporary China: the rediscovery of the classics not as relics of distant antiquity, but as part of a living tradition that is not just of relevance to contemporary China but to the world as a whole.

Increasingly, Chinese scholars are arguing that the classical thought that helped to shape the modern world should not be confined to the Greco-Roman canon alone. Chinese, Mesopotamian, Indian and other civilizations have all contributed to the long civilizational effort to confront enduring questions about human existence and society.

For much of the modern era, Western science, military technology, political institutions, and industrial systems have been the primary sources of practical knowledge; to "learn from the West" was seen as modernization. Today, however, for many Chinese classicists, engagement with Western thought is part of the effort to understand how other societies have answered the question of how to live.

In fact, classical writings are valued precisely because they ask questions that modern societies, despite their immense technological sophistication, still struggle to answer: What is the good life? What is the relationship between law and morality, individual desire and civic responsibility, personal fulfillment and collective harmony?

One reason these questions have regained urgency is the realization among intellectuals that technological progress and material development alone have not produced moral clarity or civilizational confidence. In fact, some of the greatest catastrophes of modern history emerged within highly advanced societies.

While earlier generations encountered Western civilization through the pressures of colonialism and modernization, Chinese scholars today engage with Greek and wider classical traditions grounded in China's own intellectual inheritance.

The value of comparative classical studies lies not in erasing differences, but in illuminating them. Classical Greek tragedies dramatized conflict, individual heroic endeavors and the instability of political life. Confucian thought emphasized harmony, relational ethics and moral cultivation through ritual. Comparative perspectives can open new ways of approaching both Greek antiquity and Chinese classical thought.

There is also growing recognition that civilizations understand themselves more clearly through encountering others. Odysseus, the hero of Homer's epic poem *The Odyssey*, leaves Ithaca and returns transformed through his encounters with foreign worlds. Confucius spent 14 years traveling among the competing states of his age in search of moral order and wise governance. Both traditions suggest that stepping beyond one's own world provides the distance necessary to reflect upon it more deeply.

In an increasingly fragmented global landscape marked by geopolitical rivalry, technological disruption, and ideological polarization, the classics offer something increasingly rare: long traditions of reflection on human nature, political order, moral responsibility, and the conditions of civilized life itself. They remind us that civilizations are not sustained by power or wealth alone, but by their capacity to preserve, reinterpret and transmit meaning across generations.

The gathering in Athens thus represents an emerging attempt to recover a genuinely global humanism — one grounded not in cultural uniformity, but in serious dialogue among the foundational civilizations of humanity. At a time when the world often appears divided by distrust and competing narratives, that aspiration may itself be among the most important lessons the classics still have to offer.

— ZHAO XU, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

New measures to advance dual-carbon goals

Editor's note: *Friday is the 55th World Environment Day. In April, China issued new measures to evaluate and assess the performance of local governments in advancing carbon peaking and carbon neutrality. The 21st Century Business Herald spoke to Tian Zhiyu, a researcher at the Energy Research Institute of the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, about how the measures will help China's green transformation progress. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China has set dual carbon goals of peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060. The new measures are designed to guide governments at all levels in adopting a sound approach to performance assessment, while ensuring accountability for meeting carbon reduction targets.

The measures seek to ensure effective alignment of goals and responsibilities among the central and local governments, across different regions and among various government departments.

According to the measures, a carbon peaking action plan will be formulated during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period to achieve national targets by 2030, including reducing carbon emissions intensity by more than 65 percent from 2005 levels, increasing the share of non-fossil energy consumption to 25 percent and peaking both coal and oil consumption.

The measures' primary purpose is to promote higher-quality work in advancing the country's carbon peaking and carbon neutrality agenda.

For regions making solid progress, the focus will be on identifying successful practices and sharing valuable experiences. For those lagging behind, the priority will be to take timely corrective actions and address existing problems.

China's provinces differ significantly in terms of resource endowments, industrial structures and stages of development. Therefore, the measures place emphasis on ensuring fairness in the assessment criteria.

Local governments are required to draft their own carbon peaking action plans during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, setting five-year and annual targets as well as policy measures that align with national objectives.

Also, during the evaluation and assessment process, factors such as changes in domestic and international conditions, as well as natural and climatic circumstances, are taken into account. The assessment criteria can be adjusted and refined dynamically when necessary, maintaining a degree of policy flexibility.

For provinces that rely heavily on carbon-intensive industries and face significant transition pressures, balancing emissions reductions with economic growth remains a key challenge. A three-pronged approach can be useful here.

First, it is essential to strengthen the commitment to comprehensive green transformation. Achieving the carbon peaking and neutrality goals is not about restricting development. Rather, it is aligned with and supportive of high-quality development, delivering benefits in both the near and long term.

Second, greater emphasis should be placed on improving "carbon productivity". Reducing carbon intensity should serve as a key benchmark when planning new projects and upgrading existing ones, ensuring that every unit of carbon emissions generates the greatest possible economic value.

Third, stronger awareness of process management is needed. Achieving carbon peaking and neutrality goals cannot be left until the last minute or rely on external support. Efforts must begin now, starting with a clear understanding of current emissions profiles, identifying untapped potential for reductions and building broad-based momentum for low-carbon transformation across all sectors and industries.

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VIEWS

Kulsum Begum

Visit marks a new stage in China-Laos ties

When General Secretary of the Lao People's Revolutionary Party Central Committee and Lao President Thongloun Sisoulith arrived in Hangzhou on the first day of his state visit to China, one brief moment captured wide attention.

At DEEP Robotics, a leading robotics company, a robot dog approached him with a gift. Thongloun smiled, accepted the toy and thanked the machine in Chinese.

Later, he operated another robot dog and watched it roll over on command. On the surface, it was a light-hearted moment. In reality, it revealed something much deeper about where China-Laos relations are heading.

Twenty years ago, a Lao leader visiting China would likely have focused on roads, bridges, hydropower stations, and agricultural cooperation. Today, the first stop is Hangzhou, which is home to robotics firms, AI platforms, digital governance systems, and e-commerce giants. That shift reflects a structural transformation in how both countries view development.

Global Lens

For more than six decades since diplomatic relations were established in 1961, China and Laos have built their partnership on political trust, mutual respect, and a shared identity often described as "comrades and brothers". That foundation remains strong, but it doesn't tell the full story.

The significance of President Thongloun's visit lies elsewhere. China-Laos relations are steadily evolving into a comprehensive development partnership shaped by economic necessity, structural transformation, and long-term modernization goals. In many ways, Laos is emerging as a real-world laboratory for a new model of South-South cooperation in the 21st century, where development outcomes matter more than ideological framing.

The country's challenges are deeply interconnected. Laos continues to face poverty, inflation, currency depreciation, climate vulnerability, and a shortage of skilled labor, all of which reinforce each other and constrain growth. At the same time, it is preparing to graduate from the United Nations' least developed country category, a transition that requires structural economic upgrading rather than incremental reform.

Against this backdrop, Laos' 10th Five-Year National Socio-Economic Development Plan (2026-30) and the Vision 2030 framework set ambitious targets: raising GDP per capita to around $3,104, reducing poverty to single-digit levels, lifting more than 100,000 families out of poverty, expanding forest coverage, and upgrading transport corridors.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) is highly complementary to Laos' Vision 2030 strategy. China's emphasis on green development, technological innovation, digital transformation, advanced manufacturing, anti-relapse mechanisms, and regional connectivity aligns closely with Laos' goals of industrial upgrading, poverty reduction, environmental protection, and sustainable growth. When the Lao leader meets senior Chinese leaders in Beijing during his visit, both sides may align their development strategies to chart the future course of bilateral ties.

What makes China particularly significant is the depth of its development experience. China offers Laos something more strategic than capital: a tested pathway of large-scale poverty reduction, industrialization, and infrastructure-led transformation.

President Thongloun's visit coincides with the recent launch of the Global Partnership for Poverty Alleviation and Development (GPPAD), jointly initiated by China and 53 other countries, along with nine international organizations.

The initiative offers countries like Laos a platform to address poverty and development challenges through cooperation, knowledge-sharing, and practical support.

The China-Laos Railway remains the most visible symbol of this transformation. Since its opening in December 2021, it has carried more than 73 million passengers and transported over 84 million tons of cargo, including around 19 million tons of cross-border freight. More than 840,000 international travelers from over 120 countries and regions have used the route. But its real impact goes beyond statistics.

For decades, Laos was defined as a landlocked country. Today, it is increasingly described as "land-linked". Agricultural products from Laos now reach Chinese markets within days.

Tourism corridors linking Kunming in Yunnan province to Luang Prabang and Vientiane have expanded rapidly. Warehousing, logistics, hospitality, and small businesses have grown along the railway belt.

Consumption in railway-linked zones has risen by more than 35 percent. The railway did not simply connect cities but it changed expectations about what Laos can become.

Infrastructure, in this sense, is not just physical capital. It is psychological capital. It reshapes how farmers, students, and entrepreneurs think about opportunity. A farmer with access to a larger market behaves differently.

A student with cross-border mobility thinks differently. Development begins when possibility becomes visible. President Thongloun's decision to begin his visit in Hangzhou reflects this shift. The focus is no longer only on what China can build in Laos, but on what Laos can learn and eventually build for itself. Robotics, AI, digital governance, and smart logistics are now part of Laos' development imagination.

This is reflected in emerging cooperation platforms such as the China-Laos AI Innovation Cooperation Center, the 500-kilovolt power interconnection project, digital infrastructure development, telecommunication satellite applications, and vocational training programs.

The relationship is gradually moving from physical connectivity toward capability building. Clean energy cooperation is another emerging pillar. With hydropower resources and expanding cross-border grids, Laos is positioning itself as a potential renewable energy hub for Southeast Asia.

At the same time, economic cooperation is becoming more balanced.

China remains Laos' largest investor, with cumulative investment exceeding $18 billion, and bilateral trade reaching $9.82 billion in 2025.

But the next phase will depend on Lao products entering the Chinese market more systematically, supported by improved logistics and digital trade platforms.

Seen in a broader regional context, the China-Laos Railway is becoming part of an emerging Pan-Asian connectivity system linking China with Thailand, Malaysia, and potentially Singapore. Combined with the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, Lancang-Mekong cooperation, and ASEAN-China frameworks, Laos is evolving from a peripheral geography into a strategic corridor economy.

Ultimately, President Thongloun's visit reflects a deeper transition in China-Laos relations. The first phase was built on political trust. The second was built on infrastructure connectivity.

The third, now unfolding, is built on modernization, technology, and shared development capacity. That is why this visit is not just a diplomatic milestone, but the opening of a new stage in China-Laos relations.

Southeast Asia's future depends not on bloc politics but on connectivity, trade, industrialization, and shared prosperity.

President Thongloun's visit signals the emergence of a new development paradigm in which neighboring countries build resilience through infrastructure, innovation, and people-centered growth rather than geopolitical rivalry.

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



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Ban on smoking in public places an uphill task

I was getting a haircut at a barbershop in my Shanghai neighborhood on Monday when another customer, having just finished his grooming session, sat down on a nearby couch and lit a cigarette about four meters away from me.

It was an immediate nuisance, coming just one day after World No Tobacco Day.

In recent weeks, I have visited the Shanghai No. 10 People's Hospital at least five times to see a relative, and while there, I saw some smokers openly lighting up their cigarettes at the stairways.

And this is Shanghai, a city widely regarded as having some of the strictest anti-smoking regulations in the country.

Under Shanghai rules, smoking is prohibited not only in most indoor public spaces, but also at outdoor bus stops and major tourist attractions such as the Bund, Yuyuan Garden, Xintiandi and Nanjing Road Pedestrian Mall.

The situation in most other Chinese cities is even worse. Southwest China's Yunnan province, the largest tobacco-producing region in the country, is one such place.

During a two-month driving tour across the province late last year, I found that smoking in public places was a far bigger problem.

So far, China's National People's Congress has not enacted a national law that bans smoking in public places. Most rules and regulations relating to smoking restrictions are made by local governments.

The WHO also warns that second-hand smoke exposure contributes to serious health problems, and is estimated to cause over 1.6 million deaths worldwide every year.

The health hazards of smoking are widely known. The World Health Organization states that tobacco use is a major risk factor for cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, over 20 different types of cancer, and many other debilitating health conditions.

Every year, more than 7 million people die from tobacco use across the world. That includes some 1 million deaths in China out of about 300 million smokers, by far the largest number in the world.

The WHO also warns that second-hand smoke exposure contributes to serious health problems, and is estimated to cause over 1.6 million deaths worldwide every year.

In China, cigarette packages carry only text-based warnings of health hazards, but graphic warnings, which are mandatory in many other countries, are still not required.

According to the WHO, health warnings on tobacco packages, especially those that combine text and images, are among the most cost-effective and powerful tools for increasing public awareness of the dangers of tobacco use and reducing tobacco consumption.

The graphic designs used on cigarette packages in some countries are indeed grotesque, featuring images such as blackened and cancerous lungs, rotten teeth, and patients in hospital beds on ventilators.

There is strong public sentiment against smoking in Shanghai. According to the 2025 Shanghai Public Place Tobacco Control white paper released in March this year by the Shanghai Patriotic Health Campaign Committee, 98.2 percent of Shanghai residents support a full ban on indoor smoking.

China Daily reported on Wednesday that a coalition of 16 public health, tobacco control, and environmental protection groups has called for a nationwide smoking ban on all conventional trains and railway platforms, arguing that partial restrictions are no longer sufficient to protect passengers from second-hand smoke.

China has achieved phenomenal progress in its social and economic transformation over the past several decades. Yet, the battle to eliminate smoking in public places and reduce the number of smokers in the country still needs more efforts.

Huang Huan and An Bowen

When ecology becomes an economic engine

In the spring of 2026, several pods of wild finless porpoises — the "water pandas" known for their extreme sensitivity to water quality — were spotted swimming and playing in the Yangtze River near Yibin in Sichuan province.

Once rare visitors, these creatures have now become permanent residents of the Yangtze, serving as a living bio-indicator of the river's recovery.

This is a significant transformation from a decade ago, when the confluence near Yibin was a toxic mix of chemical effluents, illegal dredging, and silt-heavy waters.

Back then, fishermen grew poorer even as they overtaxed the river, and the city itself was trapped in the grim choice of "pollution for growth".

For years, the stubborn narrative has been that environmental fix-ups are a losing game. Conventional wisdom held that conservation was a one-way street of government spending and shuttered factories, and an enemy of economic progress.

But Yibin, the first major city along the Yangtze and a vital ecological gatekeeper, has spent the last decade dismantling that myth. When we stop viewing conservation as a "burden" to be carried, it becomes a region's most potent competitive edge and turns environmental health into economic capital.

As an industrial powerhouse on the upper Yangtze, Yibin's economy used to be defined by "the black and the white" — coal, chemicals, and heavy-duty liquor production. The riverbanks were crowded with energy-intensive plants, illegal piers, and noisy restaurant barges.

With industrial waste and raw sewage flowing straight into the current, the Yangtze's biodiversity hit rock bottom; at one point, the main stream was classified as "fishless". This was the old playbook of "pollute now, pay later" — a strategy that led to GDP spikes but left the city in an unsustainable deadlock.

When the Yangtze River Protection Law came into effect in 2020, Yibin led the charge with a challenging "inward-looking" cleanup. Illegal docks were dismantled, polluting plants were relocated to managed industrial parks, and a 10-year fishing ban was imposed.

It was a tough time, as industrial output dipped and thousands of fishermen worried about their livelihoods. These "growing pains" only fueled the skeptics who argued that green policies were merely a financial drain.

However, that view was shortsighted. True conservation lays the foundation for a more resilient economy.

Yibin didn't just protect the river for the sake of protection. It synchronized environmental repair with industrial evolution, ensuring that every yuan spent on the river eventually paid dividends to the city.

Yibin's success was rooted in its strategy of "value reconstruction". Instead of pitting the economy against the environment, the city started treating its natural assets as economic engines. The goal was to move past "handout-style" protection toward a self-sustaining model where the environment actually drives growth.

First, the city transformed its ecology into its most valuable asset. By cleaning the water and restoring the shorelines, Yibin achieved 100 percent "excellent" status for its monitored river sections in 2025. This paved the way for the successful natural breeding of the endangered Yangtze sturgeon, signaling a river truly coming back to life.

Second, the industrial engine went green. Yibin replaced its old, polluting industries with what it calls "the blue and the green" — digital tech and clean energy. By positioning itself as "China's power battery capital", it attracted a massive cluster of cutting-edge firms.

At the same time, the city's scenic beauty — from the bamboo forests to the restored wetlands — fueled the growth of the high-end eco-tourism and wellness industry that simply couldn't exist in a polluted city.

Most importantly, the locals became the biggest winners. When the fishing nets were pulled in for the last time, Yibin didn't abandon its fishermen. The city provided retraining, turning former river-harvesters into river-protectors.

Today, those same men and women work as ecological rangers, run riverside guesthouses, or thrive in green agriculture by growing organic tea and bamboo. Many are now earning significantly more than they ever did from a depleted fish stock.

Yibin today is a city transformed — green, vibrant, and alive. The sight of porpoises in the waves and flourishing industries on the riverbank isn't a result of giving up on growth; it's the result of finding the sweet spot where development and nature sustain each other.

Across China, more cities are waking up to this reality. Yibin's journey shows that environmental protection isn't a "losing trade" — it's the smartest investment a city can make.

It is not an obstacle to growth but a foundation for long-term prosperity. When we stop looking at the next quarter and start looking at the next generation, we find that every effort to protect the Earth has its own return.

This is the path to a modern China where the beauty of the landscape and the wealth of the people are one and the same.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

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

YU HONGYUAN AND HUA GECHUNYUE

Plugged in

China's stabilizing role in global energy governance has become increasingly prominent

Global energy issues are emerging at the center of the global political economy. On the surface, the current crisis concerns maritime routes, oil and gas transportation and regional security. At a deeper level, however, it reflects the profound pressure now bearing on the global energy governance order: Market mechanisms are being squeezed by the logic of security; open flows are being constrained by bloc confrontation; and multilateral coordination is being weakened by unilateral pressure.



Yu Hongyuan



Hua Gechunyue

Energy security should provide support for development. If it is excessively instrumentalized, it erodes the open environment on which development depends. At a deeper level, the weaponization of energy is becoming a significant manifestation of the imbalance in global governance. Today, route control, financial settlement, sanctions lists, insurance premiums, technological barriers and "rules-based" exclusion are increasingly layered upon one another. Energy is being used more and more as a tool of strategic pressure. The vulnerability of energy systems is an objective reality, but the weaponization of energy is a political choice. It not only raises the institutional costs that countries face in accessing energy, but also places developing countries under greater energy security pressure amid the green transition.

The old foundations of global energy governance are declining. As great power competition intensifies, the generalized use of sanctions, the exclusionary turn in rule-making and the securitization of trade instruments continue to spread. Governance mechanisms that were originally designed to reduce uncertainty are becoming less able to withstand the impact of political conflict. As a result, global energy governance has entered a more turbulent period of adjustment.

Yet crisis not only signifies disorder, but also points to the possibility of reconstruction. Future energy governance should shift toward a new logic that places greater emphasis on systemic resilience, capacity building, green transition and multilateral coordination.

What the world needs is not to turn energy into a bargaining chip of geopolitical competition, but to establish a more stable connection between energy security and climate governance. Nor does it need the creation of more closed and exclusive circles. Rather, it needs transition pathways that countries at different stages of development can participate in, afford and sustain.

China can serve as an anchor of stability in global energy governance because it offers a governance vision distinct from zero-sum competition and bloc confrontation. Faced with a complex situation in which energy security, green transition and the right to development are deeply intertwined, China does not reduce energy to a power struggle of control and counter-control. Instead, it upholds common security, green development, mutually beneficial cooperation and harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

China advocates the building of a community with a shared future for humanity and works to translate the four global initiatives it proposed into practical outcomes. It emphasizes the legitimate rights and interests of developing countries in the energy transition and opposes turning the green transition into a new form of barrier politics. This vision is not an abstract slogan, but an important prerequisite for reopening space for cooperation in a turbulent world.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

The solid foundation of China's stabilizing role also comes from its commitment to steadily advancing its energy transition and green industrial development. By the end of 2025, China's installed renewable energy capacity had reached 2.34 billion kilowatts, accounting for about 60 percent of the country's total installed power generation capacity. The combined installed capacity of wind and solar power had reached 1.84 billion kw, surpassing that of thermal power.

More importantly, China's green transition is not a breakthrough in a single area, but a coordinated advance across wind power, photovoltaics, energy storage, power grids, electric vehicles and green manufacturing. With its super-large market, complete industrial system and sustained capacity for innovation, China is no longer merely a bearer of fluctuations in the global energy market. It has become an important provider of global green transition capacity.

This capacity is particularly important for the world today. With uncertainties over traditional oil and gas supply routes, expanding the supply of clean energy, strengthening the resilience of power systems and accelerating the electrification of end-use energy consumption are not only issues of climate governance, but also issues of energy security. The development of China's new energy industries has reduced the global cost of applying green technologies, expanded the energy transition options available to developing countries and provided a new source of stability for the global energy system. China's contribution to global energy governance is reflected not only in its positions and initiatives, but also in the practical support constituted by equipment, technologies, industry chains, markets and development experience.

At the same time, China's constructive role in global energy governance continues to expand. China remains committed to advancing climate and energy cooperation within multilateral frameworks, actively participates in the process of global climate governance, promotes the Green Belt and Road Initiative, deepens South-South cooperation, and supports developing countries in strengthening their clean energy capacity and climate adaptation capacity.

This is especially critical at present. What global energy governance lacks most is not high-profile statements, but cooperative platforms capable of linking the right to security, the right to development and the right to transition. What it needs most is not exclusion in the name of rules, but the creation of conditions under which more countries can gain capacity, opportunity and benefits in the green transition. What China provides is precisely such a cooperative path, one that is more inclusive and places greater emphasis on common development.

As China plays a greater role, it will also face external constraints and discursive competition. It is necessary to maintain strategic resolve by further transforming the scale advantages of China's own energy transition into systemic advantages, cooperative advantages and rule-shaping capacity. It should expand consensus through open cooperation, consolidate security through green development and stabilize expectations through multilateral coordination.

In the face of excessive securitization and weaponization of energy, as well as global governance imbalances, the truly promising path lies not in closure, confrontation and exclusion, but in responding to risks through cooperation, shaping the future through transition and consolidating security through development. The stronger the winds and waves, the clearer the anchor's value. The significance of China as an anchor of stability in global energy governance lies precisely in its continued provision of valuable stability, certainty and space for cooperation to an uncertain world.

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PANG XIAO AND LIU KAN

Green dashboard

China is placing environmental conservation at the heart of its modernization drive with practical governance measures

In 2013, President Xi Jinping proposed a fundamental shift in mindset: no longer judging governance performance solely by GDP growth rate, and placing the ecological environment at the forefront of the evaluation system for economic and social development. The philosophical shift was encapsulated in the famous phrases "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" and "green is gold".



Pang Xiao

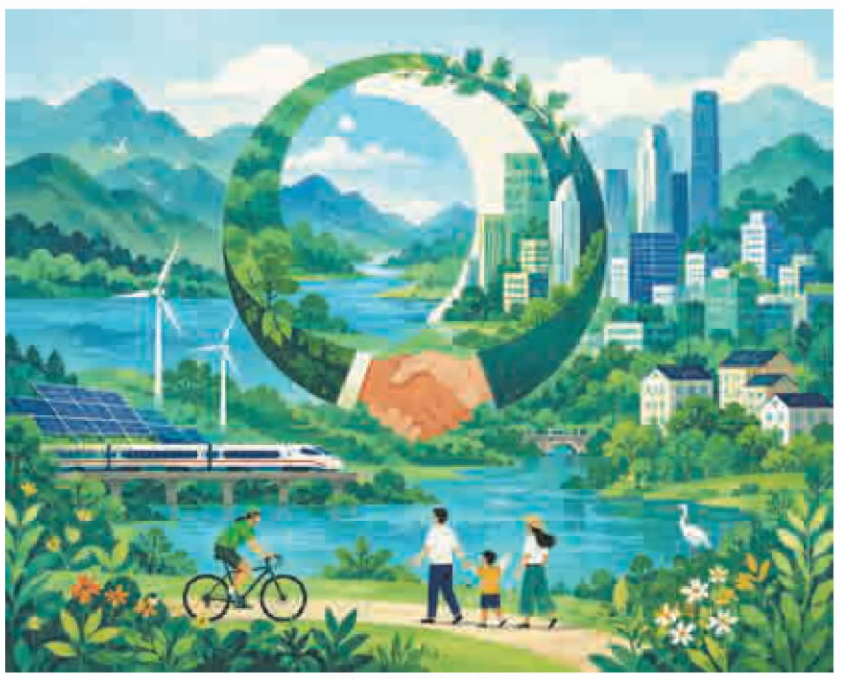


Liu Kan

In the past decade, particularly the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) period, this philosophy delivered tangible results. During this period, China's GDP grew at an average annual rate of 5.4 percent, while its carbon dioxide emissions intensity continued to decline.

Recently, the Chinese government issued two assessment measures to evaluate the performance of local governments in terms of their carbon peaking and neutrality efforts and the measures they are taking to realize a Beautiful China. These represent further progress in China's green journey by establishing a concrete governance mechanism for green development.

Since its inception in the last century by economist Simon Kuznets, GDP has become the most widely used metric for measuring national economic development. However, Kuznets himself once stated that the welfare of a nation cannot be inferred from the measurement of national income. In recent years, the deficiencies of the GDP metric became increasingly apparent. In some countries, behind the rising GDP, public dissatisfaction has also been increasing. Efforts have been made to address GDP's flaws with the introduction of concepts such as GEP (gross ecosystem product).



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

Now, the world is witnessing a megatrend to move beyond GDP. The High-Level Expert Group on Beyond GDP, launched by United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, released a landmark report in May titled "Counting What Counts: A Compass of Progress for People and Planet". The report proposes a dashboard-style indicator system comprising four pillars — foundational principles, current well-being, equity and inclusion, and sustainability and resilience — containing 31 specific indicators, including environmental and climate metrics such as total and per capita greenhouse gas emissions, and a biodiversity intactness index.

Notably, China's two assessment measures not only resonate with the "Beyond GDP" concept and indicators, but also take them a step further by making them a governance compass for action.

The assessment of progress toward achieving the dual carbon goals uses indicators such as total carbon emissions, emissions intensity and total coal and petroleum consumption at the provincial level for the first time, which has already drawn significant international attention. The assessment on actions to realize the Beautiful China Initiative is directly linked to the annual performance evaluation, rewards, punishments and appointments of local officials, and also serves as a reference for allocating government fiscal funds related to ecological environmental protection.

While the UN's Beyond GDP indicators act as a macro-value compass for orientation, China's two assessment measures operate as practical policy tools.

First, both the UN's Beyond GDP indicators and China's two assessment measures are highly aligned. The assessment measures, as two of the latest policy tools of China's journey toward green development, provide a robust empirical support for the UN's latest global indicator system, offering crucial practical experience and references for future implementation of the "Beyond GDP" concept, and for shaping the post-2030 global sustainable development agenda.

Second, China is demonstrating how to achieve a "closed-loop" governance system for "Beyond GDP". The Chinese practice shows that moving beyond GDP does not remain merely at the statistical level; it can form a policy loop with binding force and incentive mechanisms at the national level. In China's governance practice, establishing new assessment indicators for stakeholders in related areas provides effective policy guidance for actions in a local context.

Finally, it's noteworthy that the Environmental Kuznets Curve, named after the founder of GDP, is a highly relevant concept for those who study Chinese environmental policies closely. It suggests that as economic levels rise, some nations' environmental quality deteriorates before improving — a pattern often referred to in Chinese context as the Western development model of "polluting first, cleaning up later". In this context, the two measures explain the uniqueness of China's pathway. On the one hand, China faces dual pressures from both climate change and environmental pollution in a short period, which is significantly different from the experience of the West, which was to address pollution and climate issues separately over a much longer time frame. On the other hand, it reflects China's opposition to passively waiting for the turning point of the Environmental Kuznets Curve. Instead, China advocates synergistic advancement: cutting carbon emissions, reducing pollution, expanding green development and pursuing economic growth simultaneously. By proactively supporting green and low-carbon industries, China is attempting to seize the opportunity of the new technological revolution to spur its green development. For example, electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products witnessed a surge in export value in 2025, which, according to China's General Administration of Customs, approached 1.3 trillion yuan ($191.6 billion), an increase of 350 percent compared with 2020.

Overall, China is proactively advancing green technology to support its high-quality development through robust ecological and environmental protection, serving as a positive example for other countries in the Global South. And this can also be a realistic pathway to realize the philosophy of "Beyond GDP".

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BUSINESS

Trip.com vows investment for tourism push

Travel portal to invest 15 bln yuan over 5 years to attract more foreign visitors

By LI JING
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Trip.com Group will invest 15 billion yuan ($2.2 billion) over the next five years to promote China as a travel destination globally, betting that a post-pandemic rebound in global travel demand and expanding visa-free access can turn the sector into a major growth driver for both the company and the world's second-largest economy.

The investment — announced on Monday by Liang Jianzhang, co-founder and executive chairman of the board at Trip.com Group, at an industry conference in Guilin, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region — will fund overseas advertising campaigns, influencer marketing, destination promotions and international partnerships aimed at attracting foreign visitors to China.

The company also set a target of bringing 200 million international visitors to China over the next five years.

"We used to sell Chinese products to the world. Now it is time to sell China's services and experiences to the world," Liang said.

The move comes as China is doubling down on services exports, with policymakers having embedded "encouraging and supporting services exports" into the Government Work Report as a key task for this year.

China's travel services exports surged 32.3 percent year-on-year to 105.35 billion yuan in the first quarter, the fastest growth among all services export categories, said the Ministry of Commerce.

Inbound tourism has been boosted by waves of measures spanning visa facilitation, payment convenience and streamlined departure tax refunds. China has expanded unilateral visa-free access covering 50 countries and introduced a 240-hour transit visa-free arrangement covering 55 countries at 65 ports. In the first quarter, foreign nationals made roughly 8.32 million visa-free entries into China, representing an increase of 29.3 percent year-on-year, official data revealed.

Industry analysts said the strategy is also closely aligned with the company's own international expansion ambitions.

The company reported revenue of 62.4 billion yuan in 2025, up 17 percent year-on-year. International bookings on its overseas platform Trip.com grew about 60 percent year-on-year, while the company served approximately 20 million inbound travelers during the year, according to company disclosures.

The company does not separately disclose revenue from inbound tourism, but management has identified cross-border travel as one of its fastest-growing businesses. The company has spent heavily in recent years building brand awareness for Trip.com in overseas markets.

Analysts said attracting more foreign visitors to China would not only increase transaction volumes across hotels, flights and attractions, but also strengthen Trip.com's position against global online travel agencies such as Booking Holdings and Expedia Group.

To improve the visitor experience, Trip.com has worked with more than 8,000 attractions to make ticket bookings available to foreign travelers, expanded multilingual services and introduced airport assistance programs for overseas visitors.

But despite the strong recovery, challenges remain.

Tourism executives at the conference said language barriers, uneven service standards and limited international awareness of many Chinese destinations continue to constrain growth. Liang also pointed to opportunities to develop more internationally appealing entertainment, events and cultural experiences to boost spending by overseas visitors.

The United Nations World Tourism Organization estimates global international tourist arrivals reached 1.52 billion in 2025, surpassing pre-pandemic levels. The Asia-Pacific was among the fastest-growing regions, providing a larger pool of potential visitors for China.

For the company, the 15 billion yuan investment represents a long-term bet that China's tourism sector can become a stronger export industry for services, as foreign visitors increasingly seek experiences ranging from high-speed rail and digital payments to cultural heritage sites and natural attractions.

"China has unique advantages in tourism," Liang said. "As a Chinese company, we have a responsibility to help the world discover them."



Visitors gather at Trip.com's booth during a tourism expo in Shanghai on May 26. The company has set a target of bringing 200 million overseas visitors to China over the next five years. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Bayer opens new innovation, cooperation hub in Jinan

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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Bayer expanded its China Center of Innovation and Partnership (CCIP) to Shandong province on Wednesday, nearly two years after launching its flagship hub in Shanghai.

The expansion advances the CCIP's "in China, for the world" concept, betting on the country's fast-expanding consumer health market fueled by rising wellness awareness and supportive government policies for medical innovation.

At the inauguration ceremony of the CCIP in Jinan, Shandong, Bayer signed cooperation agreements with the Shandong Institute for Food and Drug Control, Jewim Pharmaceutical (Shandong) Co Ltd and Shandong Freda Biotechnology Co Ltd.

"China is the number two market in our global consumer health business, and it is a very dynamic market. Innovation plays a very important role within China," said David Evendon-Challis, president of global research and development and chief scientific officer of Bayer Consumer Health. "We continue to invest in our brands, our science, our innovation and our manufacturing and supply chains in China."

The company is investing in a new factory that will be put into operation in 2028, with construction scheduled to finish this year. The facility will enable Bayer to steadily expand and launch new products.

Built around the CCIP framework, Bayer has established an innovation ecosystem spanning consumer insight analysis, joint research, scientific verification and commercial conversion, creating a bridge for bringing achievements to international markets.

One example is a joint product developed with Sirio Pharma Co Ltd based in Shantou, Guangdong province, which has already been rolled out in China and is poised to enter overseas markets such as Australia.

Last year, Bayer generated 3.47 billion euros ($4 billion) in sales from China, and the company anticipates the consumer health market will continue to grow consistently over the next several years.

"We see a balance shifting from treatment products to prevention and daily care," Evendon-Challis said.

He also noted a huge increase in e-commerce and digital commerce, with artificial intelligence and large language models helping people make choices.

Karen Hackney, vice-president of dermatology research and development at Bayer Consumer Health, said that skincare is evolving from beauty into a key health segment, driving sector growth.

"Aging populations and social media influence fuel market expansion, with skin barrier research standing as a core innovation priority for the division," she said.

Li Xiaomeng, head of R&D at Bayer Consumer Health China, explained the rationale behind choosing Shandong as the second CCIP hub after Shanghai.

"Shandong is China's second most populous province and the third-largest economy," Li said. "We need a population base as we serve consumers and want to reach more people."

The province is also home to top-tier hospitals, including Qilu Hospital, whose gastroenterology department ranks among the best in the Asia-Pacific region. "This provides a strong foundation for collaborative product development and clinical efficacy research," said Li.

Thorsten Umland, vice-president of digestive health R&D at Bayer Consumer Health, emphasized the importance of trusted partnerships in innovation.

"One example is how we worked with Jewim, a partner in Shandong, who sat down with us to improve the product and make manufacturing more efficient. They weren't just a contract manufacturer. They helped us make the product better and develop it further," he said.

Quite the stretch



A loader transports bales of hay in Tancheng county, Linyi in East China's Shandong province, on Monday. During the wheat harvest season, the county has stepped up efforts to recycle agricultural hay to improve its comprehensive utilization rate.
ZHANG CHUNLEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Anta, Zxmoto enter co-branded merchandise deal

By WANG ZHUOQIONG
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Chinese sportswear maker Anta Sports Products Ltd has announced a strategic partnership with domestic motorcycle brand Zxmoto, positioning itself as the latter's global strategic cooperation brand.

Under the deal unveiled earlier this week, Anta will support Zxmoto at international racing circuits, including world-class motorcycle events, and debut a co-branded line of athletic footwear and apparel.

The collaboration coincides with Zxmoto's recent racing triumphs. In March, the brand claimed both podiums in the WorldSSP category at the World Superbike Championship (WSBK) Portuguese round, a milestone for a Chinese motorcycle manufacturer in a competition historically dominated by European, US and Japanese brands. By May, at the Czech round, Zxmoto had secured its fifth championship victory of the season.

Anta said that the partnership reflects its broader strategy of bolstering Chinese sports brands and supporting domestic industry growth.

The first co-branded collection draws inspiration from Zxmoto's championship-winning 820RR bike. Design elements such as the "Champion Red" color and the winning number "53" are featured prominently across jackets, footwear and apparel.

In Anta's Tmall flagship store, the line is front-and-center. Prices start at 299 yuan ($44.13) for short-sleeve t-shirts and 469 yuan for racing-style shoes.

According to Anta, the collection aims to translate Zxmoto's racing success into wearable sportswear for consumers, creating a tangible link between domestic technological achievement and lifestyle branding.

The Anta partnership signals a growing trend of Chinese brands leveraging each other's reputations to gain global recognition, underscoring the country's shift from "Made in China" to "Created in China" narratives in global manufacturing.

The partnership comes as Anta pursues international expansion. The group recently launched its first direct-operated flagship store in Los Angeles, marking a significant investment in North America.

The move is part of Anta's broader three-year plan, which includes opening 1,000 stores across Southeast Asia, entering Middle Eastern markets and expanding into major international retail channels such as Foot Locker and DSG in North America and Europe.

Despite the marketing push, early consumer feedback has raised questions about the co-branded products' design.

Zhang Duo, senior editor at Motorcycle magazine, hailed the partnership as a win-win for the two influential Chinese brands. But he added: "Though the collection leverages Zxmoto's racing heritage, the apparel lacks the technical design features and fashionable cuts typically expected in motorsport collaborations."

Zhang made a comparison with co-branded offerings in Formula 1 and said other motorsports markets often feature more refined design execution.

Zxmoto currently partners with more than 40 companies, ranging from domestic giants like Eastroc Beverage, DJI, Midea and Honor, to international suppliers including Pirelli, Shell and SKF.

Birkenstock bullish on growth potential of Chinese market

By HE QI in Shanghai
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German footwear brand Birkenstock sees China as one of its most promising growth markets, with the country becoming a key driver of its global business expansion.

With the Chinese market being a major driver, the company sees a 30 percent year-on-year growth in its revenue in the Asia-Pacific region, which accounts for 12 percent of its global total, Jochen Gutzy, chief communications officer of Birkenstock, told China Daily in a recent exclusive interview.



Jochen Gutzy

Gutzy said Birkenstock is bullish on China's long-term consumption potential. "We are here to stay and build a sustainable business," he said.

Birkenstock's global setup covers three major global markets — the Americas; Europe, the Middle East and Africa; and APAC.

"APAC is the largest of all three regions when it comes to the market potential," said Gutzy, adding that though the Americas remain its largest single market, the APAC region delivers far stronger growth momentum, which is still in its early development stage, with China retaining massive untapped market space.

Tiffany Wu, managing director of Birkenstock Greater China, said: "We used to focus heavily on our online business in China. However, over the past two years we have accelerated our offline store expansion to reach broader consumer groups. The unique value of our anatomically designed footbed can only be fully perceived through in-store experience, which cannot be fully conveyed via online channels."

Wu said every newly opened Birkenstock store in China can hit official sales targets within six months. The brand now operates six stores in Shanghai, with a clear expansion roadmap covering coastal core cities and lower-tier inland markets.

Domestically, Birkenstock's consumer group has become significantly younger, with 18 to 25-year-old buyers emerging as the major growth force. Unlike trend-chasing consumers, young Chinese shoppers prioritize brand heritage, functional value and exclusive immersive experience over fleeting fashion fads.

Gutzy stressed that Birkenstock's steady organic growth in China is driven by cultural resonance rather than intensive marketing investment. "The cultural fit between the brand and the Chinese market is even stronger than it was in the US back then," he said.

Strict German manufacturing standards have also brought structural capacity constraints to the brand's Chinese business. "Demand has always grown faster than capacity since I joined in 2012, so we were always sold out," Gutzy said.

To ramp up its market penetration in China, Birkenstock launched a four-day pop-up exhibition celebrating the 50th anniversary of its iconic Boston clog in Shanghai from May 28 to Sunday.

Nestled in a historic 1939 building on Shanghai's Changle Road, the "House of Boston" exhibition showcased the company's five-decade evolution through archival displays, original German manufacturing equipment and documentary works by renowned photographer Henry Leutwyler. The Boston clog's multi-scenario, all-age inclusiveness fits well with China's family-oriented consumption ethos, the company said.

The anniversary pop-up served as a key offline experience for the brand's localized strategy. By showcasing its original manufacturing craftsmanship and the history of product iterations, Birkenstock aims to highlight its core technological advantages over other similar products in the market.

The brand intends to further tap China's market potential, adhering to steady, high-quality channel construction and sustainable growth instead of blind aggressive expansion, Gutzy said.

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BUSINESS

Optimizing AI for real-world scenarios

Platform helps address gap between emerging tech, practical implementation



A visitor photographs a live-line operation robot at China Southern Power Grid's stand during the 2025 World AI Conference in Shanghai on July 28. CHEN HAOMING / XINHUA

BEIJING — Chinese artificial intelligence researchers have released an open-source framework and a real-world scenario competition platform that significantly improves AI industrial application.

As AI computing power grows stronger and large language models become increasingly sophisticated, Chinese researchers have been focused on how best to apply the fast-growing technology to real-world scenarios.

To this end, a research initiative at the artificial intelligence innovation center at the Yangtze Delta Region Institute of Tsinghua University standardized human-machine interactions, task-set mechanisms and human feedback systems, resulting in enhanced industrial application efficiency and greater enterprise deployment.

The team leader said that the global AI sector currently faces a structural contradiction: the exponential growth of model and tool capabilities versus the linear climb in industrial adoption rates. The core contradiction in AI development has shifted from "enhancing model intelligence" to "bridging the deployment gap".

To address the gap between AI capabilities and real-world deployment, the team released the Real World AI open-source framework, expanding the scope of open-source efforts from code and tools to encompass role definitions, workflow design, human-machine interaction and human-human collaboration as an integrated practice.

The framework reconstructs the interaction between AI and humans in real-world tasks through three core elements: restoring real-world task sets, capturing authentic human feedback from real interactions and standardizing human-machine interaction protocols.

The team said real-world tests have proven that RWAI outperforms traditional software development models in practical efficiency, actual effectiveness and resolution times, reducing pre-project validation timelines from two-to-three months to less than two weeks.

The team also launched its AI arena platform. Unlike traditional benchmarks or model leader boards, the platform focuses on evaluating the actual effectiveness of AI solutions in real business operations, including metrics such as organizational costs, time efficiency, computing costs and compliance requirements.

The platform adopts a "challenger-champion" mechanism, where competing entities are not single models, but complete solutions, encompassing team configurations, workflows, agent combinations and context engineering. The best-practice workflows corresponding to winning solutions will be made public and available for replication.

China Southern Power Grid's internet service subsidiary utilized the RWAI platform to address the end-to-end safety management challenges of power grid infrastructure projects, ranging from planning to on-site execution. Faced with complex compliance requirements, traditional manual supervision on infrastructure projects had reached an efficiency bottleneck.

Using the platform, the company developed an intelligent risk control solution for on-site and subcontractor management, increasing hidden risk detection rates by approximately 40 percent and boosting risk warning accuracy to 92 percent. The company and research team are now preparing to advance a demonstration project for generative AI across the full lifecycle of construction planning.

The company's senior engineer Hu Rui said the RWAI platform has successfully bridged the gap between AI technology and deployment, while significantly reducing trial-and-error costs. The system has transformed engineering management from reactive response to proactive intelligent control, using AI to support high-quality power grid construction.

Jiangsu Eastern Shenghong has also used the RWAI platform. As a petrochemical manufacturer, it has long-faced challenges such as integrating knowledge in traditional process industries, applying general-purpose AI to core business operations and a lack of controllability in decisionmaking by large language models.

Leveraging the RWAI platform, Eastern Shenghong integrated 30 years of production process knowledge with data from the full industry chain, overcoming the high-compliance barriers to build an industrial large model that truly understands the business.

Through multimodal fault monitoring and prediction, the company has significantly reduced unplanned downtime on key production lines and can dynamically recommend optimal production scheduling, achieving cost reductions, efficiency improvements and process optimization.

Yang Tianwei, vice-chairman of the company and general manager of its AI business unit, said that by using the RWAI platform's evaluation capabilities, they have transformed internally validated, high-quality model capabilities into a library of reusable, billable and composable products.

"This not only activates Eastern Shenghong's own intelligent development, but also provides a field-proven and best-practice solution for deploying large models in the process industries," Yang added.

The RWAI platform now covers multiple application scenarios including industrial forecasting systems, document review, risk control and research report generation. Its implementations have already been deployed in projects for some Fortune Global 500 companies.



A staff member demonstrates how a robot can be controlled remotely at a mock power grid control unit at a lab of Guangdong Power Grid Co in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on April 16. ANDY WONG / AP

The research team said that the platform will also supply real-world human-computer interaction data to support large language model development and academic research.

XINHUA

China's innovation edge in AI industries wins plaudits from global MNCs



A robot threads a needle at the World Intelligence Expo 2026 in Tianjin on May 28. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

TIANJIN — In the embodied intelligence exhibition hall, a humanoid robot waved and interacted with visitors, drawing crowds of onlookers. A German guest, Andrea Rosinger, repeatedly raised her phone to capture the scene.

Rosinger was in China attending the recent 2026 World Intelligence Expo in Tianjin.

Having worked in the field of digital technologies for decades, Rosinger is interested not only in the robot itself, but also in how robots and humans may work together in various fields in the future.

About 20 years ago, when Rosinger first came to China, she was involved in software development and digital solutions for businesses. Back then, digital transformation was a goal many companies were striving to achieve.

Today, she sees artificial intelligence driving industrial transformation at an unprecedented pace.

"At this expo, we can see the integration of AI and robotics across many fields, such as healthcare and manufacturing. My feeling is that China is leading the industry in robotics and making rapid progress in AI," she told Xinhua News Agency.

Covering 130,000 square meters, the expo featured six themed exhibition halls and a comprehensive exhibition area focusing on AI core technologies, embodied intelligence, intelligent connected vehicles, low-altitude economy and commercial aerospace, intelligent manufacturing and smart living. More than 700 foreign companies and organizations from around the world participated in the event.

From large language models and humanoid robots to smart factories and the low-altitude economy, the latest technologies, products and application scenarios on display have turned the expo into a window through which international participants can see China's innovation vitality and future industrial development.

"China is not only a huge market, but also a major global engine of innovation and manufacturing," said Rainer Kern, regional chief financial officer and vice-general manager at Karcher China.

Attending the expo, Kern said he was particularly interested in understanding the future direction of AI technologies and how industrial infrastructure may evolve in the years ahead.

In his view, the pace of AI development has exceeded many people's expectations. "In the past, technological iterations often took three to five years. Today, things that seemed impossible just half a year ago have already become reality."

"AI can significantly shorten research and development cycles. Today, you can use AI tools such as DeepSeek to conduct market research much more efficiently, gaining insights into market conditions, customer demand, historical purchasing behavior and likely future market trends," Kern said.

As a global provider of resource-conserving cleaning systems, Karcher values China's comprehensive industrial supply chains, its ability to rapidly deploy new technologies and its vast market potential.

What attracts international companies to China is not only the size of its market, but also its dynamic innovation ecosystem and continuously expanding industrial capabilities.

Hendrik Kruger, general manager of X Control — a Hamburg-based company specializing in digital solutions for the cruise industry — traveled to Tianjin as part of a German business delegation in search of new partnerships.

"We are actively seeking cooperation opportunities with Chinese companies," Kruger said, expressing interest in working with Chinese cruise operators to explore broader cooperation opportunities.

For Kruger, AI has already become deeply integrated into virtually every aspect of business operations. From software development, quality assurance and cybersecurity management to customer services and operational analytics, AI is helping companies improve efficiency and optimize decision-making.

"I am particularly impressed by the open-source approach adopted by many Chinese AI innovations," he said, adding that Chinese companies are actively promoting open ecosystems, and such openness is creating new possibilities for international cooperation.

A recent survey jointly released by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China and consulting firm Roland Berger shows signs of improving confidence among European businesses operating in China. China's vibrant R&D ecosystem, vast talent pool, and rapid product commercialization capabilities are attracting a growing number of European companies to establish and expand their R&D activities here.

This trend is also evident in the field of AI.

As AI rapidly moves from technological breakthroughs to industrial applications, more European companies are viewing China as an important destination for understanding future technological developments and Chinese companies as innovation partners, said Jens Eskelund, president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China.

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CHINA

Samples to enable studies on conceiving in space

SHENZHEN — Mouse embryo material brought back to Earth aboard the Shenzhou XXII return capsule is expected to provide a theoretical foundation for future research on conceiving life during long-term human space habitation.

The Shenzhou XXII successfully made it back from the Tiangong space station on May 29. The cultured embryo material was among science samples brought back as part of a project undertaken by a research team from the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Shenzhen Institutes of Advanced Technology.

According to SIAT, the experiment aims to explore developmental patterns of mammalian pre-implantation embryos in a space environment, including the key mechanisms underlying mitochondrial damage and epigenetic modification abnormalities in embryos.

Led by a senior researcher, Lei Xiaohua, from the center for energy metabolism and reproduction of SIAT's Institute of Biomedicine and Biotechnology, the team performed the in-orbit culture of mouse embryos, at various developmental stages, using a biotechnology experiment cabinet on the space station.

"Given the strict constraints on spaceship transfer and in-orbit resources, the core challenge of this experiment was how to achieve embryo culture and real-time imaging within limited space," Lei said.

The team collaborated with another SIAT team, led by Men Yongfan from the Research Center for Biomedical Optics and Molecular Imaging, to design an embryo microfluidic chip culture box. It featured two rows of six culture chambers. This design simultaneously met the needs of two experimental groups — each with three replicate experiments — and was compatible with the space station's automated culture system.

After ground-based verification tests, the team established a complete experimental system for mammalian pre-implantation embryo culture, imaging, perfusion fixation, and cryopreservation suitable for the space station.

The team confirmed that in-orbit embryo development images were successfully captured, and that embryo development, as well as fixation and preservation conditions, were optimal.

In the early morning of May 30, live science experiment samples retrieved from the Shenzhou XXII return capsule were transported to the Technology and Engineering Center for Space Utilization of the Chinese Academy of Sciences in Beijing via specialized refrigeration equipment.

In future research, Lei's team will conduct systematic comparison and integrated analysis of the returned samples and ground-based control samples, including developmental phenotype statistics, specific protein molecular staining, high-resolution chromatin three-dimensional imaging, and multi-omics sequencing.

The research will provide key data when determining space's influence on zygotic genome activation stage and whether the space environment can support normal early development, thereby deepening our understanding of the initial developmental patterns of mammalian life in the space environment, he said.

Lei has earlier participated in two major space embryo experiments of the country. In 2006, a Chinese research team achieved real-time imaging of space embryos from the ground for the first time via the Shijian 8 satellite.

In 2016, China's Shijian 10 satellite carried early mouse embryos into space, for the first time achieving the complete development in space of mouse embryos from the 2-cell stage, an early-on embryonic cleavage stage, to blastocyst, the stage where noticeable cell differentiation occurs.

XINHUA

Sinologists sign up



An international sinologist writes Chinese characters with a calligraphy brush during the 3rd World Conference of Sinologists in Dunhuang, Gansu province, on Wednesday. The event, themed "Pooling Wisdom of Civilizations to Jointly Address Challenges of Our Times", gathered over 300 representatives from nearly 70 countries. Alongside the conference, activities like "Be a Chinese for a Day" and academic salons showcased the charm of Chinese culture. TIAN QI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Action plan unveiled to stabilize employment

Govt lists measures to shield jobs from external shocks and boost incomes

By LI LEI
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China has unveiled an 18-point action plan to stabilize employment and raise incomes, including measures designed to shield the labor market from external shocks such as trade wars and geopolitical tensions, according to a government document released recently.

The plan, titled "Action Plan for Stabilizing Employment, Expanding Capacity and Improving Quality", was approved on April 30 by the State Council's leading group on employment promotion.

"Employment is the most fundamental aspect of people's livelihoods," the document said.

The action plan includes a dedicated section on supporting industries affected by the external environment to expand hiring, identifying them as a key source of job creation.

Authorities are instructed to extend unemployment insurance premium refunds, skills-training subsidies and job-expansion grants to sectors affected by global headwinds.

The central government will also use major trade fairs such as the China Import and Export Fair to explore new markets while deepening cooperation under the Belt and Road Initiative as an alternative to Western-dominated trade channels.

The plan explicitly calls for the creation of cross-border service jobs in research, design and inspection, reflecting shifts in offshore outsourcing. It also establishes a monitoring mechanism to track the impact of external shocks on hiring in key regions and industries, with contingency plans to enable rapid responses.

Beyond geopolitics, the plan relies on manufacturing and emerging technologies to generate employment opportunities.

Authorities will maintain a "reasonable share" of manufacturing jobs and promote orderly industrial transfers to central, western and northeastern China.

They will also launch an "Artificial Intelligence Plus" initiative to accelerate the digital transformation of factories, creating demand for data labelers and AI trainers.

New energy, advanced materials and low-altitude infrastructure projects are also identified as major sources of employment.

The plan calls for retraining programs to help workers in traditional industries adapt to the adoption of AI, with the aim of preventing job losses.

To reinforce a virtuous cycle of rising household incomes and domestic demand, the action plan seeks to boost consumption through cultural tourism venues linked to performing arts, sports, cuisine and winter activities.

Urban renewal and new infrastructure projects will also be used to create construction jobs, supported by a special employment loan program for the sector.

In social services, the plan expands eldercare and childcare capacity, including exploring a professional qualification system for providers of elderly care.

A nationwide pilot program for occupational injury insurance will cover new forms of employment, such as drivers for ride-hailing platforms, reflecting the continued growth of the gig economy.

The document also strengthens minimum-wage adjustment mechanisms, enhances oversight of wage arrears and illegal employment agencies, and streamlines procedures for business registration and unemployment assistance.

Employment impact assessments will be required for major projects and policies, signaling that job stability has become a cross-cutting priority for policymakers.

The Ministry of Education estimates that the number of new college graduates will reach a record 12.7 million in 2026, an increase of 480,000 from the previous year.

To help absorb them into the labor market, the action plan directs State-owned enterprises to increase campus recruitment by more than five percentage points compared with the previous year's level.

The new measures are part of China's broader push to build an "employment-friendly" development model, a concept first introduced in the nation's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and reaffirmed in this year's Government Work Report.

On the sidelines of the annual legislative meeting in March, Minister of Human Resources and Social Security Wang Xiaoping signaled a campaign to stabilize, expand and upgrade employment.

She outlined measures including supporting labor-intensive sectors such as foreign trade, construction and hospitality; tapping job potential in the digital economy, high-end manufacturing and modern services; and improving minimum-wage mechanisms, labor market regulation and protections for migrant workers' pay.

"The ministry is studying relevant measures to actively harness AI's role in creating new jobs and empowering traditional roles, advancing inclusive development that aligns technological progress with improvements in people's livelihoods," she said.

China has set a target of creating more than 12 million new urban jobs in 2026, in line with its GDP growth target of 4.5 percent to 5 percent this year.

Rolling optimization chip enhances smart machine capabilities

By ZHOU WENTING in Shanghai
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Researchers from Shanghai-based Tongji University have unveiled their independently developed first-generation specialized computing chip for rolling optimization, called the Moving Horizon Unit, which functions like an intelligent brain for autonomous vehicles, robots, drones and other smart machines.

The research team said the chip enables intelligent devices to observe their surroundings, process information and adjust their actions in real time. The technology is expected to support the development of smart transportation and advanced intelligent equipment.

Chen Hong, a lead scientist on the project, said rolling optimization is a capability humans use naturally, continuously adjusting actions based on changing conditions and feedback to achieve a goal.

In complex and constantly changing environments, autonomous vehicles, robots and drones must continuously detect changes around them, plan their next moves and make decisions in real time. These tasks can be difficult for conventional general-purpose chips.

"Our research aims to transform the human capability of adapting to environmental changes and uncertainties in a proactive way into a machine-computable hardware solution," said Chen, a professor at Tongji University's College of Electronic and Information Engineering.

"By embedding this rolling optimization mechanism into a specialized chip, we enable vehicles to drive autonomously and robots to make independent decisions without relying on pre-set programs," he said.

Drawing on three decades of experience in integrating algorithms with hardware, the team developed a specialized computing architecture for rolling optimization and holds fully independent intellectual property rights to the technology.

According to Chen, the architecture includes several innovations. One allows the chip to predict possible future conditions and evaluate different options directly within the hardware, helping devices make decisions more efficiently. Another combines artificial intelligence with the laws of physics, enabling machines to learn and adapt with less dependence on massive amounts of training data.

"We have already developed an onboard controller and conducted real-vehicle integration tests," Chen said.

Researchers said the chip's core module can be customized for specific applications while also being integrated into a variety of chip systems, enabling it to be adapted for different uses.

At the chip's launch event on May 29, Frank Allgower, former president of the International Federation of Automatic Control, said rolling optimization has long been recognized for its advantages but has been difficult to apply widely because it requires substantial computing power.

"This new chip reduces these burdens, simplifying implementation and opening up possibilities for previously challenging systems and scenarios," said Allgower, who is also a professor at the University of Stuttgart in Germany.

Researchers said the chip has successfully passed real-world tests in intelligent vehicle control, evidencing its technical feasibility.

The team plans to continue upgrading the chip, expand joint research and development with industry partners and accelerate its use in fields including intelligent manufacturing, industrial control, new energy and robotics.

Attendees at the launch event also watched demonstrations at the university's testing and evaluation base for intelligent and connected vehicles. During the demonstrations, vehicles equipped with the chip performed maneuvers including serpentine driving and lane changes in a range of scenarios.

Fungus haggling



Merchants discreetly negotiate fair prices for Chinese caterpillar fungus, making offers with their hands hidden, at a market in Xining, Qinghai province, on Thursday. Qinghai, a key production area for this special fungus, experiences peak trading activity in its markets between April and July during the harvest season. ZHANG ZHONGPING / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

China-led intl standard issued for monitoring of karst ecosystems

By LI MENGHAN
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The International Organization for Standardization has issued the world's first international standard for karst critical zones, marking a major step toward unified monitoring of these fragile yet vital ecosystems worldwide.

The standard, titled Specification of Monitoring Technology for Karst Critical Zones, was developed under China's leadership with the participation of experts from Austria, Canada, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia and Serbia.

"The karst critical zone is a special hydrogeological structure formed by the dissolution of soluble rocks by flowing water, extending from the vegetation canopy to groundwater circulation," said Bai Bing, a research assistant at the Institute of Karst Geology of the Chinese Academy of Geological Sciences under the China Geological Survey, who participated in the development of the standard.

"It is an important and unique system widely distributed around the world, covering about 22 million square kilometers, or roughly 15 percent of the earth's land surface," Bai said.

He highlighted the importance of karst critical zones in supplying water to about one-quarter of the world's population. However, he noted that surface water in karst regions is vulnerable to infiltration losses and contamination, affecting both water quantity and quality.

In addition, karst critical zones face challenges like geological disasters, poor soil fertility and rocky desertification, which the international scientific community believes can only be addressed through a deeper understanding of these systems.

Drawing on the distinctive characteristics of different countries, the standard builds on China's years of research in karst water resource management, ecological restoration, carbon cycle studies, and disaster prevention and mitigation.

For the first time, the standard provides a systematic classification of karst critical zone types based on climate conditions. It also identifies key hydrological, geochemical, and biological processes to improve understanding of the zones' structures, regional differences and environmental evolution trends, supporting efforts to address resource and environmental challenges.

The standard also provides specific guidance on monitoring procedures and carbon sink calculations, including detailed instructions on data collection, transmission, storage, processing, quality control and sharing.

"The karst critical zone plays an important role in the global carbon cycle. Establishing a unified monitoring framework can improve the efficiency of data management and services, which is crucial for the accuracy and reliability of environmental assessments and for promoting collaborative efforts in karst critical zone management," said Zhang Cheng, a researcher at the Institute of Karst Geology who led the development work.

Zhang, who is also executive deputy director of the International Research Center on Karst under the Auspices of UNESCO, said the standard will contribute to China's "dual carbon" goals — peaking carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060 — as well as the UN Sustainable Development Goals related to clean water, climate action and life on land.

"The release of this standard represents a major breakthrough in China's deep participation in global geological governance, reflecting strong international recognition of China's scientific research capabilities, technical expertise and industrial influence in the field," he said.

He added that China will continue to contribute its expertise to the sustainable management of global karst critical zones.

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CHINA

Aging population triggers demand for 'senior toys'

Market grows for products that help reduce loneliness, support rehabilitation

By LI HONGYANG
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China's rapidly aging population is fueling a new consumer trend for "senior toys". With over 300 million citizens aged 60 or older, families are increasingly turning to specialized games, puzzles and therapeutic toys to combat cognitive decline and elderly isolation. However, industry insiders warn that the emerging market is still failing to meet the complex needs of older adults.

Guo Xiafei used to think her grandmother was fine living on her own. But during her rare home visits to Chengdu, Sichuan province, Guo noticed her grandmother's loneliness, filled with long hours of television, naps and silence.

"My grandpa can find joy in music. He plays the *erhu* and the bamboo flute, but my grandma's life is much more monotonous. I realized I've grown up, and it's time to look back," the 27-year-old said.

That realization led her to search for something that could bridge the distance. That's how she found senior toys.

To Guo's delight, after playing with a bead sorting and tweezing toy, her grandmother broke into a childlike smile, hugged and thanked her.

The 82-year-old, who has severe hearing loss, usually required the family to shout into her ear. Yet, sitting side by side with her granddaughter and taking turns playing a whack-a-mole game, her face was full of laughter.

"She told me the toys are so wonderful. That warm family vibe is the real point of the toy," Guo said.

For decades, China's massive toy industry focused exclusively on children. Now, e-commerce platforms are flooded with hundreds of products marketed as elderly toys — ranging from no-pick-up table tennis sets and color-sorting games to memory books and grip balls.

On the product pages, stores say the toys are designed to kill time and keep minds sharp.

Guo discovered them by accident while scrolling online.

"I saw a table tennis set with no need to pick up the ball. Since my grandmother needs help while walking outside and spends most of her time indoors, I thought: why not bring the fun inside?

"I wanted to let them experience a bit of what we young people are into. That's where it all started," she said.

However, she quickly learned a lesson that no product description can teach.

"If I give them a toy and walk away, they won't play. They are like children. They need someone beside them and simple interaction.

"When I was little, they played with me. Now I play with them," Guo said.

Like Guo, a growing number of families are turning to toys not just for entertainment, but as tools for connection and cognitive care.

Besides medical treatment, Chu Yue provides toys for her 66-year-old mother, who has developed symptoms of memory decline.

The 41-year-old from Daqing, Heilongjiang province, said: "My mother had even gotten lost inside her own neighborhood. She was worried that she might have developed dementia."

Chu went online and typed a simple search: "Toys to prevent dementia for the elderly."

What appeared was a flood of cheap, simple products on shopping platforms. She picked a string puzzle — a small board with holes and tangled cords — priced at less than 20 yuan ($2.93). The goal is to untie the knots and free the strings by moving them through the right holes.

"At first, my mother thought it would be too hard. So I showed her," Chu said. "Then she tried herself and realized that as long as she is patient, she can always solve it."

Within days, her mother was demanding more challenge.





From top: Chu Yue's mother trains her mind with a string puzzle game. Guo Xiafei's grandmother trains her motor skills with a tweezing toy.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"She told me to tie it tighter, twist it a few more rounds, and make it harder for her," Chu said.

The toy's appeal lay in its simplicity. Her mother soon started playing for hours. Then she asked Chu to buy the same toy for her elder sister.

"My aunt loved it too. And then she started playing with her own family, setting puzzles for each other. It brought the whole household together. Activities like watching TV are just input with no interaction. But with this toy, her brain is working," Chu said.

Yet, while such toys help some, others face more complex needs that off-the-shelf products fail to meet.

After a cerebral infarction affected her grandfather's speech and mobility, Tan Mengqian, 32, got creative. Her grandfather, a retired professor from Tai'an, Shandong province, could no longer walk steadily or communicate clearly.

"I needed to find things he could do with his hands while sitting down," Tan said. She started with large-print books and picture books, which he enjoyed. But she wanted more than just a pastime.

She then turned to the internet, searching for "toys for the elderly with dementia".

What she found were sensory touch toys for children. "He would touch and play with them to help develop his tactile perception," she said. But engagement was limited. "He couldn't get overly absorbed in it. He might play for half an hour, then not play seriously anymore."

The core problem is a lack of suitable products for those with more advanced needs, she said.

"The elderly toys I find on online shopping platforms are not right for his situation. We need something that uses the hands but doesn't require fine, detailed movements."

For Tan, the ultimate solution wasn't found in a shopping cart.

"They don't fundamentally solve our problem. The core need still has to be met through companionship," she said.

The current market for senior toys often misses the mark, Ma Dafei, general manager of a Zhejiang toy company, told Tide News, a Zhejiang-based online media outlet, in January.

"Many products are just children's toys made larger, with colors and themes that don't resonate with older adults," he was quoted as saying, adding that they fail to address what seniors truly need or enjoy.

He said that toys for seniors should be designed to support health and social connection. A toy for a lively retiree is completely different from one for someone who is homebound. The market is still in its early phase, lacking this crucial segmentation.

"Many people simply don't realize that seniors can benefit from toys, or how play can support healthy aging," Ma said to Tide News, adding that this awareness gap has left a market need largely unmet.









From top: Seniors sharpen their memorizing skills by participating in the "remember the fruit" game at a community center in Fuzhou, Fujian province, in July last year. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
An elderly woman uses a set of colored beads to train her thinking and motor skills in Hefei, Anhui province, last month. ZHAO MING / FOR CHINA DAILY
A social worker accompanies an elderly woman in solving a jigsaw puzzle at a senior care home in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, in January. SHI WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY
Senior residents play a balancing game for Lantern Festival on March 1 in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Elderly scout for age-friendly products to combat signs of cognitive decline

By LI HONGYANG

China's booming market for toys tailored for senior citizens was underscored in a recent survey by Shanghai's Minhang District Consumer Rights Protection Committee, signaling a major shift in the nation's silver economy.

Reported by China Consumer News, the findings show that nearly 70 percent of seniors are actively seeking age-appropriate products designed to stave off cognitive decline, maintain physical dexterity and combat isolation. The surge in interest has prompted calls for official "age-friendly" product certifications and standardized difficulty ratings.

A third of those seeking information turn to community or senior activity centers and online shopping platforms. Offline retail stores also play a key role for about 20 percent of elderly consumers, according to the survey.

Notably, recommendations from family and friends, along with short video and social media platforms, are emerging as influential channels.

Affordability is a major consideration, as more than 70 percent of respondents prefer toys priced under 100 yuan ($14.65), with the most popular price point being below 50 yuan. However, a segment of consumers demonstrated willingness to invest in higher-quality products they find particularly appealing.

In terms of product types, creative handicraft toys are the most favored, followed closely by hands-on assembly kits and puzzle and board games. The primary motivation for purchase is clear: over 70 percent seek to exercise the brain and prevent cognitive decline, while activities to maintain hand mobility and provide light physical exercise are also important factors for a significant portion of seniors.

The survey also highlighted that ease of use is considered the most important product feature, with over 70 percent of respondents emphasizing "simple and easy-to-use operation".

Meanwhile, over 40 percent cited "reasonable price and good value" and a similar proportion prioritized "safe, nontoxic and reliable materials" as fundamental requirements in their purchasing decisions. These findings underscore the strong emphasis older consumers place on usability, affordability and safety.

Respondents also expressed clear expectations for a user-friendly and safe design that genuinely considers the needs of the elderly.

Seniors' preferences for challenge levels vary but lean toward "moderately challenging". After experiencing the toys on-site, participants had different perceptions of the difficulty. It is recommended that toy difficulty be graded so that individuals can choose an appropriate challenge level based on their own situation.

A strong majority — over 75 percent — expressed a desire for toys that facilitate social interaction.

The survey also indicated strong trust in quality certifications, with clear support for the introduction of a dedicated "age-friendly toy" label to guide consumers toward products that are safe, user-friendly and cognitively beneficial.

In light of these insights, the committee has proposed the development of dedicated certification standards encompassing safety, usability and efficacy. It further recommended the introduction of a scientifically calibrated system to categorize products based on difficulty level and functional purpose.

At the same time, companies are encouraged to develop product designs that foster social interaction and intergenerational integration, to better meet the needs of this growing market.

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CULTURE



Little Red Fox and White Fox, the central characters of Yang Zhi's *The Fox's Transformation Chronicle*.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

DRAWING BEYOND THE LINES

Two comics artists follow different paths for personal storytelling and the freedom to create without compromise, **Bai Shuhao** reports.





Above left: Cy leads a workshop at the festival, introducing participants to the fundamentals of composition and visual storytelling. **Above right:** Yang Zhi creates a live illustration at the 10th French Comics and Graphic Novels Festival. **Below:** Female workers in Cy's *Radium Girls*, whose health is damaged by prolonged exposure to radium while working at a watch factory.



At the 10th French Comics and Graphic Novels Festival in Beijing this May, two young women wearing glasses sat side by side, though they appeared to come from entirely different worlds.

One was Yang Zhi, a Chinese cartoonist with shoulder-length black hair and a quiet, studious air. The other was French comics artist Cy (Cyrielle Evrard), whose cropped hair and understated style carried the effortless cool of a heroine from a late-night French film.

Yang draws on a digital tablet. Cy prefers colored pencils. One tells stories rooted in Chinese fox-spirit folklore; the other resurrects forgotten industrial tragedies from American history.

Their artistic styles couldn't be more different, yet their careers have followed remarkably similar paths.

At nearly the same age, both women left stable jobs to pursue comics independently. Both built audiences online through social media and both eventually arrived at the same conclusion: they no longer wanted other people deciding what they were allowed to create.

Socializing a fox

"When I dropped everything else and focused entirely on comics, that was when I felt happiest," Yang says.

Two years ago, she began publishing an online comic titled *The Fox's Transformation Chronicle*. The story follows a young fox surviving alone in the wilderness before being rescued by an older white fox who teaches her the art of shape-shifting. By observing human desires, the fox learns to transform into the "ideal version" of whatever others expect — a process of cultivation on the path toward becoming a nine-tailed fox.

Told through the eyes of a mythical creature, the work explores gender, shifting power structures and social norms. It quickly attracted a loyal online following and was published in print in 2025.

Before that success, Yang worked as a storyboard artist for film and television productions, translating scripts into visual sequences. She entered the animation industry during a boom period for Chinese cinema and contributed to several major projects. Yet, after four years, she felt increasingly disconnected from her work.

"I draw every day, but not the things I actually want to draw."

That feeling became especially clear in projects involving fox spirits from Chinese folklore.

"We tend to imagine fox spirits as seductive, dangerous figures," she says. "Then, over time, they become harmless little creatures, or girls who need to be saved. But why is it that when a fox turns into a human, a female fox always becomes a woman and a male fox always becomes a man?"

The question lingered. Thinking about a cat she once observed — an animal unlikely to perceive beauty as humans do — she began wondering whether fictional foxes were simply being forced into the human's expectations of appearance and desire.

To tell a different story, she left her storyboard work behind and spent eight months creating *The Fox's Transformation Chronicle*. She never expected it to become popular.

"If I chase popularity, my choices become limited," she says. "I want to make what I want to make, not what other people expect from me."

That philosophy echoes the comic's narrative. At one point, the female fox transforms into a man and discovers freedoms unavailable in female form. She experiences the rewards of human ambition. However, at a banquet celebrating her political rise, she is served the white fox who first taught her to become human. At that moment, she realizes that no matter how perfectly she imitates what humans want to see, the effort is ultimately meaningless.

"Caring too much about what other people think is, to me, a false problem," Yang adds. Although the work is now being adapted into an animated film, she resists being described as especially "talented".

"Talent isn't something you can simply claim," she says. "If people resonate with the work, it spreads. If they don't, it doesn't."

Her next project will follow the same principle: expression first, persuasion never. She has little interest in convincing people of anything.

Radium Girls still glows

Cy's decision to leave her previous job came after an argument with her boss.

By then, she had already built a growing online audience by sharing sketches, unfinished comic pages and fragments of everyday life. Social media made the move into freelance work feel less like a leap and more like the natural next step.

"I'm not someone who hides away to create," she says.

She enjoys posting work while it is still evolving and hearing readers' reactions in real time. "As a freelancer, you have to use social media. Without it, things become very difficult."

The book she brought to the festival, *Radium Girls*, began with an article she discovered online. At first, she assumed the title referred to an American rock band. Later, she discovered the real story.

In 1918, at a clock factory in New Jersey, young women were hired to paint watch dials with luminous paint containing radioactive radium. They were instructed to "lick, dip, and paint" their brushes repeatedly, unaware of the danger. Over time, many developed severe illnesses — losing teeth, becoming paralyzed, and eventually dying. Their legal battles later helped shape some of the earliest worker protection laws in the United States.

Radium Girls retells that history. First published in France in 2020, it later appeared in North America in 2022 and China in 2025.

Cy was drawn to the story partly because it remains relatively unknown. These women, as she puts it, "disappeared into the smoke". But she was equally struck by how relevant the story remains today.

"Whenever scientists discover a new element or material that can be industrialized, workers are exposed first," she says. "At first there are one or two cases. Then, after many deaths, it becomes headline news. And then it disappears again, until the next material comes along."

To reconstruct the story, she immersed herself in archival research, reading victims' diaries, and studying the details of early 20th-century factories, down to industrial locks and machine parts.

Not all of Cy's work centers on historical events, but she intentionally engages with social themes. She believes artists should remain actively involved in society rather than stand apart from it.

In France, comics artists typically work as freelancers, a lifestyle that often brings financial instability. But for Cy, autonomy outweighs insecurity. It is one reason she has no desire to return to office work.

When publishers take on a project, they usually provide an advance against future royalties. If a book performs poorly, the author keeps the advance. If it succeeds, royalties are paid on top.

The arrangement, she says, allows creators to keep working without being financially crushed by a single setback.

"If a book doesn't sell well," she says pragmatically, "I just move on to the next one and find another editor."

At the festival's Beijing stop, Yang and Cy joined French comics artist Catherine Meurisse and Chinese comics artist Yu Kun onstage for a conversation with readers. One audience member asked whether commercial projects sharpen an artist's voice or slowly wear it down.

Neither Yang nor Cy seemed especially enthusiastic about working for others.

Yang says she has always wanted to tell her own stories, but struggled for years simply to begin. She recalls making bets with friends: if they failed to finish a script outline within a week, they would owe each other 50 yuan. "In the end," she says with a laugh, "we each ended up owing the other 500."

Cy says commercial projects often move in circles. An idea approved at the start can be revised repeatedly, only to return months later to its original form.

Recently, a new phrase has gained traction online: "one-person company" — the idea that a single creator can build an audience, produce work, and distribute it independently. Social media, AI tools and digital platforms have made that kind of independence feel increasingly attainable.

Both artists also offer advice to younger creators, drawn from their own experiences.

"When I want to make something," Yang says, "I don't calculate the cost first. I don't start by asking whether it will make money."

Cy echoes the sentiment: trust the value of your own work and never underestimate it.

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Grandma's tales inspire Tibetan writer's new book

XINING — As Khandro Tsering watched his third-grade students' eyes light up while listening to him read aloud *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone* in vivid Tibetan, he was taken back to those happiest childhood memories of evenings spent immersed in folktales and legends gently told by his grandmother.

That moment inspired the young man from Qinghai province in Northwest China to write a fairytale book for children: a way to nurture imagination and learning while celebrating Tibetan culture and honoring the memory of his beloved grandmother.

Raised in a family in the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Huangnan in Qinghai, the 32-year-old writer grew up without electronic devices, comic books or animation. Instead, he was surrounded by six gifted storytellers: his grandmother and her five sisters.

Stories of mountain deities and fearless young heroes filled his childhood. Beyond the magic of folklore passed down through generations, the tales also helped him make sense of the world around him.

"Through my grandmother's stories, I learned kindness, courage and a deep respect for life," says Khandro Tsering, who now teaches at a middle school in the Tibetan autonomous prefecture of Golog, Qinghai.

In his book, *The Story of Kunga Dondrup and Lotus Conch*, protagonist Kunga Dondrup is granted three wishes by the Lotus Conch. He first wishes for peace in the world, then for his mother to be saved, while leaving the third wish unspoken.

"I want young readers to understand that true happiness is not gained through greed, but by staying true to one's original purpose and embracing a greater love for the world," the writer says.

Continuing the storytelling traditions he inherited, Khandro Tsering weaves the landscapes of his homeland, everyday experiences and simple wisdom into his narratives. Loyal Tibetan mastiffs, sacred mountains and lakes, and even the rhythms of Tibetan poetry are carefully preserved in his work.

The book was written over six years in Tibetan before being translated into Chinese by the author himself. Striving to retain the language's original cadence and the deeper meanings of Tibetan proverbs, he says the process was challenging but worthwhile, allowing the story's warmth to reach readers in both languages.

From devoted listener to folklore collector and fairytale creator, Khandro Tsering's journey mirrors that of many young ethnic group writers in Qinghai.

Like countless children growing up in the province's Tibetan regions, he spent his early years reading local Tibetan literary journals and newspapers, learning the craft of writing, and participating in literary competitions organized by those publications.

One of the influential journals is "Sbrang char", meaning "dew" in Tibetan. Since its establishment in 1981, it has held a writing contest every three years and introduced special awards for emerging talents. To date, it has helped cultivate more than 60 prizewinning authors.

The development of ethnic literature is supported by State funding, says Palden, chief editor of Sbrang char. Every year, the Ministry of Finance provides special subsidies to publishing houses for compiling and publishing books in ethnic languages.

Today, Khandro Tsering's efforts extend beyond the written page. Last year, he traveled to more than 10 villages in his hometown, collecting folktales from local elders and transforming them into animated videos with Chinese and local Tibetan subtitles using AI tools.

"Many villagers could only remember fragments of these stories," he says. "I reimagined the missing parts in a fairytale style so that these nearly forgotten tales can once again become part of children's lives."

XINHUA

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LIFESHANGHAI





Left: A work symbolizing the cycle of life, made from fallen leaves and traditional Chinese medicine by a participant at one of Yan Wenhua's events on Dec 14, 2024. The white yam slices represent human's spine, reflecting the creator's struggles and life experiences. **Middle:** A portrait crafted from fallen leaves and TCM herbs by a participant of the event. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The scent of emotional healing

As younger generations and urbanites face mounting stressors, the olfactory is shifting from consumer demand for commercial brand fragrances to empirically proven therapy, report **He Qi** and **Wang Xin**.

As a participant twisted a dried mugwort leaf between her fingers, its familiar medicinal scent filled the air, bringing tears to her eyes. Like that, when participants piece together their own artistic creations, they'd find a release of certain emotions they've held back, and are healed by the power of nature.

This intimate moment unfolded at a special eco-art therapy exhibition on the East China Normal University campus in Shanghai, offering a gentle emotional outlet for urban dwellers grappling with anxiety.

Against the backdrop of a significant rise in emotional distress among the general public, particularly China's younger generations, new approaches to emotional healing are breaking barriers in traditional psychological counseling and bringing mental health care into daily life: eco-art therapy integrated with mindfulness and traditional Chinese culture, and fragrance-based emotional regulation backed by neuroscientific and empirical research.

According to clinical data, emotional issues are no longer confined to severe cases requiring specialized treatment, says Qiao Ying, an expert from the Shanghai Mental Health Center.

"In the past, people thought you needed to see a doctor only if your condition was serious. But now, the number of people experiencing subthreshold depression and anxiety has increased significantly," Qiao notes, adding that the number of children and adolescents seeking treatment for mental health has risen each year.

To address demand, the eco-art therapy exhibition curated by Yan Wenhua, a professor at the School of Psychology and Cognitive Science of East China Normal University, explores a low-cost, accessible healing path. The exhibition, running through July 3, features hundreds of works created by ordinary people in nearly 40 public healing activities organized by Yan's team recently.







Left: A natural clock crafted from fallen leaves and herbs by a participant in 2024. **Top above:** TCM herbs on display at the exhibition at East China Normal University in Shanghai. **Above and top right:** A pop-up event launched by Eternal Group and the Shanghai Mental Health Center to support emotional well-being.

> Eco-art therapy basically refers to an ecological approach in art therapy, an innovative method aimed at restoring the deep connection between man and nature through creative activity."
>
> **Yan Wenhua,** East China Normal University

"Eco-art therapy basically refers to an ecological approach in art therapy, an innovative method aimed at restoring the deep connection between man and nature through creative activity," explains Yan.

Mindfulness techniques are integrated throughout the exhibition. With green plants, written words and audio instructions spanning the display space, they lead visitors to fully focus on and connect with the present.

Originating from traditional Chinese Zen meditation, mindfulness was systematized and simplified into a practical psychological technique before being reintroduced to China. Yan's team has deeply integrated mindfulness with the 24 solar terms and traditional Chinese medicine to create culturally relevant healing activities.

During Minor Cold (*xiao han*), participants were guided to paint their true selves on blank masks; in spring and summer, they observed growing plants, smelled them, and expressed their feelings through art.

At a leaf and TCM creation event in December, the aroma of medicinal herbs evoked family memories, allowing participants to release suppressed emotions through their creations.

"We never judge their creations; there is no good or bad, right or wrong. They just need to follow their hearts and express themselves in a totally free, open manner," Yan explains, adding that the power of TCM deeply connects with Chinese people. "It is unique in that it is embedded in our growth and family bonds.

"We can build an alliance with nature and learn from it. Nature never abandons you, and you can always gain nourishment from it, at any time," Yan adds.

Qiao offers a professional interpretation of the method's core logic: "The essence of eco-art therapy is not 'treatment', but reconnection; reconnecting with nature, with yourself, and with your creativity. Much of today's anxiety stems from a sense of loss of control and disconnection. Eco-art therapy lets you touch the soil, smell the grass after rain, and observe the veins of a leaf.

"When your brain switches from ruminating about the past or worrying about the future to being fully present in the moment, anxiety naturally finds an outlet," Qiao says.

As another important carrier of emotional healing, fragrance has solid scientific support for its therapeutic effects.

"Smell is the only sense that goes directly to the amygdala — the emotional center of the brain — without passing through the thalamus. This means it can reach your heart before you even have time to rationally think," Qiao states.

In clinical interventions, scent is used as a crucial "emotional anchor". Qiao explains that her team does not simply use lavender to calm people; instead, it guides patients to form an association with a specific natural scent, such as citrus or cedar, while in a deeply relaxed state. Later, when they feel anxious in their daily lives, that scent acts like an "emotional switch", helping them regain calm quickly.

"In this sense, fragrance is not a 'placebo', but a direct shortcut to the emotional center," she adds.

The booming fragrance market reflects the growing recognition of scents' emotional healing potential.

Wang Wei, chief operating officer of Eternal Group, says that China's fragrance market has moved past the niche fragrance bubble and the misconception that "commercial fragrances are outdated". Consumers no longer follow labels blindly but return to the intrinsic emotional value of scents.

"Instead of blindly chasing viral niche fragrances on social media, consumers now clearly state their need for scents that help them relax and reduce stress," Wang says.

To empirically validate fragrance's healing value, the group introduced brainwave-based fragrance emotion detection technology in collaboration with the Shanghai Institute of Technology at the 30th China Beauty Expo in May. The technology converts subjective emotions such as pleasure and relaxation into visual data, providing scientific backing for fragrance therapy.

Wang emphasizes that the company has transformed from a brand agent into an ecological enabler in the fragrance industry, making fragrance a practical tool for daily emotional regulation through scientific research and scenario-based innovation.

"We hope to provide consumers with more accurate and locally adapted emotional fragrance experiences through continuous product innovation, scientific empirical research and scenario-based empowerment, truly bringing olfactory healing into people's daily lives," Wang says.

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Science meets art to unlock nature's hidden connections

By **HE QI**
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Only Tree Knows, a groundbreaking exhibition of nature-inspired art, runs from May 1 to Aug 31 at the Shanghai Natural History Museum. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Step into the temporary exhibition hall on B1 of the Shanghai Natural History Museum, and a field of all-black metal flowers appears to bloom in silence on one side of the gallery. Hand-cut from metal sheets, they precisely replicate the forms of eight flowers, including roses, lilies and foxgloves, yet stripped of all natural hues — their hollow black silhouettes echo the rigorous structure of plant specimens in scientific illustrations.

These black silhouettes encapsulate the core theme of *Only Tree Knows*, a groundbreaking natural art exhibition.

Jointly organized by the Shanghai Natural History Museum and the Pudong Biyun Art Museum, the exhibition runs from May 1 to Aug 31. It brings together 22 works by 12 domestic and international artists, engaging in a cross-contextual dialogue with the museum's natural specimens to explore the profound theme of forest ecology and human coexistence.

"We collide the taxonomic research of science with the perceptual imagination of art, not to provide answers to ecological issues, but to help the public rediscover the hidden connections of nature," says curator Guo Xiaohui.

Breaking away from the one-way instruction of traditional science popularization, the cross-disciplinary exhibition takes forests as its core framework, connecting the above-ground vegetation realm and the underground mycelial network through specimens, installations, light and shadow, sound, AI-generated art, and other types of multimedia.

"Many people are used to viewing specimens but forget that forests are living; many love art yet rarely reflect on the ecological propositions behind it. We hope visitors can reread the story of forests with both rationality and sensibility," Guo adds.

As one of the exhibition's signature works, Zadok Ben-David's *Black Flowers* condenses plant forms into an existence between specimen and illusion, confronting the imbalance in the relationship between humans and nature.

"I paint these enlarged flowers black, not for beauty, but as a warning. Artists don't have solutions, but we can raise questions to make people rethink and protect nature," he states.

A universal symbol of both joy and sorrow, flowers are reimagined in black to turn natural representation into ecological reflection, prompting viewers to re-examine their place in the natural world.

Black Flowers is an extension of Ben-David's landmark *Blackfield* series, marking the classic body of work's first large-scale presentation in China. The artist notes that the series is a monumental project spanning 12 to 15 years: "My first installation, *Blackfield,* has 30,000 miniature flowers of 900 species, displayed with black side first and color revealed later, which is a metaphor for life with both tragedy and joy."

Ben-David adds: "This exhibition is necessary because it allows people to feel and think about nature in a new way, which is crucial for the current ecological environment."

Echoing this message is Rodrigo Arteaga's site-specific work *Fallen Tree*. Crafted from Shanghai's native tree branches and completed over a month in the museum, it is paired with his other piece, *Monocultures* — burnt paper sheets that capture the damage caused by ecological simplification. Together, the two works convey that the forest is not a static entity, but a dynamic space of constant connection, transformation and imbalance.

"You don't see the actual plant, but rather you see the absence, and the way of making it remembers or comes back to the forest fires that happen every year in Chile and in other places," Arteaga explains.

Two Chinese artists also joined the exhibition. Wang Yuyang of the Central Academy of Fine Arts explores the "third nature" in the technological age through *Plant 002* and *Biological Klein Blue*, employing AI algorithms and microbial techniques; Liu Zhenchen's *Panacea* series captures traces of medicinal plants on canvas, imbuing natural textures with a therapeutic quality.

Ninety percent of the works are making their Shanghai debut and their first appearance at the natural history museum. The exhibition also integrates 290,000 forest-related specimens from the museum's collection, forging a cross-temporal dialogue between artistic creation and natural heritage.

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LIFE

A TV classic spins anew on vinyl

The score to hit drama *Jade Goddess of Mercy* is back, this time as a reimagined album, **Chen Nan** reports.





The melody arrived softly at first: a violin tracing a line of longing above the quiet pulse of a piano. Inside the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on a late May afternoon, the opening notes of *Yu Guanyin*, or Jade Goddess of Mercy, were enough to suspend time.

For many audiences in China, the music carries them instantly back more than two decades, to an era when Chinese television dramas unfolded with an almost novelistic emotional seriousness — stories of love and betrayal, desire and sacrifice, set against the turbulence of a rapidly changing country.

Now the music itself has returned, transformed.

On May 24, composer Ye Xiaogang joined singer Zhu Hua, violinist Li Yuhe and pianist Feng Huaiyu for an event marking the release of a new vinyl album inspired by Ye's celebrated score for the television adaptation of Chinese writer Hai Yan's best-selling novel, *Jade Goddess of Mercy*.

The namesake TV series, *Jade Goddess of Mercy*, premiered in 2003 and follows the journey of An Xin, a young woman who transforms from an ordinary girl into a daring undercover narcotics officer. The story explores An Xin's complex emotional world as she becomes embedded within a dangerous drug trafficking organization. Her life is entangled with three men — the dedicated officer Tie Jun, the cunning dealer Mao Jie, and Yang Rui, an ordinary urban young man who is the emotional anchor and narrative viewpoint of the drama — forming a tense web of love, loyalty, and betrayal. Against this backdrop, the drama interweaves high-stakes anti-drug operations in Yunnan province, juxtaposing An Xin's inner struggles with intense, suspenseful action. At its heart, the series is a story of duty, sacrifice, and the human cost of fighting crime, where personal desire often collides with moral responsibility.

The black vinyl edition, released by NCPA Classics, does not simply reproduce the original soundtrack familiar to television audiences of the early 2000s. At the heart of the new release are two orchestral works that trace the evolution of *Jade Goddess of Mercy* from television soundtrack to contemporary concert music. *The Jade Goddess of Mercy Orchestra Suite (2001)* stands as the foundational pillar of Ye's musical world for *Jade Goddess of Mercy*. Moving beyond the functional demands of screen scoring, Ye reimagined and expanded the drama's central themes symphonically, transforming them into an autonomous orchestral work that has since become a lasting staple in the repertoire of major Chinese orchestras.

More than two decades later, *Jade Goddess of Mercy Capriccio for Violin and Orchestra (2023)*, commissioned by the Hangzhou Philharmonic Orchestra, revisits that emotional landscape from a more introspective and expansive perspective. Built around an extended dialogue between solo violin and orchestra, the work draws on the violin's warm, tensile sound to explore the music's emotional undercurrents with greater depth and freedom. The result feels less like a return to familiar material than a poetic reimagining — a work with themes once bound to the screen that unfold with renewed lyricism and emotional scope.

Together, the works chart the unusual afterlife of a television score that has steadily migrated from popular culture into China's contemporary concert repertoire.

"The music has continued to grow," Ye says. "It walked out of the television drama and became something independent."

Ye notes that many of the musical ideas developed in *Jade Goddess of Mercy Capriccio for Violin and Orchestra* never appeared in the earlier suite.

"In that sense, this album brings together nearly all the themes from the television drama that I felt deserved to be further developed and shared with a wider audience," says Ye.

For Ye, now one of China's most internationally recognized contemporary composers, the origins of *Jade Goddess of Mercy* still feel strangely fated.

He recalls buying Hai Yan's novel almost accidentally and reading it straight through. By the end, he had become convinced that the story demanded music. Not long afterward, director Ding Hei approached him to compose the score for the adaptation.

To prepare, Ye traveled to Xishuangbanna in Yunnan province, where parts of the drama were filmed. He observed local life, spoke with actors and immersed himself in the emotional atmosphere of the story.

Although he now describes the actual writing process as instinctive, he insists that spontaneity only becomes possible after deep emotional preparation.

The resulting music was unusually lyrical for Chinese television at the time, blending symphonic structure with an emotional openness more commonly associated with cinema than serialized drama. Some members of the production reportedly worried that the score sounded too classical and not commercially viable. Ye refused to simplify it.

The novelist Hai Yan later joked that the television series itself had become "a music video for Ye Xiaogang's music", because the production team became reluctant to cut scenes that carried the score's emotional momentum.

Over the years, the music developed a life beyond the series. Orchestras across China began performing the suite version regularly, and audiences continued to associate its melodies with a particular emotional atmosphere: restrained longing, romantic fatalism, and moral vulnerability.

The recording was completed in Berlin, Germany, in November 2024 with the Deutsches Symphonie-Orchester Berlin under conductor Stefan Malzew.

"Even without a shared spoken language," Ye says, "music became our common language."

The afternoon also revisited Ye's long creative partnership with singer Zhu, whose performance of the drama's theme song became inseparable from the series' emotional identity.

Returning now to the music of *Jade Goddess of Mercy* after 25 years, Zhu describes how age has altered her understanding of the work.

"When I sang it years ago, there were emotions I could not fully understand," she says. "Now they feel very clear."

Time, she suggests, has softened the technical self-consciousness of youth. Her voice now moves more freely within the orchestral texture, particularly alongside the strings.

In contemporary China's entertainment industry, where soundtrack music is often designed for speed, algorithmic circulation and immediate commercial impact, the survival of *Jade Goddess of Mercy* feels increasingly unusual. Its endurance owes less to nostalgia alone than to the seriousness of its artistic ambition.

Ye spoke candidly during the discussion about what he sees as the shrinking creative space for composers in film and television today. Producers increasingly treat music as a functional background, he says, rather than as an equal narrative force.

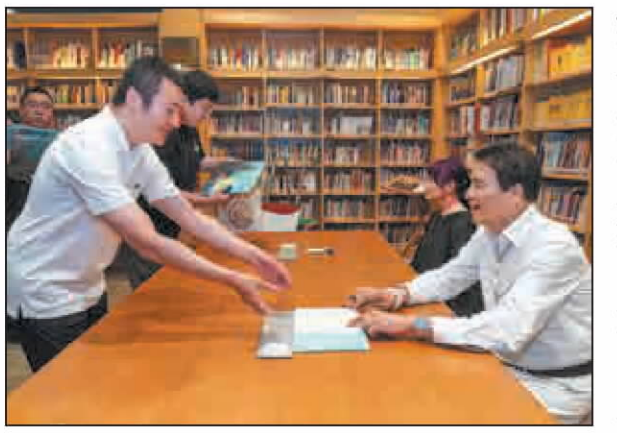
For him, *Jade Goddess of Mercy* belongs to a different moment — one in which directors and composers were willing to shape scenes around musical ideas rather than merely decorate finished images with sound.

That philosophy also informs Ye's broader thinking about contemporary Chinese composition. Educated largely within Western classical traditions, he has long sought to reconcile European structural rigor with distinctly Chinese aesthetic sensibilities: restraint, silence, and emotional space.

But he warned against superficial forms of East-West fusion now common among younger artists.

True synthesis, he argues, must emerge from a deeper cultural consciousness rooted in Chinese philosophical traditions — ideas of harmony, coexistence and the relationship between humanity and nature.

Contact the writer at chennan@chinadaily.com.cn





Top left: The album cover of *Jade Goddess of Mercy*. **From top:** Composer Ye Xiaogang (right) and singer Zhu Hua gather at the National Centre for the Performing Arts in Beijing on May 24 to unveil his new vinyl album, *Jade Goddess of Mercy*. Composer Ye in an album-signing session with music lovers at the NCPA on May 24. Violinist Li Yuhe plays the piece, *Jade Goddess of Mercy Capriccio for Violin and Orchestra*, during the event in Beijing. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "This album brings together nearly all the themes from the television drama that I felt deserved to be further developed and shared with a wider audience."
>
> **Ye Xiaogang,** composer

Legends of the Great Wall meet mountain mists in Shanxi

By XU LIN
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Left: Yanmen Pass in Xinzhou city, North China's Shanxi province, was a strategic section of the Great Wall. **Right:** Wanghuagou, an ancient village perched on the cliff face on Guancen Mountain, Xinzhou. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Looking for a summer getaway that combines history, nature, and serenity? Xinzhou city in North China's Shanxi province offers exactly that.

Just a three-hour high-speed rail journey from Beijing, the city offers a cool respite from the summer heat. It invites travelers to explore a section of the Great Wall, tour a vibrant ancient city, hike mountain trails and experience natural wonders, making it an off-the-beaten-path weekend escape.

Steeped in frontier heroism, Yanmen Pass in Daixian county is a strategic section of the Great Wall. The Great Wall of China was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1987.

Yanmen Pass is often depicted in Chinese martial arts novels as a legendary frontier stronghold and a powerful symbol of patriotism and chivalry.

Yang Jia Jiang, or Generals of the Yang Family, defended the key northern frontier garrison during the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), holding off repeated invasions by the nomadic Khitan people. This legendary military household has become a timeless symbol of loyalty, courage and patriotism in Chinese culture. It has been widely portrayed in literary works, operas and TV series, in which vivid stories of heroic female generals from the Yang family have been told and passed down.

Today, tourists can enjoy a grand welcoming ceremony featuring performers dressed in traditional costumes portraying the Yang family clan, along with exciting martial arts demonstrations and a spectacular parade.

"We weave together Great Wall culture, the legendary tales of the Yang family clan and frontier folk customs, offering a wonderful journey through the history of the border passes of northern Shanxi," says Hou Tianjia, an office worker from the scenic area.

Visitors can hike along the Yanmen Pass section of the Great Wall and climb the weathered ancient beacon towers, where soldiers once lit smoke signals to send urgent military messages across the mountains.

About one and a half hour's drive away is the ancient city of Xinzhou, where entrance tickets are free of charge and local residents still carry on their daily lives.

Visitors can explore ancient architecture like Xiurong Academy and various temples, and join intangible cultural heritage workshops such as those about paper-cutting. As night falls, the traditional *datiehua* (molten iron fireworks) show lights up the sky, and a street with bars pulses with energy — a perfect blend of traditional and modern nightlife.

"Life moves at a slow pace here. You can stay a night, soak in hot springs, and taste various local snacks to ease fatigue and wrap up your journey in a relaxed way," says Li Qiyu, a marketing office worker from the ancient city scenic area.

She adds that local food is fairly priced, accommodation offers great value for money, and it's not overly commercialized.

Nestled in Ningwu county, Luya Mountain scenic area stands out as a perfect summer escape, boasting a pleasant average summer temperature below 20 C.

After hiking along its winding trails, a breathtaking panoramic view unfolds from the mountaintop, with rolling peaks shrouded in swirling mist and clouds.

A must-visit attraction in the scenic area is the Permanent Ice Cave, a rare natural wonder formed around 3 million years ago. Maintaining a year-round subzero average temperature, the cave keeps its icy interior intact even during scorching summers. Visitors are advised to wear warm outfits and anti-slip shoes for a comfortable and safe tour.

Under artificial lighting, the cave walls are adorned with countless translucent icicles, ice waterfalls and ice curtains of varying sizes, shaping a dreamlike underground fairyland of ice and snow.

Nearby, three ancient villages, known as the Hanging Villages, are perched on cliffs high on Guancen Mountain. Some houses are embedded in the rock face, while others are supported by wooden pillars over the abyss, looking like castles in the air from a distance.

However, Luya Mountain offers more than just a summer retreat — it's a comprehensive experience of coolness, ecology and wellness. Beyond the forests that serve as natural oxygen bars, visitors can enjoy the Malun Alpine Grassland, an ancient cliff plank road first built in the Tang Dynasty (618-907), and clusters of alpine lakes.

About 160 kilometers away is the Laoniuwan scenic area of Pianguan county, where tourists can witness the remarkable confluence of the Great Wall and the Yellow River. They can also climb an ancient castle to have a bird's-eye view of the surrounding area, wander through a village of stone houses, and soak up the river's timeless beauty.

Indeed, combining ancient culture, lively old-town charm and cool natural scenery, Xinzhou makes every summer getaway here truly unforgettable.

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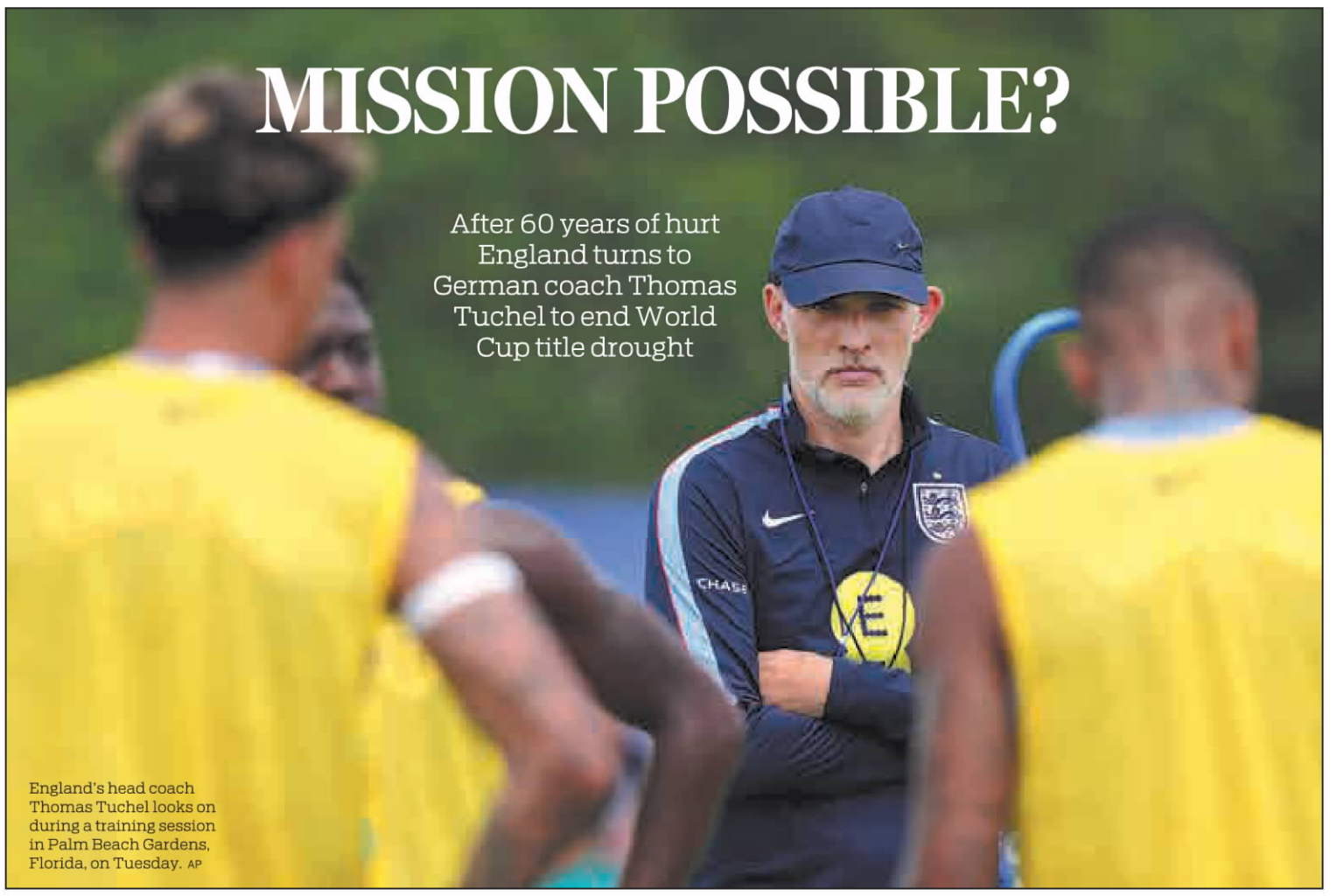
SPORTS

SOCCER

MISSION POSSIBLE?

After 60 years of hurt England turns to German coach Thomas Tuchel to end World Cup title drought



England's head coach Thomas Tuchel looks on during a training session in Palm Beach Gardens, Florida, on Tuesday. AP

In a bid to end its decades-long wait to win a second World Cup, England has put its fate in the hands of a German.

It's fair to say the appointment of Thomas Tuchel was not universally well-received.

"I'm sorry I have a German passport," the serial-winning former Paris Saint-Germain, Chelsea and Bayern Munich coach quipped at his official unveiling in 2024.

He had woken that morning to some unflattering headlines in the British media.

The Daily Mail described it as a "dark day for England" and said the national team had gambled on a "GERMAN".

The party leader of the right-wing Reform UK Nigel Farage asked on X: "Why can't we have an English manager?"

Never mind that Tuchel was a Champions League winner who had lifted trophies in three different countries. Or the fact that England has gone down the foreign route before: a Swedish coach in Sven-Goran Eriksson and an Italian in Fabio Capello. And in the days before Tuchel's appointment, there were rumors that Pep Guardiola was also a leading candidate.

Historic rivals

A point of contention was the fact that Germany has long been England's biggest soccer rival. Since winning the 1966 World Cup final against West Germany, England has often struggled against the Germans at major tournaments. Some England fans have brought 20th-century history to the rivalry with provocative chants taunting Germany about World War II.

Debate about Tuchel's nationality, however, dissipated quickly, helped by his easy-going charm when dealing with the media and a perfect winning record during England's World Cup qualifying campaign.

According to professor Jan Ruger, author of the upcoming book *Great Powers: A History of Britain and Germany*, the wider reaction to Tuchel's appointment points to a change in Anglo-German relations after the tensions that prevailed in the decades following two world wars.

"There were questions, but it certainly hasn't turned into an ongoing saga in the way in which it would have in the 1990s or even around the turn of the century," Ruger told The Associated Press. "Then it would have been unthinkable to have a German manager.

"Germany really isn't the bad guy anymore. That's long since passed. I don't think it works portraying Germany as the bogeyman."

Fierce criticism

Time will tell if Tuchel is portrayed as a hero or villain at the World Cup. If England fails, his nationality might be raised again. But England managers of the past have been the subject of brutal criticism by fans and media, regardless of what it says on their passport.





Debate about Thomas Tuchel's nationality dissipated quickly, helped by his easy-going charm when dealing with the media and a perfect winning record during England's World Cup qualifying campaign. AGENCIES

Tuchel's predecessor Gareth Southgate was widely credited with making England fans fall back in love with the national team during his eight-year spell, yet he faced a torrent of abuse from sections of supporters during the 2024 European Championship, with plastic beer glasses thrown in his direction after one match.

Southgate departed after leading England to back-to-back Euros finals and the World Cup semifinals in 2018.

He goes down as the nation's second-most successful manager after Alf Ramsey, who led England to World Cup victory in 1966.

If Tuchel can end England's trophy wait, he would become a national treasure.

"Everyone in the squad, the staff, everyone believes we can win it," midfielder Kobbie Mainoo said.

Difficult decisions

Tuchel stunned some fans and players with his squad selection for the World Cup, leaving out big names including Phil Foden, Cole Palmer and Trent Alexander-Arnold.

It was evidence that he would not be swayed by public opinion, which has been a criticism of previous coaches.

"Everything I know about international football tells me that tournaments are won by teams, not individuals," he said. "What we're trying to achieve in the summer can only be achieved as a team."

Midfielder Jordan Henderson was one of the surprise inclusions at the age of 35.

"I know everybody likes to speak about players that aren't here, unfortunately that's the case with every England squad really," Henderson said.

"There's so many good players, so much talent, but for us as a squad here, it's about being together and we're here for a reason and it's about bringing that, being the best version of yourself, being best version individually and collectively, working every day to achieve our dreams."

A proven winner

Tuchel is the 14th coach tasked with the challenge of ending England's trophy drought, which now stretches to 60 years.

After Southgate's departure the English Football Association said it was looking for a candidate to "win a major tournament". That might sound obvious, but even coaches who had won big prizes with club teams such as Bobby Robson, Terry Venables, Eriksson and Capello could not emulate that success with England.

Southgate got closer than anyone since Ramsey despite a modest coaching career before being handed the national job.

His success appeared to be grounded in developing a connection both within his squad and with supporters. As a former player who missed a penalty in a semi-final shootout defeat to Germany at Euro 1996, his emotional understanding of what it means to represent England appeared to resonate with a new generation.

As a foreign coach — albeit one who coached in the Premier League with Chelsea — Tuchel cannot bring that same dynamic to the role.

He does, however, fit the description of a winner of major tournaments, having led Chelsea to the Champions League in 2021. He was also a Champions League finalist with Paris Saint-Germain.

He won league titles in France with PSG and Germany with Bayern Munich.

In Harry Kane, Jude Bellingham and Declan Rice, he has three of the biggest stars in European soccer and enough talent at his disposal that he felt able to leave out the likes of Foden and Palmer.

"I love the difficult decisions and I love the tough decisions because they bring in the end clarity, they bring a certain edge, and it's what you need to go all the way," Tuchel said. "From day one, we said we will always try to select and build the best group, which is maybe not necessarily just to collect the best talents."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Cherki's magical skills could be just what France needs in tight games

PARIS — If matches get tight for France at the World Cup and a defense is particularly hard for the star-studded attack to breach, Rayan Cherki is a dream player to bring on.

The 22-year-old enjoyed a brilliant first season with Manchester City, lighting up the Premier League with his maverick skills and amazing passing. He finished second with 12 assists behind only Manchester United's Bruno Fernandes, an established Premier League player.

One of Cherki's assists saw him dribble across the penalty area with his right foot before playing a blind pass — where a player does not look in the direction of where he is passing — with his left foot to Marc Guehi. Afterward, City coach Pep Guardiola — who coached all-time great Lionel Messi at Barcelona — spoke of his disbelief at the creativity shown because he had not even seen that pass as an option.

In another match, Cherki assisted Phil Foden's goal with an audacious Rabona pass, in which the player's kicking leg is crossed behind the back of the standing leg.

Cherki is more of a passer, but when he does score the goals highlight his amazing close control. Take his brilliant goal on his City debut against Wolverhampton, where he started the move with an outrageous backheel flick.

He can also run directly at players at speed with the ball glued to his feet, attributes he shares with the record eight-time Ballon d'Or winner Messi. His goal during his debut for France last June saw him net a brilliant volley against Spain in the Nations League.

"Rayan has something special," Guardiola said. "He will become an extraordinary player with his mindset and mentality."

Options for France

Cherki gives France coach Didier Deschamps wider options thanks to his versatility. He can play as an attacking midfielder or a right winger as he does with City, or as a playmaker just behind the center forward.

He was positioned behind Marcus Thuram in a 3-1 win against Colombia in March, where he was involved in two goals, and behind Kylian Mbappe against Ukraine last November.

When he was called up to the France squad for the first time in May last year, Cherki called it "the beginning of a beautiful adventure". It could take him to greatness, for Cherki has the soccer world at his feet.

It's hard to tell which is his stronger foot, although like Messi his best magic comes from his left.

In an interview with France Football magazine in March, Cherki was asked to name City's best technical player.

Without hesitation, he replied: "Me."

Cherki also described himself as "one of the most unpredictable players on the planet".

Perfect if France needs him to break down a solid defense.

Another Lyon gem

Cherki came through Lyon's renowned youth academy, which has produced the likes of 2022 Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema and the wonderfully skilled Hatem Ben Arfa.

He made his Ligue 1 debut at just 16 years old in October 2019 and scored his first senior goal a few weeks later in a French Cup match, when Cherki's astounding talent shone bright. He scored two clinical goals, set up a teammate with a brilliant pass from midfield, won a penalty which his teammate missed, then provided another assist. He also hit the crossbar with an audacious lob.



France's Rayan Cherki (left) in action with Germany's Jonathan Tah during a Nations League game on June 8, 2025. REUTERS

It was a mesmerizing performance for his age and put him on the radar of Europe's biggest clubs.

In his final season at Lyon, he ended with a league-high 11 assists. City landed him last summer for 36 million euros ($41 million), perhaps benefiting from Lyon's dire financial situation to buy him for what now looks like a bargain price in soccer transfer terms.

Guardiola must have already known what he was getting, since Cherki scored against City in a Champions League youth game just after turning 15 — the youngest scorer in the competition.

Future of France

Cherki's remarkable balance is an asset he shares with Messi and the late Diego Maradona, who honed his rare talent in the back streets of a shantytown on the outskirts of Buenos Aires. As a young boy, Cherki developed his technique on the streets of Lyon in east-central France. After one season with suburban club Saint-Priest he joined Lyon's academy at seven.

While he is not expected to start for France at the World Cup, that is understandable given the glittering talent in attack.

Les Bleus will likely line up with Bayern Munich star Michael Olise, Ballon d'Or winner Ousmane Dembele and the prolific Mbappe, who scored a hat-trick in the 2022 World Cup final loss to Argentina and netted in the 2018 World Cup final win over Croatia.

Deschamps is stepping down after the World Cup and his successor is widely touted to be Zinedine Zidane — the star of France's triumphs at the 1998 World Cup and Euro 2000, who, like Mbappe, scored in two World Cup finals.

Zidane was an exquisitely gifted midfielder himself and could build his team around Cherki in the years to come.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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The greatest wall
Ancient monument sets stage for new generations
TALES & TRAILS, PAGES 7-10



New global partnership targets poverty
CHINA, PAGE 11



Europe scorched
Record-breaking heat wave grips continent amid climate warming
WORLD, PAGE 14

CHINA DAILY

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Chinese assets gaining appeal around world

Artificial intelligence-powered revolution a key driver of shifting investment landscape

By **WANG KEJU**
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As geopolitical tensions, diverging economic policies and rapid advances in artificial intelligence reshape global markets, senior economists said that Chinese assets are emerging as a key anchor, with the country's cost-effective AI ecosystem well positioned to support a new round of manufacturing upgrading.

With China pushing ahead with financial opening-up, economists said the case for including Chinese assets in global portfolios is likely to strengthen further, even as US equities continue to play an important role in global asset allocation.

Despite persistent uncertainty, global cross-border capital continued to expand in 2025, with the United States, the United Kingdom and China remaining among the world's major destinations for international capital, said Zhang Xiaoyan, associate dean at Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance.

"The core logic of global capital allocation is simple: Investors seek better returns with lower risks," Zhang said. "Chinese assets could offer both."

On the return side, Zhang pointed to strong growth potential in China's emerging sectors such as digital technology and software, advanced manufacturing, automation, clean energy and green tech. In terms of risks, Chinese assets have low correlation with European and US markets, making them "effective diversifiers", she added.

In particular, the AI revolution is a key driver of the shifting global investment landscape.

Despite mounting risks from geopolitics, tariffs, energy shocks and inflation, new opportunities are emerging in AI infrastructure, energy transition and supply chain restructuring, said Shane Zhang, chairman of Morgan Stanley Securities (China).

Zhang said that Asia, and China especially, may be entering what he described as an investment- and manufacturing-led "super cycle". "China's supply chain resilience, high-end manufacturing, materials and AI industrial chain are drawing growing international attention," he added.

Dismissing AI bubble fears, he highlighted China's cost advantage, noting that achieving comparable model inference performance — the point at which a trained AI model processes new data in real time and produces output — in the country costs just 15 to 20 percent of the figure for the US. "That will drive broader AI adoption across China's economy," he added.

Miao Yanliang, chief strategist at China International Capital Corp, also said the AI revolution is no speculative bubble so far. "The technology is indeed boosting productivity, there's no heavy use of leverage, and valuations are not excessive by historical standards."

Miao said the adoption of AI is approaching an inflection point where gradual growth turns to exponential acceleration. "The winner won't be just one; it could be both China and the US, and the rest of the world could also benefit from this technological revolution," he added.

> "The core logic of global capital allocation is simple: Investors seek better returns with lower risks. Chinese assets could offer both."
>
> **Zhang Xiaoyan,** associate dean at Tsinghua University's PBC School of Finance

In the new landscape, investors can no longer rely on a single anchor. The US remains a vital component, but ignoring China is no longer an option, according to economists.

"Global capital is moving from an overweight position in US assets toward more diversified allocation," Miao said, noting that China's current weighting in global portfolios remains below the country's economic strength and corporate performance.

As central banks diversify reserves and investors seek alternatives to dollar-centric holdings, renminbi-denominated assets are gaining attention, Miao said, adding that China's continued financial opening and the steady internationalization of its currency support this shift.

China's financial opening is gathering pace, with easier market access for qualified foreign institutional investors and improved cross-border investment mechanisms, which is expected to give Chinese assets more weight in global portfolios, experts said.

"Investors need to adapt their strategies to changing market environments," said Zhang Xiaoyan, the Tsinghua associate dean. "With China's high-level opening-up and the implementation of favorable policies, the domestic capital market will welcome more development opportunities, offering long-term investment potential for investors at home and abroad."

Despite the growing appeal of Chinese assets for global investors, economists said the pace and momentum of domestic demand recovery remain a key factor for investors to watch.

Chinese enterprises' innovation and production capabilities are highly competitive, said S&P Global Ratings' Asia-Pacific chief economist Louis Kuijs, noting that the challenge lies in domestic demand and consumption.

In Kuijs' view, stimulating consumption hinges on addressing households' worries about income and job stability, and increasing the availability of public services such as healthcare and education for the country's urban migrant population.

INSIDE
River of shared prosperity
Global Views, page 6



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Prayers for peace



Palestinians offer prayers on Wednesday beside the ruins of a mosque destroyed by Israeli strikes, in Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip. Israel said it targeted and killed Mohammed Odeh, the new leader of Hamas' military wing, during airstrikes in Gaza City on Tuesday.
ABDEL KAREEM HANA / AP **See story, page 15**

Desert fighter, US friend to reunite soon

By **DUAN JINXIAN** and **WANG SONGSONG** in Beijing

When China's afforestation hero Yin Yuzhen and her friend from the United States Ronald Sakolsky spoke over the phone recently, people from all over the country expressed the hope that they would meet again in person soon. Now that wish is set to come true.

When China Daily met up with Yin for an interview on Tuesday in Beijing, the 60-year-old, her dark black braid reaching her waist just like it did in many of her old photos, revealed that she would meet her old friend and tree-planting benefactor this summer.

Sakolsky also confirmed the appointment when contacted on Tuesday night. He said that he would be coming to China in August.

During his time here, he plans to visit the "forest miracle" he helped create years ago in Maowusu, in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region.

Maowusu is China's fourth-largest sandy stretch, covering a vast area spread across Shaanxi province, and the Inner Mongolia and Ningxia Hui autonomous regions.

On his trip to China, Sakolsky also plans to visit Luoyang, Henan province, where he taught English in 1999 and 2000. It was there that he first heard about Yin's efforts — planting trees to reclaim land that was being overtaken by the desert.

He set out to raise money to support the project and procured a $5,000 donation to help Yin buy saplings. Those saplings have now grown into trees that carpet the once barren area in green. It is a gift that Yin said she will never forget.

"When Sakolsky comes here, I will make noodles for him, representing both a long life and our long friendship," she said with a broad smile. "I will also treat him to our specialty food such as lamb skewers and millet porridge."

She also promised to give him a pair of insoles that she embroidered.

Yin is a national model worker who is widely acclaimed as one of China's afforestation heroes.

"No matter which country you are from, when you visit Maowusu it means you love nature and the Earth. We can unite with other people through our common dreams," Yin said.

She added that she remembered all the people who helped her. "They have moved me not just for a short time, but for a lifetime."

Yin was in Beijing on her way to Tallberg in Sweden, where she has been invited to participate in an international forum from Wednesday to Sunday.

*See **Friendship,** page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

WHATEVER YOU'RE IN THE MARKET FOR, PANJIAYUAN PROBABLY HAS IT

Antiques hub is magnet for tourists looking for unique keepsake

By **CHEN NAN**
chennan@chinadaily.com.cn

Edwin den Hartog, a visitor from the Netherlands, had wandered the streets of Beijing many times before, but it had not prepared him for Panjiayuan. The sprawling market, a labyrinth of alleys and stalls in the capital's southeast, unfolded like a miniature city of its own.

Sunlight glinted off jade trinkets, and he was surrounded by wooden carvings and stacks of old posters, while vendors called out in friendly tones, offering a glimpse into the city's lively, mercantile heart.

"This market is huge!" Den Hartog exclaimed, pausing to take in the sheer scale of the scene. "The atmosphere is so different from markets back home. To foreigners, the items at the market are fascinating — little pieces of history that could become a keepsake."

The antiques section was his first stop. Rows of stalls overflowed with curiosities: carved wooden figures, metalwork and jade pieces with intricate patterns.

Hoping to buy his mother a necklace, he marveled at the textures, the weight and the stories each item seemed to carry. Nearby, another corner overflowed with beads, perfect for assembling a personalized necklace.



Foreigners browse through books at an autumn old book fair at the Panjiayuan Antique Market in Beijing in 2024. WANG FEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

China Vibes 中国风尚 — GIFTS —

"Picking the beads yourself is so much fun," he said, sliding a polished blue stone onto a string. "It feels like you're making a memory, not just buying a souvenir."

Panjiayuan's story stretches back centuries. Originally known as Panjiayao, during the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) the area hosted kilns run by the Pan family from Shandong province, producing bricks and tiles for Beijing's old city.

*See **Market,** page 3*

WORLD WATCH
By Sujata Ashwarya

Two exits reflect an OPEC in transition

The United Arab Emirates recently left the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, seven years after Qatar walked away from the same institution. Two Gulf countries have now departed the cartel that coordinated their oil politics for nearly six decades.

The question worth asking is not what this means for OPEC, which will continue in some form. It is whether these twin exits, read alongside the quieter recalibrations underway in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, tell us something about where Gulf oil politics are heading, and what kind of regional order is taking shape behind the daily news of war, ceasefire and energy disruption.

The two departures were driven by different logics, but they point in the same direction. Qatar's 2019 exit was the move of a state that had become peripheral to OPEC's core business. Doha's future was already in liquefied natural gas, where it was a global leader and where OPEC quotas had no relevance. Leaving was a strategic refocusing rather than a rupture.

The UAE's exit is structurally different. Abu Dhabi was OPEC's third-largest producer, with spare capacity that gave the cartel credibility in moments of supply shock. Its departure represents the loss of a central pillar.

What the two exits share is the underlying judgment that the institution no longer fits the national strategy.

The proximate trigger for the UAE move is well understood. Abu Dhabi has invested heavily in expanding its production capacity, now at roughly 4.8 million barrels per day, with ambitions of 5 million by 2027, while OPEC quotas held its actual output well below that ceiling. The frustration was real and long-standing.

*See **Energy,** page 3*

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INDEPTH





A security inspection robot (left) and a laser leveling robot (right). PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Robots expanding limits of mega projects

Work at Shanghai airport terminal a model for major 'smart' construction, experts say

By **YU YILEI** and **WANG YING** in Shanghai

At the vast construction site of Shanghai Pudong International Airport's Terminal 3, a group of construction robots is racing against the clock alongside human workers — the ideal choice for carrying out repetitive, efficiency-intensive, and hazardous tasks.

As the first large-scale application of robots in civil aviation infrastructure construction, their deployment highlights the significance of intelligent manufacturing and smart construction in building mega projects, experts said.

Consisting of 37 types of robots with different functions, they are under the command of a unified "brain" known as a construction robot cluster management system. It is the first application of such a system in a large aviation project.

Tang Shengling, senior consulting adviser at the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute's digital economy research center, said the use of robots in the airport construction project is a significant step.

"The landmark application of clustered and systematic construction robots will provide a replicable Chinese model for the development of intelligent robotics and the smart upgrading of the construction industry," Tang said.

Efficiency improved

The terminal under construction covers nearly 1.5 million square meters, with a total floor area of about 1.96 million sq m, according to Zhang Yi, deputy director of the terminal engineering department of Shanghai Airport (Group)'s construction division.

"One of its most distinctive architectural features is the international terminal's bird-shaped roof. Together with 17 gigantic bird-shaped columns, it creates the impression of a bird soaring through the sky," Zhang said.

"The project is expected to be ready ... in 2028, further supporting Shanghai's development into an international aviation hub," added Zhang.

Qin Yi, deputy general manager of Shanghai Construction Group's general contracting department, said the number of robots and the scale of their application in the project are unparalleled.

Qin, who is also the executive deputy head of the Shanghai Pudong International Airport's Terminal 3 project, said the robots would reduce construction time by 20 percent, and trim the on-site workforce by about 35 percent.

For instance, a crew of three robots is doing the concrete flooring works continuously and efficiently in carrying out tasks of leveling, surface finishing and polishing. The crew is expected to complete about 700,000 sq m of structural and architectural flooring work for the project.

The team consists of a four-wheel laser leveling robot, a crawler smoothing robot and a floor polishing robot, Qin said. The crew can process more than 1,000 sq m of flooring per day, and keep deviations in flatness to within a millimeter.

The use of robots has not only saved construction time but also significantly reduced reliance on specialized labor, further ensuring the stability and quality of the construction process. "The introduction of robots for the project has made the construction process more advanced and intelligent, therefore improving the overall project's quality and standard," Qin said.

When comparing manpower and robot performance, for example, robots can significantly improve first-pass welding qualification rates and overall welding quality, he said. The rework rate in traditional manual welding is typically close to 10 percent, but welding robots have virtually eliminated reworking.

Eradicating human risk

The use of construction robots demonstrates their application possibilities not only in airport infrastructure, but also in other industries, said Duanmu Haiying, director of the Shanghai Meta-Now Metaverse Industry Promotion Center.

"This extensive application of robots of multiple brands and multiple types of systems will enable end-to-end connectivity across the data chain, further optimizing costs," Duanmu said.

Cao Qixin, a professor specializing in robot research at Shanghai Jiao Tong University, said: "The construction industry involves highly complex workflows, and integrating multiple types of robots through an intelligent platform has significant importance."

Twenty-four robot models are currently being used in the terminal construction project. Based on their functions and applications, they are classified into three categories: on-site construction robots, construction management robots, and processing robots, Qin said.

Working in risky scenarios, they can perform highly difficult operations, eliminating the need for human workers to be directly exposed to hazardous environments such as high temperatures, toxic gases and flying sparks.

In complex areas such as the bird-shaped columns, elevated facade panels and skybridge truss structures, multiple welding robots can play important roles, Qin said. In traditional high-altitude operations, the aerial-work robots are capable of carrying out tasks such as coating surfaces and decoration, curtain wall water-spray testing, and cleaning maintenance.

"Civil aviation engineering has the highest requirements for safety and precision, so robots must undergo reliability verification in real-world scenarios," said Duanmu, adding the Shanghai project can serve as a model for the intelligent upgrading of infrastructure projects nationwide.

In highly repetitive tasks, robots are all-rounders capable of handling everything, including trivial chores. A security inspection robot, for example, has agile movement and can take panoramic images on a construction site, allowing management to view any alarming scenarios and on-site conditions in real time.







Above: Work is underway at the construction site of Shanghai Pudong International Airport's Terminal 3 on May 11. WANG YING / CHINA DAILY **Left:** A worker operates a welding robot at the site. **Below:** A curtain wall glass panel is installed at the construction site with the help of a robot. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



An engineer demonstrates how to use a paintwork robot before it is deployed at the construction of Shanghai Pudong International Airport's Terminal 3. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Another example is the cleaning robot, which can remove small stones and dust from construction floors via a fully automated operating system. The machine is capable of cleaning up to 500 sq m of floor area per hour.

As for underground work, the welding robots can reduce the workforce by 50 percent and improve efficiency by 30 percent.

"During the construction of Shanghai Pudong International Airport's Terminal 3, various robots were extensively used, particularly in floor leveling and steel structure welding," Qin said. "The use of robots also includes our on-site unmanned inspection management, as well as our backstage digital management matrix. The introduction of robots into the project has effectively transformed the construction process into advanced manufacturing and intelligent construction, and has improved the overall project's quality and standard," he added.

Setting high standards

Qin is proud that a large proportion of the robots being used on the project are made in China or have Chinese origins.

"The robots we are using can be categorized into three types. The first is robots that have been independently researched and developed by ourselves, such as molding robots and robots that weld wall foundations. The second is those we jointly developed with (domestic) robot manufacturers. And the third is those we directly purchased from the market, including some imported equipment," Qin said.

Shanghai is looking to transform and upgrade its advanced manufacturing over the coming three years. The use of robots in the terminal construction perfectly fits this agenda. The three-year action plan was unveiled by the municipal government early in January.

The plan has set ambitious goals, including nurturing 100 manufacturing enterprises, each with an annual output of above 1 billion yuan ($147 million), and raising the city's robot density to 600 robots per 10,000 employees by 2028. The measures are expected to consolidate and enhance the city's industrial chain and turn it into a global high-end manufacturing center.

Robot density, a key gauge of the adoption of automation in manufacturing, is the number of robots per 10,000 people in the manufacturing industry.

China has a robot density of 166 per 10,000 workers, ranking sixth in Asia and 22nd globally, according to a report from International Federation of Robotics.

South Korea tops the rankings at 1,220, followed by Singapore at 818. Shanghai's current density level of robots is 500 according to Xinhua News Agency. If it reaches the target of 600 by 2028, it would rank third behind South Korea and Singapore.

Transportation face-lift

The extensive deployment of robots at the terminal construction project offers three key insights, said Tang Shengling, senior consulting adviser at the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Research Institute.

"First, it provides a reference model for large public infrastructure, offering practical experience for future major projects such as airports, rail transit and large-scale public buildings. Second, the clustered use of robots is reshaping the construction industry's long-standing reliance on labor-intensive methods. Finally, it will help drive the development of upstream and downstream technologies and the broader supporting ecosystem," Tang said.

When operational, Terminal 3 is expected to further enhance Shanghai's position as an international aviation hub, and be a crucial cog in the Yangtze River Delta's regional airport cluster.

Zhang, the deputy director of the terminal engineering department, said after completion, the new terminal will add 50 million additional annual passenger trips to the airport's capacity. Shanghai Pudong International Airport received nearly 85 million passenger trips by the end of 2025, exceeding its design capacity of 80 million, he said.

"Terminal 3 is designed to enable Shanghai Pudong International Airport to handle 130 million passenger trips annually by 2035," Zhang said.

Shanghai's two airports recorded more than 135 million passenger trips, and handled 4.5 million metric tons of cargo-and-mail throughput in 2025, according to the Shanghai Airport (Group).

The airport group currently operates an aviation network that reaches a record 302 destinations in 54 countries.

The construction of Terminal 3, which is the core project of the airport's phase-four expansion, officially started on November 20, 2024, and is scheduled for completion in 2028.

Shanghai is undergoing a face-lift of its transportation system with other major facilities scheduled for completion in the coming two years, including the Shanghai East Railway Station.

With the main structure more than 50 percent complete, the project is expected to finish construction by the end of this year, and is slated to begin operations by July 2027, according to local officials.

Baoshan Railway Station, the starting point of the 2,000-kilometer, 500-billion-yuan high-speed railway linking Shanghai and Sichuan province, is also set to be put into operation next July. The new station is expected to improve the integration of the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

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TOP NEWS

Nation's brands eye World Cup

Chinese firms use AI, digital platforms to expand global reach as tournament nears

By **LI JING**
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The 2026 FIFA World Cup, which is scheduled to take place from June 12 to July 20, is emerging as a major global marketing stage for Chinese brands seeking to expand overseas, as fragmented viewing habits and digital advertising tools reshape how companies participate in top-tier sports events.

The tournament, jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, is expected to attract more than 6 billion viewers worldwide, with overall exposure projected to rise 20 percent from the previous soccer World Cup, according to a recent survey by global advertising technology company The Trade Desk.

Chinese companies increasingly see the World Cup as more than just a platform for logo exposure. They are going to use the event to strengthen global brand recognition through technology, streaming platforms and social media.

"Top-tier sporting events are helping Chinese brands enter a more advanced stage of globalization," said Wang Xueli, director of Tsinghua University's Center for Development of Sports Industry.

"In the past, many Chinese companies mainly wanted to build basic brand awareness. But now, through top global events such as the World Cup, they are trying to strengthen their position in mid — to high-end markets and showcase their technological capabilities."

TTD's survey found that audience behavior around the upcoming tournament is becoming increasingly fragmented. At least one-third of viewers plan to follow matches through multiple channels, including traditional television, sports apps, connected TV platforms and short-form video content.

In North America, 45 percent of US respondents and 47 percent of Canadian respondents said that they would use sports apps to follow the event, while more than 40 percent in both countries planned to consume content through connected TV and streaming platforms.

"The World Cup is evolving from a 90-minute match into a long-cycle content ecosystem spanning pre-match buildup, live interaction and post-match engagement," said Ashley Wu, senior director of business development at TTD China. "That creates new opportunities for Chinese brands to build sustained connections with overseas consumers."

The changes are also lowering barriers for smaller brands.

Previous soccer World Cups were largely dominated by multinational sponsors who spent heavily on stadium exposure and naming rights. But artificial intelligence-driven advertising, streaming platforms and social media now allow smaller companies to target overseas consumers more precisely and at lower cost.

"Sports marketing is no longer only about sponsoring a team or buying billboard space," Wu said. "Even brands without huge budgets can now reach highly specific audiences through multi-channel campaigns."

Platforms such as TikTok and Instagram have pushed sports content far beyond core soccer fans, helping brands reach younger and female consumers. TTD's survey found that women now account for nearly half of viewers in several European markets, while Gen Z audiences in Spain and Italy showed engagement levels above 90 percent.

China's established global brands are also embedding themselves into tournament operations.

Hisense, the official display technology partner for the tournament's video assistant referee system, will supply RGB Mini LED displays for FIFA VAR centers. Meanwhile, Lenovo is deploying more than 10,000 devices and more than 200 engineers across all 16 venues, introducing AI-powered "digital twin" technology capable of generating 3D virtual replicas of players and match situations.

Analysts say such partnerships reflect a broader shift in how Chinese companies engage with global sports events.

"Chinese firms are no longer simply buying advertising boards around stadiums," Wang from Tsinghua University said. "They are becoming part of the technological infrastructure behind major international sporting events."

For Chinese companies, the appeal of global sports marketing may also lie in its relative stability during a volatile global geopolitical and economic environment.

"Whether it's tariffs or geopolitical tensions, sports remain one of the few globally positive and emotionally resonant topics," Wu from TTD China said. "For Chinese brands trying to build long-term international recognition, that kind of certainty has become increasingly valuable."



A customer wearing an Argentina national team jersey shops on Monday for World Cup merchandise at a store at Yiwu International Trade City in Zhejiang province. WEI ZHIYANG/FOR CHINA DAILY

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Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic visits the innovation center of Minth Group in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, on Wednesday. Vucic, who is on a five-day state visit to China, learned about the company's latest achievements in advanced manufacturing and the development of humanoid robots. LIU MINGXIANG / XINHUA

Vucic sees new chapter in bilateral ties

By **ZHAO JIA** in Beijing
and **CHEN YE** in Jiaxing, Zhejiang

When robots performed Serbia's Moravac folk dance on Wednesday at an innovation center in Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic saw more than a display of smart technology.

In a social media post after visiting the innovation center of Minth Group, Vucic said that he had seen how robots are assembled and how they can be used in daily life, industry and entertainment.

He said the performance of the Serbian folk dance showed that technology is not only about science and machines, but also about understanding the traditions and spirit of a people.

Such technologies would soon come to Serbia with the support of Chinese friends and partners, bringing "a completely new development energy" to the country, he said.

Vucic visited Minth Group's facility in Jiaxing on Wednesday during his trip to Zhejiang. The company, a global supplier of automotive exterior parts, body structural components and products related to new energy vehicles, entered the Serbian market in 2018 and has since built 10 factories in the country, making it an important participant in China-Serbia industrial cooperation.

At the factory, Serbian young people demonstrated robotic operation skills they had learned there, drawing applause from Vucic and underscoring the role of skills training in bilateral industrial cooperation.

During the visit, Vucic also met representatives of major Chinese companies interested in investing in Serbia. He said the two sides discussed concrete projects, new factories, advanced technologies, and opportunities to provide even more jobs.

Vucic said the investment agreements reached and signed by the two sides on Wednesday, worth a total of 953 million euros ($1.11 billion), represented an enormous amount for Serbia. The projects showed "in the most beautiful way" what the ironclad friendship between Serbia and China means in practice, and how it could help "change the face of Serbia", he added.

The visit came amid deepening local-level cooperation and people-to-people exchanges between Zhejiang and the European country. In 2025, trade between Zhejiang and Serbia reached $990 million, up 11.1 percent year-on-year.

Zhejiang and Serbia have established four pairs of city-level friendly exchange relationships, while nearly 10 universities in Zhejiang have developed stable partnerships with Serbian educational institutions.

The China-Serbia Youth Cultural Exchange Center was also unveiled on Wednesday in Jiaxing. Designed as a long-term platform for bilateral youth exchanges, it will focus on emerging fields such as smart manufacturing, new energy, humanoid robots and the low-altitude economy. Under the program, 500 young people from Serbia will be invited to visit China.

At the center's opening, Vucic called it "a true treasure" for Serbia, where young people will learn about new technologies and return home with advanced knowledge. He encouraged them to learn from the Chinese people, build friendships with their Chinese peers, and take knowledge back to Serbia to contribute to the nation's development.

People-to-people exchanges are "of the utmost importance for Serbia" and valuable for Chinese young people, as the two sides learn from each other, adapt to different cultures and learn how to work better together, Vucic said.

After completing his itinerary in Zhejiang, Vucic went to Shanghai on Wednesday. He will conclude his five-day state visit to China on Thursday.

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Friendship: Sandy stretches transformed

From page 1

According to the invitation, Yin's efforts have resulted in more than 300,000 trees being planted across 4,000 hectares, a feat that has earned her respect and recognition around the world.

"Over the past 35 years, you have worked with an indomitable spirit to transform desert areas into thriving oases," the invitation said.

Yin has been invited to "share her experience in sustainable development, to foster constructive dialogue, and to explore potential pathways for future collaboration".

"I want to talk about desert greening, protecting the Earth, the soil and the water," she said.

For Sakolsky, now 69 and a retired high school teacher in Pennsylvania, his stint in China had a profound impact on him. "The Chinese taught me to appreciate the simple things in life. It is about how much empathy and kindness you can share, as well as respect," he said.

Referring to his friend Yin, he added, "Please tell her I will see her soon."

On May 20, the Inner Mongolia autonomous region's people's association for friendship with foreign countries officially invited Sakolsky to "witness the growth of young saplings into dense forests".

Since 1959, China has established a desert scientific expedition team, according to a report of Guangming Daily. Through continuous exploration, the country has made breakthroughs in advanced theories and technologies, successfully transforming the appearance of large sandy stretches, while also providing the world with access to China's desertification control approach.

The Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification has honored China for its "outstanding contribution to combating desertification" three times, a Xinhua News Agency report said.

Yuan Hui contributed to this story.

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Market: More than 4,000 vendors sell everything from calligraphy to coins

From page 1

Since its founding in 1992, Panjiayuan has become China's most popular market for antiques and folk art. Today, it spans nearly 50,000 square meters, divided into six sections, including street stalls, classical furniture and modern collectibles. Over 4,000 vendors from across China sell products ranging from calligraphy and old books to coins and folk crafts.

Den Hartog also noticed the relaxed pace among some vendors — some even napping on chairs, others chatting with neighbors.

"There's a sense of life and leisure here that makes browsing fun. You're not just shopping; you're part of the market's rhythm," he said.

After three hours, Den Hartog's feet were tired, but he wasn't done. "The market is enormous. You could spend an entire day here," he said, reflecting on the layers of discovery. He capped off his visit at a nearby Wenzhou seafood restaurant, savoring the flavors before stepping back into the bustling streets.

Behind one of the bead stalls, Li Mei, a longtime vendor at the market, smiled warmly as she helped customers choose pieces.

"People come from all over the world. They bring a lively energy to the market. Some want antiques, some just want something beautiful to remember their trip. It's not just about selling; it's about sharing a piece of the city's memory," she said. "Some just enjoy the experience of discovery, nostalgia and connection."

There is Lu Ke, a book lover, who visits Panjiayuan's secondhand book stalls almost every weekend. She focuses on books about history, economics and literary biographies.

"Whenever I find something in those categories, I grab it without hesitation. Spending the equivalent of two cups of milk tea on books might seem trivial, but the joy and energy they bring last far longer than a sugary drink — so why not?" she said.

"The joy of browsing secondhand books isn't just in finding the right title; it's in flipping through the notes and thoughts left by previous readers, feeling the traces of time etched into the pages," she added.

Energy: Independent national strategies pursued

From page 1

But the timing carries its own meaning. Choosing to leave during the Iran war, when Gulf energy infrastructure has been under sustained attack and the Strait of Hormuz has been intermittently impassable, signals a state preparing for the next phase of regional politics on its own terms.

The Saudi-Emirati dimension is where the structural shift becomes visible. Riyadh has carried the political cost of OPEC+ production discipline for years, defending prices through cuts that constrained its own revenue and demanded coordination with Moscow. The UAE's exit means Saudi Arabia now carries that burden alone with Russia. The Emirati energy minister was at pains to insist the decision had nothing to do with Riyadh, that this was about national strategy and not about brothers within the group. That kind of careful denial usually confirms the underlying pressure. The two states will continue to coordinate where their interests align, but they are diverging under shared regional constraint, their interests still overlapping while the institutional architecture that bound them together gives way.

Read at the level of the regional order, what is happening in the Gulf is neither collapse nor consolidation. It is the gradual emergence of an arrangement in which states pursue independent national strategies under shared geographic and economic constraints, navigating their relationships with each other relationally rather than coordinating through inherited institutions.

OPEC was the central coordinating body of Gulf oil politics for nearly six decades. Its hollowing out reflects something larger: the leading Gulf producers no longer see institutional coordination as the right vehicle for their full range of interests, even when, as in Saudi Arabia's case, formal membership continues. The age of regional cartels and bloc discipline is giving way to something looser and more flexible, in which sovereignty is exercised through bilateral arrangements, parallel benchmarks and selective participation in overlapping platforms. The Iron Dome anti-missile battery deployed to Abu Dhabi during the Iran war and the recent OPEC exit are different expressions of the same logic. The Gulf is choosing flexibility over commitment, and capability over institution.

The institutions inherited from the 20th century, with OPEC chief among them, were built for a world in which oil-producing states needed coordination to manage their relationship with consumer markets and with the dollar system that priced their commodity. The Gulf states of 2026 are operating in a different world, one in which their strategic flexibility is more valuable than their institutional discipline, and in which their counterparties in Asia have built the financial and technical infrastructure to receive that flexibility.

The exits of Qatar in 2019 and the UAE in 2026 mark the visible surface of this transition. Whether others follow, and how the residual coordinating function of the cartel gets reconstituted, are the open questions of the next decade. What is no longer in question is the direction. The leading Gulf producers are moving away from the architecture of the 20th century, some by leaving its institutions, others by working around them while remaining inside.

The author is a professor at the Centre for West Asian Studies at Jamia Millia Islamia in New Delhi. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Steady development of ties will help advance China-Canada new strategic partnership

China and Canada have distinct historical and cultural backgrounds, yet cooperation and mutual benefit should be the main themes of their relationship.

Under the former Canadian government, however, the relationship faced numerous challenges, mainly due to its aligning the country with the United States in its China policy.

Since the Mark Carney government took office and signaled a change of approach, relations have gradually improved. This warming momentum has been steady after Carney's visit to China in January. During the visit, the two sides signed multiple economic and trade cooperation documents in agriculture, new materials, clean energy, finance and education.

Foreign Minister Wang Yi is scheduled to pay a three-day visit to Canada starting Thursday. The visit, the first by a Chinese foreign minister to Canada in a decade, is expected to help advance the implementation of the agreements reached during Carney's visit, including the resumption of the China-Canada high-level economic and financial strategic dialogue, and consultations on trade issues involving electric vehicles and canola seeds. The visit is also anticipated to facilitate further progress on Canada's previously announced plan to increase direct flights between the two countries, thereby enhancing bilateral economic, trade and people-to-people exchanges.

The breadth and depth of Sino-Canadian cooperation constitute a solid foundation to build on. In 2025, the total trade volume between China and Canada reached 124.09 billion Canadian dollars ($89.86 billion), with China consistently ranking as Canada's second-largest trading partner.

The two economies are also complementary. China, as one of the world's largest consumer markets, has a growing demand for Canada's agricultural products, energy resources and premium consumer goods, while Canada benefits from access to the superlarge Chinese market.

More importantly, China and Canada have the potential to jointly advance their new strategic partnership. The essence of a new strategic partnership lies in transcending ideological differences and geopolitical disputes, focusing on the common well-being of both peoples, and striving to advance the global governance system in a more just and equitable direction. China and Canada have the responsibility and capability to strengthen coordination and cooperation on major issues such as upholding multilateralism, addressing climate change and promoting global economic recovery.

Wang's visit can help enhance mutual understanding, which is crucial for the healthy development of bilateral relations. As the Chinese side stressed, the two sides should become partners that help each other achieve success and develop together. They should do more to promote cooperation and reduce items on the "negative list".

China looks forward to the visit enhancing political trust with Canada, expanding mutually beneficial cooperation, properly managing differences and promoting Sino-Canadian relations along a healthy, stable and sustainable trajectory for the betterment of both peoples, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said.

As long as the two countries uphold the principles of mutual respect and equality, advance cooperation with a pragmatic attitude, and foster trust with a broad-minded approach, they can indeed become reliable partners.

However, it is imperative for Ottawa to pursue a consistent China policy grounded in mutual respect and strategic autonomy.

Canada should maintain an objective and rational stance on China-related issues within multilateral mechanisms such as the G7 and NATO, and resist attempts to transform economic and security platforms into tools of bloc confrontation and geopolitical rivalry.

In particular, Ottawa should refrain from sending any erroneous signals to "Taiwan independence" separatist forces.

Likewise, disputes in the South China Sea should be peacefully resolved by directly concerned regional parties through dialogue and consultation. As a non-regional country, Canada should avoid actions that risk complicating the regional situation, heightening tensions, or undermining mutual trust among regional countries.

Global poverty relief entails collaboration

A major outcome of the 2026 Global Poverty Reduction and Development Forum that opened in Beijing on Wednesday is the establishment of the Global Partnership for Poverty Alleviation and Development (GPPAD) by China and 53 other countries, along with nine international organizations.

While some major countries export inflation, chaos and war, China is contributing poverty reduction and sharing its experience to promote poverty relief and common development.

United Nations Development Programme Resident Representative ad interim for China James George said in the first committee meeting of the GPPAD, the UNDP welcomes the partnership's emphasis on dialogue, knowledge-sharing, South-South cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaboration, as these are essential elements for accelerating sustainable development progress and ensuring that development pathways remain inclusive, resilient and sustainable.

Against a backdrop of mounting global development challenges, the establishment of the partnership is both timely and significant. According to the latest Global Multidimensional Poverty Index report released by the UNDP, 1.1 billion people across 109 countries continue to live in multidimensional poverty, while nearly 890 million vulnerable people face the dual pressures of poverty and severe climate hazards. With three-quarters of the world's extreme poverty concentrated in rural areas, the urgency of strengthening international cooperation on poverty reduction has become increasingly evident.

At a time when climate change, economic uncertainty, food insecurity, debt pressures and geopolitical conflicts are undermining global development gains, no country can tackle these challenges alone. What the world needs is stronger solidarity, more pragmatic cooperation and platforms that enable countries to share experiences and pursue common solutions. In this regard, the founding of the partnership represents another global public good provided by China and its partners.

By promoting policy dialogue, technology sharing, capacity building and development cooperation, China is transforming its poverty reduction experience into an international resource that benefits more developing countries. This reflects China's commitment to advancing inclusive development and building a global community with a shared future free from poverty.

China's experience demonstrates that poverty is neither inevitable nor unconquerable. In 2021, the country declared a landmark achievement: the eradication of absolute poverty, following a decades-long effort that lifted around 800 million people out of destitution. With that, the nation achieved the poverty reduction target of the UN 2030 Agenda 10 years ahead of schedule.

China has actively promoted international exchanges and cooperation on poverty alleviation. Through the Global Development Initiative, South-South cooperation projects, agricultural assistance programs and poverty reduction training seminars, China has shared its experience and technology with countries across Asia, Africa and Latin America. From hybrid rice technology benefiting farmers in nearly 70 countries to mushroom cultivation creating employment opportunities in over 100 countries and regions, China is sharing its hard-earned experience with the world.

Fundamentally, the issue of poverty reduction is an issue of development. Only through development can impoverished regions cultivate endogenous growth drivers and achieve sustainable prosperity. China's experience shows that poverty alleviation must move beyond short-term relief and focus instead on strengthening self-development capabilities.

As Chinese Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong said at the forum, China will support the GPPAD in fully leveraging its role by strengthening policy dialogue, technology demonstration and talent training, while developing a series of "small but beautiful" projects to help developing countries enhance their poverty reduction capacities.

To this end, there is an urgent need for all parties to build broader consensus and accelerate the global poverty reduction process. The proposals put forward by Liu underscore China's commitment to advancing international poverty alleviation through pragmatic, results-oriented actions. As he said, countries should accelerate pragmatic actions, strengthen dialogue and exchanges, enhance endogenous drivers by vigorously promoting market and technology-enabled empowerment, reinforce multilateral coordination and improve the global governance system for poverty reduction.

Poverty relief is not a one-time accomplishment but a long-term undertaking for all countries. Only through collaboration and shared progress can humanity build a better future marked by lasting prosperity and dignity for all.

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Luo Jie



Opinion Line

Real emotional connection at heart of *Dear You*'s success

Dear You, a low-budget drama in the Chaoshan (Teochew) dialect, has achieved quite a feat. According to the ticketing platform Maoyan, as of Tuesday the film, which cost 14 million yuan ($2.06 million) to make, had raked in over 1.1 billion yuan at the box office. Featuring a non-professional cast, the film has garnered an impressive rating of 9.2 out of 10 on the popular movie review platform Douban. The success of *Dear You* is a testament to the power of compelling storytelling. Despite lacking star power, the film's touching storyline attracted an audience by word of mouth. This spontaneous reaction shows the drawing power of a work that touches the heart.

The film is not just all romance; it is also about a profound sense of duty and moral obligation. At its heart lies a touching story: After the male main character dies a tragic death while working abroad in Thailand, a compatriot, Xie Nanzhi, a woman of Chaoshan descent who had befriended him there, chooses not to immediately tell his wife. Instead, she continues his practice of sending letters and money home for 18 years. This act of kindness and dedication quietly helps a stranger far away.

From being illiterate to learning how to write, Xie perseveres in her self-imposed endeavor. Each painstakingly written Chinese character represents a solemn promise she keeps to herself. This loyalty transcends blood ties and life and death, embodying the deep-seated Chinese sense of responsibility to fulfill a promise with utmost dedication. These letters, imbued with tears and warmth, touch the softest part of every viewer's heart.

Moreover, the film evokes memories of *qiaopi*, the letters and remittances sent home by earlier generations of overseas Chinese during the 19th and 20th centuries. In 2013, UNESCO recognized the *qiaopi* archives, emblematic of the Teochew culture, by adding them to its Memory of the World Register.

These letters, which traversed oceans to reach loved ones back home, are more than emotional connections; they are cultural legacies. Through them, we gain insights into the hardships and perseverance of the older generation of overseas Chinese, as well as their profound attachment and unwavering dedication to their homeland. The film captures this historical narrative, illustrating how the *qiaopi* carried not only financial support but also the enduring spirit and cultural identity of the Chinese people.

In today's globalized world, *Dear You* offers a compelling answer to the question of how local culture can reach a national or even global audience. The film shows that local narratives, when infused with universal human emotions, can resonate with audiences everywhere, overcoming cultural and linguistic barriers. By blending local stories with universal human emotions, culture can transcend its own boundaries and be sustained and revitalized through creative means.

The success of *Dear You* shows exactly what Chinese cinema needs. It teaches us that true cultural transmission lies not in the packaging of form, but in the depth of content; not in the flaunting of technology but in the sincerity of emotion. When we can embed our most precious emotions in the simplest stories, we have the genuine capability to touch hearts and become part of something larger than ourselves.

— HUANG XIANGYANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Pilot AI boundaries leave room for innovation

Editor's note: *China recently launched a pilot program for the review of artificial intelligence ethics and services. Southern Finance spoke to Zeng Tieyong, director of the Center for Mathematical Artificial Intelligence at the Institute for Advanced Study at Beijing Normal-Hong Kong Baptist University, about the future of AI governance. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The pilot program will initially be launched in provincial-level regions that have national pilot zones for AI industrial innovation and application. The goal is to explore practical approaches for implementing AI ethics review and service mechanisms.

The main purpose of AI ethics governance is to establish clear boundaries for the development of the industry, defining which types of technological research and commercial applications are encouraged and which practices are strictly prohibited.

On the one hand, this approach will help mitigate the risks associated with AI, including privacy breaches, financial security concerns and unclear algorithmic accountability. On the other hand, by clearly defining baseline rules, the industry can be given sufficient room for innovation, preventing excessive regulation from stifling technological progress.

The move indicates that China's AI governance framework is moving beyond broad principle-based guidance toward a more institutionalized, scenario-specific and operational stage. The pilot program suggests that regulation is now penetrating deeper into industrial settings, with the aim of developing governance models that can be replicated and expanded nationwide.

The core of promoting AI lies in real-world application scenarios, and vertical application sectors are precisely where AI can be deployed most quickly and effectively. By establishing governance red lines in sectors closely tied to daily life, China can both accelerate the delivery of AI-driven public benefits and gain regulatory experience through practical social applications.

The program allows governance models to evolve from specific sectors to the broader industry ecosystem, maximizing the practical value of the AI industry while safeguarding ethical boundaries.

The main challenge in the AI industry remains high-end hardware manufacturing. Due to external technological restrictions and supply chain constraints, critical technologies such as lithography machines and high-performance computing chips remain major bottlenecks.

At the same time, China has several notable advantages, including its enormous talent pool. Chinese universities produce a large number of doctoral and master's graduates every year, providing abundant technical manpower that can be rapidly transformed into industrial productivity.

Another advantage is the country's diversified application scenarios. China's policy environment is generally more supportive of AI commercialization and deployment. Drawing on the development experiences of industries such as photovoltaics and new energy vehicles, AI technologies in China are able to scale and quickly enter the market.

While supporting governance mechanisms for AI is crucial, the two decisive factors for catching up remain talent reserves and breakthroughs in core hardware technologies.

China already has a strong foundation of practical engineering and technical personnel at the grassroots level, along with a large concentration of high-end specialists trained by top universities. If these resources can be effectively mobilized, they will be sufficient to sustain large-scale industry-wide research and development. What China currently lacks most is a smaller group of world-class pioneers capable of leading frontier innovation.

China's rapid rise in the NEV sector offers an important reference point. By bypassing traditional technological barriers, leveraging domestic supply chains and talent advantages, and eventually achieving breakthroughs in hardware self-sufficiency, China's AI industry is widely expected to become globally competitive and potentially take the lead.

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VIEWS

Fred S. Teng

Reshaping the world with fairness and peace

The world does not suffer from a shortage of institutions. What it suffers from is a weakening respect for the principles that give institutions legitimacy.

If the foundation on which a building stands is eroded, the structure is at risk. At the center of the modern international order stands the United Nations Charter. Signed in 1945 after the devastation wreaked by two world wars, the Charter was not merely a diplomatic document drafted at a conference.

It was a civilizational commitment and represented humanity's collective decision that war should no longer be treated as a normal instrument of national ambition, sovereignty should be protected, disputes should be settled peacefully, and international cooperation should serve the common progress of humanity.

Eight decades later, the authority of the Charter is under severe strain. Armed conflicts continue. Unilateral sanctions are increasingly imposed outside the UN framework. Military interventions are justified through selective interpretations of security. Global governance is divided by bloc politics.

Many smaller and developing countries fear that international rules are applied unevenly, depending on the power and interests of those involved.

This is why the world urgently needs to revitalize the authority of the UN Charter and renew the role of the UN itself. This does not mean treating the UN as perfect, but recognizing that without the Charter, the world becomes more dangerous, less predictable and more vulnerable to the rule of force.

The Charter rests on several basic principles: sovereign equality, noninterference in internal affairs, peaceful settlement of disputes, prohibition on the use of force except under limited lawful conditions, collective security, human rights, development, and international cooperation.

These principles are not abstract ideals, but the operating system of international coexistence.

Sovereign equality protects smaller countries from domination by stronger states. Peaceful settlement gives diplomacy a chance before conflict becomes irreversible. Collective security prevents individual states from claiming unlimited authority to define threats and punish others.

Development cooperation recognizes that peace cannot be separated from economic dignity. Human rights remind states that sovereignty carries responsibilities as well as protection.

The UN Charter did not weaken overnight, but due to repeated departures from its spirit.

The use of force has too often been justified without clear UN authorization. When powerful countries act first and seek legal or moral justification later, the authority of collective security is eroded.

Unilateral sanctions imposed beyond the UN framework, especially with extraterritorial effects, create a parallel system of punishment that hurts ordinary people and weakens the legitimacy of international law.

International institutions have also been pulled into geopolitical rivalry. Instead of serving as platforms for dialogue, they are sometimes used as arenas for accusation, pressure, and alignment.

At the same time, the voices of the Global South remain underrepresented in global decision-making. Many developing nations see a gap between the promise of sovereign equality and the actual distribution of power. This gap damages confidence in the system.

New global challenges make revitalization even more urgent. Artificial intelligence, climate change, pandemics, cybersecurity, debt distress, food insecurity and space governance are moving faster than existing institutions can respond.

If the UN cannot adapt to these realities, its authority will weaken not because its principles are wrong, but because its mechanisms appear inadequate.

Despite its limitations, the UN remains indispensable because it is the only international organization with near-global membership, the only institution where large and small countries sit under one roof.

The UN provides legitimacy that no military alliance, economic bloc, or informal coalition can replace. It gives developing countries a voice, creates channels of communication even when relations among major powers deteriorate, and coordinates humanitarian relief, peacekeeping, development, public health cooperation, refugee support, climate discussions, and international law.

The UN does not eliminate conflict, but it provides a place where conflict can be managed. It does not guarantee justice, but it preserves a language of justice. It does not always stop war, but without it, the world would have even fewer barriers against war.

Revitalizing the authority of the Charter requires more than speeches. It requires discipline from major powers.

They must recommit to the principle that force should not be used except in accordance with the Charter. They must avoid treating international law as a tool to be invoked when it is convenient and ignored when it is not. They must accept that security cannot be built on humiliation, exclusion, or coercion.

The UN Security Council must recover its role as the central mechanism for collective security.

Its permanent members have special privileges, but also special obligations. The veto should not become a shield for paralysis. Nor should frustration with the veto become an excuse to bypass the Charter.

Revitalizing the UN also requires making it more representative. The world of 1945 is not the world of today. Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the broader Global South now play a far greater role in global growth, population, trade, diplomacy, and development. Reform should be approached carefully but seriously, with the goal of making the UN more legitimate, balanced, and capable.

Development must also return to the center of the UN mission. Peace and security cannot be separated from development. A world of deep inequality will not be stable. Poverty reduction, infrastructure, education, health, climate adaptation, digital access, and fairer participation in the global economy should not be treated as secondary issues. They are the foundations of peace.

A Charter-based world order is not an argument against any country or bloc, but an appeal for restraint, legitimacy and survival.

It not only protects the weak from the strong, but also protects the strong from the consequences of overreach. It gives rivals a framework for coexistence and gives diplomacy time to work.

If nations return to the Charter not as a ceremonial document, but as a living framework for coexistence, the UN can be the house where conflict is restrained, dialogue remains possible, power is held accountable, and humanity remembers that peace is not the absence of disagreement, but the discipline to resolve disagreement without destroying the world we share.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

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The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Syed Inam Ali Naqvi

China-Pakistan partnership moves beyond infrastructure

The China-Pakistan relationship is often seen through the lens of infrastructure development. Public discussions tend to reduce the partnership to roads, ports and energy projects connecting western China to the Arabian Sea through Pakistan, particularly the $62 billion China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). While this perspective is not entirely inaccurate, it fails to capture the true nature of the relationship.

When the CPEC was formally launched in 2015, infrastructure development became the dominant symbol of bilateral cooperation. Power plants, road networks, and the development of the Gwadar Port were the visible foundations of the partnership.

Supporters saw CPEC as a transformative initiative capable of reshaping Pakistan's economy, while critics regarded it as a source of debt dependency. Despite their opposing views, both perspectives shared a common assumption that China-Pakistan cooperation was primarily an infrastructure-based relationship. Today, this assumption appears quite inadequate.

The first phase of the CPEC produced substantial outcomes.

Pakistan's long-standing energy crisis, which had imposed serious economic costs, was eased through new energy projects and investments. Transport networks improved connectivity with previously isolated regions.

Furthermore, the Gwadar Port acquired strategic importance beyond its economic potential. Access to the Gwadar Port offers China additional connectivity to the Indian Ocean, helping diversify China's shipping channels beyond the Strait of Malacca. These were important achievements which demonstrated what sustained political commitment between the two countries could accomplish.

At a time of intensifying geopolitical fragmentation and economic uncertainty, the broadening of China-Pakistan cooperation reflects an effort by both countries to build longer-term strategic resilience.

Yet infrastructure alone cannot define the future of bilateral cooperation.

As economic priorities, technological change, and regional dynamics continue to evolve, the relationship increasingly appears to be entering a broader phase centered on resilience and long-term capacity building.

The emerging Phase II of the CPEC aims to transform infrastructure into broader economic opportunities. Recent cooperation initiatives have expanded beyond transport and energy to include industrial development, digital connectivity, innovation, and green cooperation.

Through special economic zones, technology partnerships, and growing business-to-business engagement, the focus is gradually shifting from building physical assets to creating longer-term economic and institutional ecosystems.

Special economic zones under the CPEC's expanded framework are not simply investment projects; they increasingly function as mechanisms for industrial development, investment attraction, and integration into regional and global value chains. Beyond infrastructure itself, they represent efforts to generate employment, expand exports, and create longer-term economic opportunities. The expansion of 5G networks, fiber-optic infrastructure, technology parks, satellite cooperation, and broader digital collaboration points to a shift from physical connectivity toward a more knowledge-based economy.

And cooperation deepening in areas such as e-commerce, digital skills development, and information technology further suggests an evolving partnership focused on strengthening technological capacity, innovation, and long-term economic development.

The evolution of Phase II can also be observed in the growing role of the private sector and business communities.

During the recent Pak-China B2B Investment Conference in Beijing, nearly 800 firms from both countries participated, resulting in joint ventures and MoUs worth approximately $8.5 billion.

Such a shift not only broadens the relationship beyond governments but also strengthens its long-term sustainability through investment, entrepreneurship, and technological collaboration.

The partnership's human dimension is equally important and may ultimately prove more durable than material projects.

Nearly 29,000 Pakistani students studying at Chinese universities are developing technical expertise, language skills, and professional networks that could shape Pakistan's future institutions.

Many of these students will eventually enter government institutions, businesses, and policy circles. The relationships and networks they build today may shape China-Pakistan engagement for decades.

The relationship has also expanded diplomatically, reflecting broader coordination on regional and international issues. This evolution further suggests that China-Pakistan cooperation extends beyond infrastructure projects toward a more multidimensional partnership.

Ultimately, China-Pakistan cooperation is evolving beyond its earlier emphasis on infrastructure construction alone. While the first phase of the CPEC focused primarily on physical connectivity, the emerging phase increasingly emphasizes industrial development, technological capacity, business engagement, and human capital.

Challenges remain, including security concerns, financial constraints, and implementation difficulties.

Yet the broader trajectory suggests that both countries are attempting to build a more diversified and resilient partnership capable of adapting to a changing regional and global environment.

The long-term success of that partnership may ultimately depend less on individual projects than on whether both sides can translate connectivity into sustainable economic and institutional development.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Chi Fulin

Regional cooperation can open doors to global growth

The Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership has successfully integrated 15 Asia-Pacific economies into one of the world's most dynamic industry and supply chain networks. It is an indispensable force for advancing regional economic integration and a new form of economic globalization.

However, RCEP now finds itself at a critical juncture where standing still means falling behind.

In a world of growing uncertainty, we face a critical choice: allow geopolitical fragmentation to undermine the hard-won unified market, or bolster our resilience through higher-level regional integration.

A development-oriented approach is the defining feature of the RCEP.

But changes in the geopolitical landscape are exerting serious shocks on the region. Most RCEP economies are highly dependent on external energy supplies. In 2025, more than 80 percent of the crude oil imports to the RCEP region passed through the Strait of Hormuz.

According to projections by the Asian Development Bank, if the Iran conflict continues into the third quarter of 2026, economic growth in developing Asia-Pacific economies will slow significantly.

A more uncertain external environment makes it imperative for the region to strengthen cooperation. Cooperation can help address the uncertainty stemming from frequent geopolitical conflicts.

RCEP members can deepen industry chain coordination and promote the regionalization of energy and manufacturing supply chains, thereby reducing dependence on single maritime routes and strengthening supply chain security. RCEP should remain firmly focused on development, and non-economic factors should not be introduced into the agreement.

A more uncertain external environment makes it imperative for the region to strengthen cooperation.

From a global perspective, the greatest advantage of China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations lies in the certainty of growth.

If ASEAN becomes the world's fourth-largest economy and China becomes the world's largest in the coming decade, the global economic landscape will be profoundly reshaped.

RCEP has become an important force for advancing global free trade.

From 2021 to 2025, intra-RCEP trade increased from $4.9 trillion to $6.1 trillion, a rise of 24 percent.

Driven by both trade and investment, the RCEP region recorded average annual GDP growth of 3.6 percent from 2021 to 2024, contributing nearly 40 percent to world economic growth.

To build on this momentum, RCEP rules must be fully implemented.

Members should accelerate the implementation of provisions on digital payments and electronic invoices, deepening cooperation in emerging fields such as artificial intelligence and financial technology.

Furthermore, the regional division of labor must be optimized. In 2024, trade in intermediate goods accounted for more than 68 percent of total RCEP trade — significantly above the global average.

Against the backdrop of rising protectionism, it is necessary to accelerate the establishment of an RCEP supply chain emergency coordination mechanism to build a regional safeguard for essential goods.

To reach its full potential, RCEP should promote deeper opening of the regional markets. Members should strive to raise the region's zero-tariff coverage to more than 95 percent within the next five years.

Trade in services is a priority. This calls for an early transition from a "positive-list" to a "negative-list" approach for services trade and investment.

Rule upgrading is equally vital. The review of rules of origin should be completed and higher-standard rules in digital trade and climate change introduced. Furthermore, RCEP should achieve a breakthrough in membership expansion.

The accession of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of China to the RCEP would further enhance its international influence. As a free trade port with a common law system and mature financial services, Hong Kong could help ASEAN members address financing gaps. We look forward to a substantive breakthrough on this issue in 2026.

Finally, the RCEP Support Unit should be upgraded into a formal secretariat to move the region from "soft constraints" toward "binding governance".

Strengthening RCEP requires upholding the principle of ASEAN centrality. By promoting the effective connectivity between China's vast market and the RCEP market, we have created a stabilizing anchor for the region.

From 2021 to 2024, China contributed more than 70 percent to RCEP's economic growth. The country will continue to support RCEP through high-level opening-up, accelerating the fulfillment of tariff reduction commitments and reducing tariffs on intermediate goods.

In this context, the Hainan Free Trade Port serves as a strategic gateway. It is well positioned to take the lead in fully implementing RCEP and the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0, becoming a new frontier of institutional opening-up.

The RCEP has proven that the greater the external uncertainty, the stronger the region's internal resolve must be; and the greater the pressure, the more firmly the region must commit to openness and cooperation.

At a time when geopolitical conflicts and protectionism are increasingly intertwined, it is all the more important for us to work together to strengthen a development-oriented RCEP, and to respond to global uncertainty with the certainty of development.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



WANG XIAOYING/ CHINA DAILY

CHAIWAT MEESANTHAN

River of shared prosperity

Thailand-China cooperation on water resources is deepening under the LMC framework

As the Lancang-Mekong Cooperation mechanism marks its 10th anniversary in 2026, the region is celebrating a remarkable milestone in international partnership. Officially established in 2016, the LMC has grown into an important engine for regional growth. China and the five Mekong countries have been working together to usher the framework into the next golden decade by staying committed to building a better community through solidarity.



At the very heart of this successful architecture lies a shared commitment to the management of shared water resources and sustainable development. Rather than viewing the river as a dividing line, Thailand, China, and their neighbors have transformed the Lancang-Mekong River into a profound symbol of interconnected prosperity, paving the way for a resilient Association of Southeast Asian Nations-China community.

The LMC is historic in its structural design: It provides the first water cooperation framework that fully integrates all six countries along the river, encompassing both upstream and downstream nations. This inclusive approach has fostered an environment where transparent communication, mutual trust and practical problem-solving take center stage.

For Thailand and China, water resources cooperation has evolved from high-level dialogue into highly effective, on-the-ground action. Over the past decade, the framework has facilitated the sharing of vital hydrological information and improved basin-wide governance. Through initiatives such as the Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Information Sharing Platform and the dedicated Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation Center located in Yunnan province, China has actively shared daily hydrological data from its hydropower plants with downstream neighbors.

This data transparency is a game-changer for local communities. It allows Thailand and other downstream states to better forecast river behavior, optimize agricultural water use and protect vulnerable ecosystems. Furthermore, the cooperative management of upstream reservoirs has served as a critical regional public good; by regulating floods during the rainy season and replenishing water levels during droughts, these cooperative measures have shielded millions of livelihoods from extreme weather shocks.

Notably, targeted water releases from China's Jinghong Dam in Yunnan province during critical drought periods have provided essential relief to downstream agriculture, demonstrating a tangible commitment to mutual support.

Looking ahead, this collaboration can be strengthened. The Initiative on Deepening Lancang-Mekong Water Resources Cooperation can be fully implemented to further upgrade joint capabilities. By investing in cutting-edge platforms such as the Lancang-Mekong River Basin Comprehensive Meteorological Service Platform, Thailand, China and other neighbors can ensure that the region is structurally prepared to adapt to climate change and mitigate natural disasters.

The ultimate measure of the LMC's success is its impact on the everyday lives of the people who call the Lancang-Mekong River Basin home. Through the LMC Special Fund, China has consistently provided financial support and capacity building for irrigation, water navigation and drought prevention. Across the region, more than 1,000 "small and beautiful" livelihood projects have been successfully carried out, directly improving local people's living standards.

For agricultural communities in Thailand, these initiatives translate to enhanced food security and poverty reduction. China has actively supported rural and agricultural revitalization across the Lancang-Mekong countries, advancing digital cooperation throughout the industry chain. Pilot programs for smart farms and the establishment of traceability systems for fruit products are actively enhancing the competitiveness of Thai agricultural exports while building greater resilience in local production systems.

The LMC operates as one of the most dynamic and effective platforms for regional cooperation, playing a pivotal role in narrowing regional development gaps and boosting socioeconomic development. The resulting economic synergy is undeniable, with trade between China and the Mekong nations surging past the $500 billion mark, a 150 percent increase from a decade ago.

While the region celebrates this progress, it must also navigate a global landscape characterized by complex geopolitical shifts, economic instability and climate change. Instead of succumbing to division, Thailand, China and the broader ASEAN community can utilize the LMC framework to reinforce their strategic coordination and mutual trust.

During the ninth LMC Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which was held in Chiang Mai, Thailand, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi underscored that "the LMC countries should adhere to true multilateralism and open regionalism, resolutely resist zero-sum games and decoupling and severing industrial and supply chains, and work together to build a Lancang-Mekong home that shares weal and woe in solidarity". By focusing on shared development rather than geopolitical competition, the LMC serves as a stabilizing force, offering a unique Lancang-Mekong model for multilateral governance.

To future-proof their economies against external uncertainties, the member states are rapidly expanding their cooperation beyond traditional infrastructure. The next phase of the LMC can focus on innovation-driven growth, including artificial intelligence capacity building, space cooperation and the digital economy. Recognizing the global imperative for sustainability, there is also a concerted push to invest in new energy, develop green industrial clusters and build regional green value chains.

Thailand's active role will be instrumental in guiding this collaborative agenda. Thailand is positioned to advocate strengthened, unified responses to shared challenges. By harmonizing the LMC's objectives with broader ASEAN community-building efforts, Thailand and China can work together to ensure that the region remains a resilient, self-determined bloc capable of weathering global storms.

The story of the LMC over the past decade is one of remarkable optimism and enduring partnership. Through dedicated water resources cooperation, Thailand and China have demonstrated that shared natural resources can serve as a bridge to mutual prosperity.

As the region steps into its second decade of cooperation, the foundations rooted in transparent water management, innovative agricultural support and unwavering geopolitical solidarity can continue to support a thriving, peaceful and highly integrated community. The "golden decade" is not merely a diplomatic slogan; it is a living reality for millions of people whose futures are brightly interconnected by the waters of the Lancang-Mekong region.

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CHUNG TIN FAH

Shaping the Asia-Pacific economic landscape

CAFTA 3.0 offers ASEAN and China a platform to shape regional governance in an increasingly fragmented world

Relations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China have evolved to become one of the most consequential partnerships shaping the economic and institutional landscape of the Asia-Pacific region. Rooted in long-standing historical exchanges and guided by the principles of mutual benefit, inclusivity and cooperation, the relationship has transitioned from largely bilateral interactions to a multi-layered, rules-based regional framework for shared prosperity. This transformation reflects both structural economic changes and strategic recalibration in response to an increasingly fragmented global order. The recent upgrade of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area to its 3.0 version marks a pivotal step toward complementarity-driven integration, particularly in emerging sectors such as digital technologies, green development and resilient supply chains.



The foundations of this modern partnership were significantly strengthened during regional challenges such as the Asian financial crisis, when China's stabilizing policies demonstrated its commitment to regional solidarity. Subsequent milestones, from China's accession to the World Trade Organization in 2001 to the establishment of the original CAFTA and the participation in broader regional architecture such as the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, have woven an increasingly dense web of economic communication and diplomatic consultation.

Today, the convergence between China's domestic development goals, outlined in the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) focusing on high-quality growth and technological innovation, and the ASEAN Economic Community Strategic Plan (2026-30) provides a macro-level platform to deepen cooperation, particularly in the digital economy, green economy and supply chain integration. This synergy closely complements China's technology and climate strategy and ASEAN's regional integration and connectivity agenda.

CAFTA 3.0 is the cornerstone of the new phase. Unlike earlier phases focused primarily on tariff reduction, CAFTA 3.0 introduces a broader and more sophisticated agenda, encompassing supply chain integration, digital economy governance and green development. These areas are central to China's domestic development strategy, particularly its emphasis on technological self-sufficiency and climate commitments. At the same time, they offer ASEAN member states opportunities to leapfrog into higher value-added activities and enhance their competitiveness in the global economy.

CAFTA 3.0 also addresses the need for more resilient supply chains in the face of global disruptions. By promoting connectivity and diversification, the agreement reduces vulnerability to external shocks and strengthens regional production networks. Furthermore, its provisions on financial technology and artificial intelligence signal a move toward greater regulatory openness and innovation, creating new avenues for cross-border collaboration.

For Malaysia, these developments are particularly significant. The country's ambition to position itself as a regional technology hub aligns closely with the opportunities presented by CAFTA 3.0. Participation in digital infrastructure initiatives, including smart city development and digital payment systems associated with broader regional connectivity projects, can enhance Malaysia's role in the regional digital economy.

A defining feature of ASEAN-China relations is the principle of ASEAN centrality, which emphasizes ASEAN's role as a convener, coordinator and normative leader in regional affairs. This principle has enabled ASEAN to maintain strategic relevance despite the presence of larger powers and to shape the regional order through consensus-based mechanisms.

In the context of CAFTA 3.0, ASEAN centrality is increasingly manifested in the development of regional governance frameworks, particularly in the digital domain. Efforts to establish an ASEAN-wide data governance framework illustrate this trend. Such initiatives involve mapping national regulatory frameworks, aligning them with international best practices, and fostering dialogue among member states to achieve greater harmonization. Through these processes, ASEAN not only facilitates economic integration but also sets standards that influence broader regional dynamics.

The transformative potential of agreements such as CAFTA 3.0 can only be fully realized if the region tackles the tangible hurdles of logistics inefficiencies, high supply chain costs and uneven infrastructure development. These are not mere technical issues; they are fundamental to ensuring that the benefits of integration are equitably distributed and ASEAN remains collectively competitive. The region's customs and logistics costs, which remain well above international benchmarks, directly undercut the efficiency gains promised by trade liberalization. Similarly, the success of digital integration hinges on bridging vast differences in data governance capabilities among member states. Initiatives to map national frameworks and explore harmonization, such as the ASEAN ICT Masterplan that calls for creating a coherent and comprehensive framework for personal data protection, are crucial first steps, but they must be coupled with concrete capacity-building and infrastructure investment.

Therefore, strengthening internal cohesion and institutional capacity is essential. Effective regionalism requires more than visionary blueprints; it demands robust governance mechanisms, transparent communication and active engagement with the private sector, which ultimately drives trade and investment. ASEAN's outlined measures — from establishing regular consultative forums to enhancing strategic communications — are recognition of this need. The partnership with China can be a powerful catalyst in this regard. China's expertise and resources in infrastructure and digital economy development can, under the framework of ASEAN centrality, support initiatives that enhance physical and "soft" connectivity within the region, thereby strengthening ASEAN's internal coherence and its capacity to engage the world from a position of collective strength.

ASEAN-China relations have undergone a profound transformation, evolving from historically rooted interactions into a deeply institutionalized partnership that balances economic integration with strategic autonomy. It demonstrates that regional cooperation, grounded in mutual benefit and respect for a regional-led order, can be a profound source of stability and growth. The introduction of CAFTA 3.0 represents a shift toward rules-based, innovation-driven regional integration, reflecting the changing dynamics of the global economy. As both sides work to implement CAFTA 3.0, their shared challenge is to translate institutional innovation into inclusive, tangible outcomes for businesses and communities. Ultimately, CAFTA 3.0 offers not only an opportunity for deeper economic integration but also a platform for shaping the future of regional governance in an increasingly uncertain international landscape.

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TALES & TRAILS

Editor's note:
China Daily reporters leverage local expertise to devise diverse itineraries that showcase a blend of historical landmarks and natural wonders in highly recommended cities and sites, offering practical guidance to experience the country.

Ancient armor opens wide

From mountain villages to virtual worlds, the Great Wall is evolving far beyond its origins, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

At first glance, the Great Wall can appear immovable — a vast ribbon of stone and earth frozen in history books and postcard images. But travel along its ridges today, and another story begins to unfold. The Great Wall is no longer only a monument to the past. In many places, it is becoming something alive again: a classroom, a hiking trail, a livestream studio, a village economy, even a digital conversation across centuries.

In one mountain valley, children shape wet clay into bricks the way Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) craftsmen once did, pressing their names into the surface before the mud hardens. Elsewhere, hikers follow forest trails where ruined watchtowers emerge suddenly through the trees, while village cafes and guesthouses glow warmly beneath ancient battlements.

On the outskirts of Beijing, visitors can speak with an AI-generated general from the Ming era, watch old frontier photographs come to life, and step into immersive worlds reconstructed from fading archives. Farther west, the Great Wall stretches across deserts, grasslands and snow-covered mountains, tracing routes once traveled by soldiers, merchants, monks and envoys.

What connects these places is not simply the Great Wall itself, but the people reimagining what it means. Some preserve forgotten kilns and fortresses stone by stone. Some revive abandoned villages as thriving cultural destinations. Others use technology to give vanished landscapes and historical figures new voices. Together, they reveal a monument far more complex than a static relic.

Built centuries ago to defend borders, the Great Wall is now opening new pathways between past and present, cities and villages, heritage and innovation, memory and everyday life.

The stories that follow explore the Great Wall's many evolving identities — not merely as an ancient defense system, but as a living cultural landscape that continues to shape how people travel, learn, create and connect.

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See more, *pages 8-10*



Blooming flowers crown the mountaintops as clouds cast a mystical veil over the Jiankou section of the Great Wall in Beijing. YANG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

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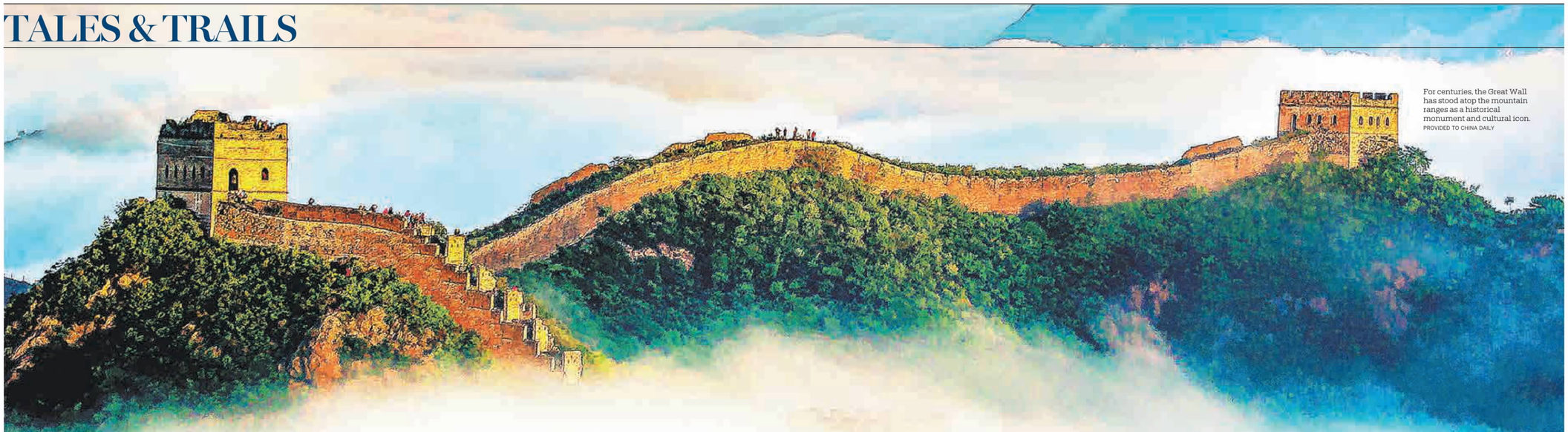


For centuries, the Great Wall has stood atop the mountain ranges as a historical monument and cultural icon. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

REVIVING CULTURAL GREATNESS

Through research, technology and community support, various sections are captivating new audiences with dynamic appeal, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

From digital avatars to forest trails and hands-on brick-making, different sections of the Great Wall are drawing new audiences and redefining what heritage protection can mean. At Banchangyu Great Wall park, visitors can walk the same ground where Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) soldiers once stood, touch bricks fired nearly 500 years ago, and try their hand at making a Great Wall brick.

On weekends, children crowd the brick-making workshop, mixing clay and carving their names into fresh blanks, while hikers follow trails through the area's thick forests.

Each morning, one man broadcasts it all to the world. At 7 o'clock sharp, Xu Guohua, without fail, turns on his phone and begins his livestream.

Three phones are mounted in front of him, streaming live to Douyin and WeChat simultaneously. The 73-year-old wears a plain dark blue cotton jacket. His weather-red face, tanned by years of outdoor work, catches the light. In his hand, he holds a small wine cup, no wider than two fingers.

"Look at this artifact from the Ming Dynasty — we dug it up in our village," he says to the camera.

Xu usually gets 1,000 to 2,000 views a day as he talks about artifacts, brick kilns and folk stories from beneath the centuries-old Banchangyu Great Wall.

"I don't really understand the internet, but I have been doing this every morning for five years," he says.

He takes pride in promoting the history and culture of the Great Wall in his birthplace.

A man from southern Guangdong province came all the way to see him after watching his broadcast, while a couple from Yunnan province traveled by train. Xu met them, showed them around, and sometimes bought them lunch.

The centerpiece of the Banchangyu site in Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, is a vast collection of brick kilns.

In the early 2000s, excavations revealed brick kilns that had been buried for nearly 500 years. Archaeologists have since uncovered more than 200 kilns, turning the area into one of the country's most important Great Wall industrial heritage sites.











From left: Visitors get hands-on experience with traditional paper-cutting in Shixia village, Beijing's Yanqing district. Local residents actively volunteer to protect the Great Wall. The Shixiaguan section of the Great Wall in Beijing's Yanqing district is a popular destination for outdoor enthusiasts. An exhibition space provides an in-depth look at the village's history and its historical connection to the Great Wall. Tiger dolls are popular souvenirs among visitors. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Bricks from nearby Great Wall sections match the dimensions of those fired in Banchangyu's kilns.

"This was where they made the bones of the wall," Xu notes.

Running several coal mines in the 1980s, Xu rose from rags to riches. The kiln discovery, along with tightening restrictions on small coal mines, prompted him to shift his focus to heritage preservation.

He then leased more than 30 square kilometers of land along the Great Wall and built a small museum beside the kilns, filling it with tablets, bricks, stone balls, and firearms he had collected from fields and farmhouses. He researched each piece, consulting ancient texts and experts to confirm their identities.

"I grew up at the foot of the Great Wall, and my family has guarded this place for generations," he says, adding that his grandmother always told him they came from the south to build the Great Wall.

Over the years, Xu and his family have built an extensive network of trails and access roads through the mountains surrounding the Great Wall.

His persistence moved his son and encouraged him to join the cause. Today, his son oversees walking trails and infrastructure throughout the park.

Additionally, his grandson returned to Banchangyu after graduating from Jimei University in Xiamen, Fujian province, in 2021, when he began working to package Banchangyu Great Wall culture into a curriculum with the support of local schools. The study programs introduce students to subjects ranging from Great Wall engineering to geology and traditional craftsmanship.

At the hands-on brick-making workshop, children can first visit the kiln ruins to hear the story of their discovery. Then they go to the workshop to mix clay, fill molds, and form brick blanks. Finally, they carve their names into the unbaked bricks.

To date, the number of partner schools has grown from three to over 30. More than 30,000 students have visited, Xu shares. Study tours now account for one-third of the park's revenue.

Xu still livestreams every morning, aiming to reach more potential visitors. Recently, he even started experimenting with an AI avatar to help explain artifacts online.

"At my age, I never imagined I'd be learning things like this," he says with a laugh.

> "I grew up at the foot of the Great Wall, and my family has guarded this place for generations."
>
> **Xu Guohua,**
> a 73-year-old villager in Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, promoting Great Wall culture through livestreams

From crumbs to incomes

West of Banchangyu, Shixia village in Beijing's northwestern Yanqing district offers another model of Great Wall revitalization.

On weekends and holidays, travelers flock to the village to sip coffee at a restored farmhouse, learn dough sculpting from local artisans, and hike a trail along the ridge where the Great Wall meets the forest.

Founded during the Ming Dynasty, the village sits at the foot of the Shixiaguan section. For decades, its remote mountain location limited development. That gradually began to change after China introduced its first Great Wall protection regulation in 2006.

Villagers formed protection teams, while entrepreneurs and cultural tourism operators started restoring abandoned courtyards. One of them was He Yuling, who arrived in 2014 and rented a crumbling traditional courtyard house on a 20-year lease. Villagers initially found the decision puzzling.

She answered with action. Today, her Shiguang Great Wall Boutique B&B brand operates 18 renovated courtyards, each with a different theme, such as spring dwelling, quiet summer and winter retreat.

She brought her family's sauce-making recipe to the village and combined it with the local stone-cooked feast. Annual revenue has exceeded 10 million yuan ($1.47 million).

Some villagers now run their own guesthouses, while others work in tourism and hospitality.

Gu Wenting, the Party secretary of Shixia village, has witnessed the transformation firsthand since returning from the military in 2013.

"The spirit of the whole village changed completely, and people have become more confident about what the village can become," Gu says.

"The sense of honor, belonging and purpose — all of it has risen."

A 6-kilometer forest trail opened beside the Great Wall at the end of 2025 after more than two years of planning and construction. Following the mountain's contours, the trail connects visitors with a nearby section while preserving the original landscape. Since its opening, it has attracted more than 20,000 hikers, according to local officials.

The village's collective income reached 1.2 million yuan in 2025, a 75 percent year-on-year increase.

"This number represents a real leap forward. Our cultural tourism industry has taken off, and the village's reputation has spread," Gu observes.

At the village entrance, signs point visitors toward coffee shops, bookstores and workshops on intangible cultural heritage. A 40-hectare crabapple orchard has just been upgraded, offering tours, picking, and study programs.

At dusk, children run through a campground. The smell of braised pork drifts from guesthouse kitchens.

According to Gu, the village plans to expand its Great Wall study programs next year while adding new camping and lodging facilities for young travelers.

"We want visitors to stay longer and experience village life more deeply," he says.

An emotional connection

East of Shixia village, in northeastern Beijing's Miyun district, visitors can step through a "time gate" where old photographs of the Great Wall come to life, question a digital Ming Dynasty general, and watch ancient weapons emerge from a virtual encyclopedia. These experiences await at three newly opened digital centers in Gubeikou, Yaoqiaoyu and Guanmen.

Miyun has rich Great Wall resources, with over 180 kilometers of Ming Dynasty walls and 61 registered fortresses. However, there is a problem.

"Many of its fortresses have disappeared above ground, leaving only ruins," says He Ding, an associate professor at Beijing University of Civil Engineering and Architecture, who led the centers' design.

His team spent a year on the project to create an emotional connection.

"The hardest part was not the technology but designing the content — getting the narrative logic and interactive details right," he says.

They combed through archives in China and abroad, searching historical texts and maps for clues about the frontier world of Miyun.

For instance, one Ming text recorded the distribution of Mongol tribes north of Miyun, he says.

"We thus added two Mongol chieftains to our digital scroll, because we want visitors to understand that the frontier was a multiethnic place," he explains.

Inside the Gubeikou center, the "time gate" uses AIGC technology to bring old photographs to life. Black-and-white images of Gubeikou begin to move, vividly re-creating a scene of merchants passing through the site in bygone days.

Beside the "time gate" stands a digital avatar of Qi Jiguang, the legendary Ming Dynasty general. The digital general's appearance draws from Ming Dynasty portraits, and his manner is calm and resolute. Visitors can ask him anything from how the Great Wall was built to how fortresses were defended, and he answers in real time.

While Gubeikou gives visitors a broad sweep of Miyun's defense network, Yaoqiaoyu zooms in on a cluster of fortresses, and Guanmen examines individual fortresses up close.

"We want visitors to go from a wide view to a narrow view, step by step," He Ding says.

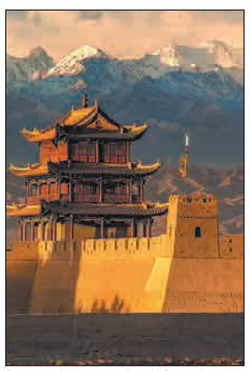
Since opening, the centers have boosted local tourism. Out-of-town visitors make up a large share, especially on weekends.

"Families often spend half a day or a full day visiting all three centers," He Ding says.

He says the team will keep upgrading. "We plan to enrich Qi Jiguang's knowledge base, add more digital characters, and develop a mobile experience, so visitors can continue their tour even after they go home."

Contact the writer at yangfeiyue@chinadaily.com.cn

WHERE ANCIENT BARRIERS BECAME BRIDGES



Jiayuguan in Gansu province is the westernmost outpost of the Great Wall.

By **WANG RU**
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Before I visited it in person, the Great Wall existed in my mind only as a single, unbroken line, like a dragon's spine stretching across the map of northern China. Over the years, I visited several sections, but none truly reshaped my understanding like its westernmost outpost — the Jiayuguan pass in Gansu province.

I first explored it years ago during a trip with a friend along the popular loop through Qinghai and Gansu provinces in Northwest China. Visiting Jiayuguan felt inevitable. Since childhood, we had known it as the western end of the Great Wall and the strategic gateway to the ancient Silk Road.

But it was only when I stood there on a summer morning that I realized how sophisticated its design truly was.

Near the entrance stands a statue of Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) general Feng Sheng on horseback. His left hand points ahead while the right grips a sword, his cloak frozen in the wind. More than 600 years ago, Feng recognized the military value of this location and proposed building the pass there.

About half an hour later, standing on the city wall and looking out at the distant mountains, I finally understood its strategic importance.

The pass was built on a natural channel only 15 kilometers wide, the narrowest point of the Hexi Corridor, the main artery of the ancient Silk Road, between the Heishan Mountains and the Qilian Mountains. Therefore, it controlled the only passage between the heartland of central China and the vast deserts of Central Asia.

Its surroundings made the fortress even more formidable. To the north stretched a vast desert, while the Qilian Mountains rose to the south as a natural defensive barrier.

"If anyone wanted to bypass Jiayuguan to attack the heartland, they would have to cross nearly 70 kilometers of desert," a tour guide told us.

"That was too dangerous and difficult, so the pass became the only realistic route. That's why it was fortified so heavily."

The choice of location amazed me. It reminded me that even without modern technology, military strategists understood how to use mountains, rivers and deserts to their advantage. At that moment, the old Chinese saying — "One man guarding the pass can hold back 10,000" — no longer sounded symbolic. It felt tangible.

No wonder Feng became known as one of the founding generals of the Ming Dynasty. Under his initiative, and through the labor of countless unnamed builders, the fortress was expanded over generations before its completion in 1539 as a sophisticated defense system.

Today, Jiayuguan remains an intricate complex of rammed-earth structures. Restoration efforts have preserved much of its original appearance, allowing visitors to understand how the fortress functioned.

Two separate walls surround the complex. Even if invaders breached the outer wall, they still faced another barrier inside, buying defenders valuable time.

The fortress faces west, with Jiayuguan Gate welcoming travelers arriving from that direction. Between the outer gate and Rouyuan Gate lies a *wengcheng*, a defensive enclosure designed to trap and delay attackers. Beyond Rouyuan Gate stands the inner city, where soldiers once lived. On the eastern side sits Guanghua Gate, protected by another *wengcheng*.

Every detail of the layout served a defensive purpose. Human ingenuity seemed embedded in every corner. In that era, people truly made the best use of their experience and vision in building this pass.

Standing on the narrow path between the two walls, I watched sunlight fall across the raw earthen surfaces, giving them a rugged beauty. There were few tourists around, so my friend and I began taking photos.

Through my camera lens, my friend appeared tiny against the towering walls. And yet centuries ago, people no larger than her had built this place, defended it and passed beneath its gates. That contrast between human fragility and achievement struck me harder than the desert wind.

"Why are you hesitating? Come take photos!" my friend called out.

As she walked toward me along the ancient road, I suddenly felt the strange closeness of past and present, as if time had briefly folded together.

Near Jiayuguan Gate, we came across a small crowd gathered around a roadside stall offering visitors an interactive "pass certificate" experience.

During the Ming Dynasty, travelers heading west into Xiyu (Western Regions, a historical term used to describe modern-day Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Central Asia) needed official travel permits similar to today's passports.

"Where are you from? Why do you want to go to Xiyu?" the stall owner asked, playfully acting as head of the fortress.

Once satisfied with the answer, he handwrote a certificate, charging between 30 and 100 yuan ($4.4 to $14.7).

The experience reminded me that although Jiayuguan was originally built for defense, it ultimately became something greater — a bridge between civilizations. Through this corridor, Chinese silk and porcelain traveled westward to Central Asia, the Middle East and East Africa, while foreign ideas, religions and literature entered China in return.

A pass may be built to keep people out, but it ends up letting them through — not just the merchants and monks on the Silk Road, but also memories. Jiayuguan taught me that the strongest walls aren't the ones that divide; they are the ones that, centuries later, still have the grace to open their gates.

Ma Jingna contributed to this story.

If you go

Getting there: You can take high-speed trains to Jiayuguan Railway Station or Jiayuguan South Railway Station, or fly to Jiayuguan Jiuquan Airport to start your journey. Jiayuguan Railway Station is the closest to the scenic area, about 15 minutes by taxi. The airport and south station are roughly 30 minutes by car. Local buses from downtown Jiayuguan also reach the site.

Ticket: During peak season (May 1-Oct 31), it costs 110 yuan ($16) per person. In the off-season (Nov 1-April 30), it costs 90 yuan. Admission includes Jiayuguan pass, the Hanging Great Wall and the First Beacon Tower of the Great Wall. Tickets are valid for three days and can be used multiple times. A round-trip shuttle bus connecting the three attractions costs 20 yuan.

Tips: Because the fortress sits on the edge of the Gobi Desert, UV exposure can be intense. Sunscreen, sunglasses, hats, and umbrellas are strongly recommended.

WANG RU



The Jiayuguan pass rises from the Gobi Desert, set against a backdrop of snowcapped mountains.





Top: An aerial view shows two separate walls surrounding the Jiayuguan pass. **Above:** A valley near the First Beacon Tower of the Great Wall. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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The Great Wall beyond the crowds

Stretching across some of northern China's most dramatic landscapes, these sections of the fortification combine history, solitude and natural beauty, inviting visitors to experience them in a more authentic way, **Wang Ru** reports.



Apricot trees bloom around the Li'erkou section in Datong, Shanxi province. HU YUANJIA / FOR CHINA DAILY

1. Li'erkou in Datong, Shanxi province

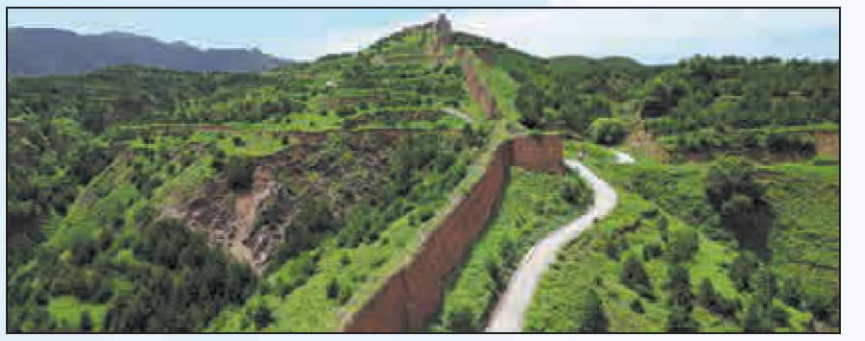
In spring, visitors to the Li'erkou Great Wall can see the season paint a scene of stark contrasts. The ancient rammed-earth structure, rugged and taupe-colored, stretches its earthen body across the rolling terrain. Suddenly, the view softens: apricot trees burst into clouds of delicate pink and white blossoms. Petals flutter like gentle snowflakes against the time-honored watchtowers, weaving a quiet story where military history meets the tender breath of spring.

Built in the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), this section is famous as the place where two sections of the Great Wall intersect, one running from north to south and the other from east to west. This feature is linked to changes in the plans made during its construction.

The original plan would have led to a defensive gap near the border of Shanxi and Hebei provinces. As a result, the plan was revised, and the wall was built back from a point near Li'erkou village, running along the mountain ridge to connect with the Great Wall in Hebei. This achieved a continuous line of defense, although the mistakenly constructed section has also been preserved.

For visitors wanting a quiet experience of this ancient structure without crowds of other people, this section is an ideal choice. Flagstone roads built in recent years make hiking easier while preserving the views of the surrounding landscape.

Visitors can also explore the Datong Great Wall Museum to learn more about the region's history. Nearby, Li'erkou village offers homestays.



The Guangwu section in Shuozhou, Shanxi, is known for its rustic charm. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

2. Guangwu in Shuozhou, Shanxi province

About 5 kilometers from the Yanmenguan pass, a key strategic point in Shanxi province, the Guangwu Great Wall once served as a crucial forward defense line within the Ming Dynasty defense system centered on Yanmenguan.

In recent years, this section has gained popularity online for its rustic charm. The section has been less restored than its counterparts elsewhere, thereby retaining much of its ancient grandeur, with mottled bricks and stones, and grass growing in the cracks.

One section of the Great Wall here is particularly iconic, the remains of a watchtower that people call Yueliangmen (the Moon Gate), named for its arched doorway that resembles the moon.

At twilight, when the rays of the setting sun pass through the doorway, the ancient structure has a solemn atmosphere, as if a guardian witnessing generations passing through the ages.

This section is especially good for hikers who are interested in ancient history.

Even today, the inscriptions on the stone plaques embedded in some of the watchtowers' archways remain clearly visible.

Sunlight streams down, casting a warm, golden veil over the bricks and stones. The grass grows even more vibrantly in the interplay of light and shadow.

Here, antiquity and life merge, painting a tranquil picture of harmony between time and nature.



The Wushaoling section is surrounded by snowcapped mountains. GAO ZEHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

3. Wushaoling in Wuwei, Gansu province

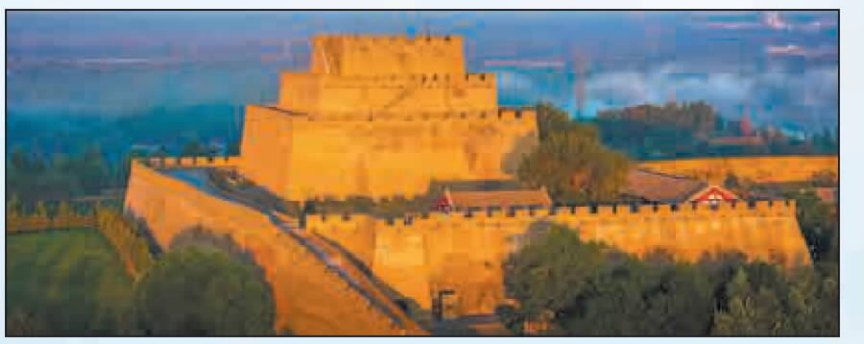
Wushaoling is located at the crossroads of the Loess Plateau, the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the Mongolian Plateau, and is one of the highest sections of the Great Wall.

Therefore, from a single vantage point, a condensed panoramic view of Northwest China gradually unfolds. Highland grassland seems to extend to the sky.

To the south, the Maya Snow Mountains, a branch of the Qilian Mountains, stay white all year round, their peaks glittering under the sun. Turn east, and thousands of ravines and gullies can be seen cutting through yellow earth, where the eroded remains of the Great Wall wind like a pale dragon. Looking west, the vegetation thins and the faint outline of the Gobi Desert appears, stretching toward the Hexi Corridor, the main artery of the ancient Silk Road, with a raw, empty vastness.

More than 2,000 years ago, Emperor Wu of the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) ordered the construction of this part of the Great Wall after general Huo Qubing reclaimed the Hexi Corridor following victories in various battles. Since that time, historical figures like Han envoy Zhang Qian and Tang (618-907) Buddhist monk Xuanzang passed by Wushaoling on their journeys to Xiyu (Western Regions). Ming Dynasty rulers also built part of the Great Wall at Wushaoling.

Now, sections from both the Han and Ming periods can be seen. Standing beneath a beacon tower, with strong winds sweeping through the grass and flocks of cattle and sheep dotting the mountain slopes, one can sense the profound weight of history and the changes that have occurred over millennia.



An aerial view of Zhenbeitai Tower in Yulin, Shaanxi province. HAO JIHONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

4. Zhenbeitai Tower in Yulin, Shaanxi province

Normally, it is the curving walls snaking through mountain ranges that form people's typical impressions of the Great Wall.

But the heritage covers not only the walls themselves but also passes, beacon towers and observation outposts.

Zhenbeitai in northern Shaanxi province stands as a large rammed-earth military observation tower and command post built during the Ming Dynasty.

The existing four-story structure, more than 30 meters high, offers a vivid lesson in military history.

The tower had several uses: first as barracks and storage; second for patrols and defense; third as a command center; and finally as a lookout station, providing distant views across the surrounding lands.

The compound can be explored by visitors wanting to better understand its defensive functions.

This scenic area is accessible to both the elderly and the very young, as the steps are gentle and easy to climb. From the top, the modern city of Yulin can be seen on one side and the Maowusu Desert on the other, creating the sensation of standing astride two worlds.

The remains of two ancient cities also exist here, where Mongolian people traded with their Han counterparts, suggesting that the post may have been more about commerce and administration than warfare, and that it helped maintain communication and exchange.

The site reminds us that the true Great Wall did not separate people with brick and stone, but connected them with trade, dialogue and ordinary people's aspirations for a peaceful life.

5. Jinshanling in Chengde, Hebei province

Located on the border between Hebei province and Beijing, the Jinshanling Great Wall is hailed as one of the most beautiful sections of the structure. It winds through lush hills, punctuated by watchtowers and guardhouses.

What makes Jinshanling unique is the variety of its watchtowers and defensive structures. The designs change with the terrain, so no two towers are exactly alike. Visitors will find towers with square, round or flat bases, and with roofs shaped like boat canopies, domes, or octagons with pointed tops. There are also multi-windowed lookout towers and storehouses. Scattered across the ridgeline, these towers form a complete and well-coordinated defensive system.

The section was originally built at the beginning of the Ming Dynasty and rebuilt when Ming general Qi Jiguang guarded the northern frontier.



Thanks to its high altitude and dense vegetation, Jinshanling is cool and pleasant in summer, making it an ideal summer retreat. It's also the perfect location for photographers to capture different landscapes across different seasons without having to dodge crowds of tourists. Sunset is particularly spectacular; at dusk, the setting sun dyes the sky blood-red, warming the old walls with a soft orange glow.

Ma Jingna contributed to this story.

Contact the writer at wangru1@chinadaily.com.cn



The Jinshanling Great Wall winds majestically through lush hills, punctuated by watchtowers and guardhouses. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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CHINA

Intl partnership targets poverty

Forum views it as a platform to share knowledge and experiences

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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Participants exchange ideas ahead of the 2026 Global Poverty Reduction and Development Forum in Beijing on Wednesday. WANG JING / CHINA DAILY

The Global Partnership for Poverty Alleviation and Development, aimed at promoting the exchange of poverty reduction experiences among countries and exploring pathways to fundamentally eliminate poverty, was launched on Wednesday in Beijing.

Jointly initiated by China, 53 other countries and nine international organizations, the partnership was announced during the two-day 2026 Global Poverty Reduction and Development Forum.

Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong said the forum and the establishment of the partnership would push global poverty reduction onto a new journey and inject fresh momentum into pooling global strength and advancing poverty alleviation.

He said China would help improve poverty reduction capacity in developing countries through policy planning, experience sharing, technology demonstration and talent training. China also plans to support a number of "small but beautiful" cooperation projects tailored to the needs of developing countries, he added.

"At present, there is an urgent need for all parties to build consensus and accelerate global poverty reduction efforts," Liu said, proposing efforts to enhance endogenous development capacity by promoting market-driven and technology-enabled development.

The launch comes as the world faces challenges in meeting the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by 2030.

Stephen Jackson, the UN Development System Resident Coordinator in China, reading a congratulatory letter from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, said poverty remained "a global development emergency" despite recent progress.

"Eight hundred million women, children and men still live in extreme poverty — from remote rural communities to crowded urban slums," the letter said, warning that conflicts, climate change, inequality and debt burdens were worsening the situation.

The letter called on governments to invest in decent work, education, healthcare, rural development and social protection, while urging greater financial support for developing countries.

Delegates attending the forum said the new partnership could provide a platform for knowledge sharing and practical cooperation.

Vongsey Vissoth, permanent deputy prime minister and minister in charge of the Office of the Council of Ministers of the Kingdom of Cambodia, said his country warmly welcomed the initiative as "a timely platform for solidarity, mutual learning and practical cooperation".

Holding the forum in China carried special significance, he said. "China's experience shows that poverty can be reduced at scale when clear vision, national ownership, broad-based growth, rural development, infrastructure, job creation and targeted public support work together," he said.

Robert Walker, professor emeritus at the University of Oxford and a professor at Beijing Normal University, said the partnership is a support for the world in achieving the SDG goals.

"Sharing expertise and knowledge would be essential, not for its own sake, but as a tool for reform, to make the world better, to ensure that poverty can be addressed," Walker said.

Heidi Kuhn, founder of United States-based NGOs Roots of Peace and Pax Agricultura and a World Food Prize laureate, called for broader global cooperation.

"I think China today has done something very extraordinary," Kuhn said. "I am certainly inspired, and I hope together we can work to plant global gardens for food security all over the world."

Mainland slams DPP's sustained separatist agenda

By **JIANG CHENGLONG**
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A Chinese mainland spokesman on Wednesday criticized Taiwan's Democratic Progressive Party for never abandoning its separatist agenda, urging it to recognize that both sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China.

Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, made the remarks at a news conference in Beijing in response to recent comments by Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te.

Lai, who also leads the DPP, claimed in a recent post on Facebook that there is no issue of "Taiwan independence" while defending the status quo of the "Republic of China". Some commentators in Taiwan have noted that if this position is genuine, the DPP should remove its "Taiwan independence" party platform as soon as possible.

Chen stressed that there is only one China and that Taiwan is part of China, which he said is an indisputable historical and legal fact, as well as the prevailing status quo across the Taiwan Strait.

He said the DPP has long positioned itself as a separatist party advocating the separation of Taiwan from China, pointing to its "Taiwan independence" party platform. Chen noted that in October 1991, the DPP amended its party charter to include the establishment of a "sovereign and independent Republic of Taiwan" and the drafting of a "new constitution".

Although some later DPP resolutions have used what he described as more disguised wording, Chen said the goal of separating Taiwan from China has never been abandoned. "The DPP authorities have, during every period in power in Taiwan, deliberately pursued 'Taiwan independence' separatist activities in an attempt to change the status quo that both sides of the Strait belong to one China," he said.

Chen also criticized Lai for what he described as a stubborn "Taiwan independence" stance and provocations in pursuit of separation. He said Lai was now changing rhetoric in an attempt to mislead public opinion and deceive the public, calling him "a complete Taiwan independence swindler".

He added that "Taiwan independence" is fundamentally incompatible with peace across the Taiwan Strait, undermines Taiwan's development, and is a dead end.

Chen urged the DPP to come to terms with reality, abandon its "Taiwan independence" party platform, stop separatist activities, and cease actions that obstruct cross-Strait relations.

Following Lai's speech on May 20, recent public opinion in Taiwan suggested the DPP's approach has shifted from pursuing "de jure Taiwan independence" to seeking "substantive Taiwan independence" in identity and culture.

Chen said Taiwan has never been a country and will never become one in the future. "Driven by their separatist nature and political self-interest, the DPP authorities have vigorously pushed 'cultural Taiwan independence' and 'de-Sinicization' in an attempt to distort Taiwan compatriots' national identity," he said.

Chen condemned the DPP for "forgetting its roots" and "betraying the Chinese nation", adding the party "will be judged by history".

"We will never tolerate or condone any form of 'Taiwan independence' separatist activity," he said, adding that no matter what "tricks" Lai and the DPP resort to, they cannot sever the historical and cultural ties between people on both sides of the Strait or block the trend toward national reunification.

He expressed hope that Taiwan compatriots will clearly recognize the DPP's intentions and strengthen their identification with the Chinese nation and Chinese culture, and called on them to join efforts in opposing all forms of "Taiwan independence" separatist activities.

Sino-Russian joint efforts secure wildlife populations

By **LIU MINGTAI** in Changchun and **ZHOU HUIYING**

In recent years, through the establishment of transnational protected areas and joint patrol and monitoring mechanisms in Northeast China and the Russian Far East, notable progress has been made in protecting Siberian tigers and leopards, safeguarding migratory birds and restoring salmon populations, according to the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

The China-Russia border connects forests, wetlands and rivers which are jointly protected by the two countries, making it a crucial region for cross-border ecological conservation.

The administration said cooperation has expanded from single-species protection to comprehensive ecosystem restoration, forming an ecological security barrier in Northeast Asia and providing a model for global cross-border ecological governance.

In the dense forests along the China-Russia border, infrared cameras have captured increasing numbers of wild Siberian tigers crossing between the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park and Russia's Land of the Leopard National Park.

China and Russia signed an agreement in 2024 to establish a transboundary nature reserve for large cats.

"The two countries have established a regular joint patrol mechanism and built an intelligent monitoring system to share real-time data on tiger and leopard activities," said Liu Linbo, director of the Hunchun bureau of the Northeast China Tiger and Leopard National Park Administration in Jilin province.

Monitoring data from the bureau shows that populations of wild Siberian tigers and leopards in the Hunchun area have doubled since the park was established in 2021, with about 70 tigers and 80 leopards recorded.

The transnational protected area, to date, covers nearly 17,000 square kilometers, providing an ecological corridor for the safe migration and reproduction of the big cats.

Each spring and autumn, hundreds of thousands of migratory birds arrive at the Jingxin Wetland in Hunchun to rest and refuel before continuing along migration routes across China, Russia and beyond.

Located at the junction of China, Russia and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the 8,000-hectare wetland is a key transit station on the East Asian-Australasian migratory bird flyway and one of the world's important habitats for migratory birds.

To ensure comprehensive protection of migratory birds, China and Russia have established a regular cooperation mechanism, conducting synchronized monitoring of waterbird populations and disease prevention during migration seasons, while sharing core data on bird numbers and activity ranges, according to the Hunchun forestry bureau.

In recent years, Hunchun has enhanced efforts to protect forest and wetland ecosystems, restoring about 5,000 hectares of forests, grasslands and wetlands, creating a favorable ecological environment for migratory birds.

Data shows that during the migration seasons each year, more than 200 species of migratory birds inhabit Hunchun, including 14 species under national first-class protection and 42 species under national second-class protection.

In mid-April, 600,000 salmon fry were released into the Mijiang River in Hunchun, a first-level tributary of the Tumen River, marking the start of their journey to the North Pacific Ocean. They are expected to return to spawn in three to four years.

As a typical transboundary migratory fish, the salmon's life cycle spans waters in both China and Russia, and the health of its population reflects the ecological condition of cross-border waters.

Over the years, China and Russia have cooperated on fish breeding and migration monitoring, establishing a regular cross-border protection mechanism.

Since 2007, Jilin has conducted fish stocking activities in the Tumen River basin, releasing more than 4.7 million salmon fry and 38 million other fish to support sustainable fisheries and promote the harmonious coexistence between humans and nature, according to Zheng Yanwen, an official with the local fisheries administration.

"The shift from single-species protection to comprehensive ecosystem restoration, and from seasonal joint actions to regular collaborative governance, provides a vivid model for global cross-border ecological governance," said Jiang Ming, director and researcher at the Chinese Academy of Sciences' Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology.

Han Junhong contributed to this story.

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Idea of space solar power station closer to reality

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Chinese scientists have successfully tested a ground-based system capable of wirelessly transmitting power to multiple moving targets simultaneously, marking a major breakthrough in the global race to harness solar energy from space.

The milestone was achieved by the "Sun Chasing project" research team led by Duan Baoyan, a member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a professor at Xidian University in Shaanxi province.

The breakthrough brings the long-envisioned concept of orbital "wireless charging stations" closer to reality.

The system successfully delivered 1,180 watts of output power over a distance of more than 100 meters to multiple moving targets. The successful demonstration of "one-to-many" dynamic wireless power transmission pushes the technology closer to practical engineering applications.

Duan compared the space solar power station to a wireless charging post positioned in a predetermined orbit.

Space-based solar power is widely regarded as a promising clean energy solution in the future. In orbit, free from atmospheric interference and the cycle of night and day, such systems can collect sunlight continuously. However, because running physical cables down to Earth from a geostationary orbit, which lies 36,000 kilometers above the planet, or between spacecraft is impossible, scientists must rely on microwave wireless power transmission. The process converts electricity into microwaves, beams them across vast distances, and then converts them back into usable direct current electricity upon arrival.

Currently, many small satellites in low-Earth orbit can generate power for only about 60 minutes during each 96-minute orbit. For the remaining time, they remain in the Earth's shadow and rely entirely on onboard batteries. A space-based charging network would reduce the dependence on individual solar panels, allowing satellites to recharge in orbit, Duan said.

To achieve this, Duan's team proposed the OMEGA design in 2014, which uses unique spherical principles to concentrate sunlight. In June 2022, the team built what it described as the world's first full-link ground validation system, successfully testing every stage of the process — from capturing sunlight and converting it into electricity, to transforming the electricity into microwaves, transmitting them before converting them back into electricity on the ground.

The team's latest iteration, dubbed Distributed OMEGA, addresses the complex engineering challenge of building and maintaining massive power grids in space. By focusing on modularity, the system uses standardized, independent components that can be assembled or replaced in orbit like building blocks.

"Unlike the previous design that utilized a complete spherical condenser to collect sunlight — where encountering space debris could render the entire system unusable — dividing it into multiple small-aperture spherical concentrators and adopting a 'formation flying' approach ensures that even if individual units are damaged, the overall performance remains almost unaffected, thereby improving system reliability," said Li Xun, a professor at Xidian University's School of Mechano-Electronic Engineering.

Li added that this also allows for reducing the voltage of each unit, improving the engineering feasibility.

Recent test data highlighted significant performance improvements over the 2022 baseline. At a distance of more than 100 meters, the system achieved a 20.8 percent direct current-to-direct current transmission efficiency, up from 15.05 percent in 2022. The beam collection efficiency reached 88 percent, ensuring that the microwave beam remained tightly focused on its target.

Li said that the performance is "world-leading", contributing to the improvement of high-precision sun tracking to guarantee energy collection at the source, a precise closed-loop control system to accurately direct the beam from the transmitter to the receiver for higher collection efficiency, and a highly integrated design to minimize link losses.

"Different from chips, there is no technology blockade among nations when it comes to building space solar power stations. Under a similar level of industrial capability, continuously raising the bar can only be achieved through technological iteration," said Duan Xuechao, deputy dean of the School of Mechano-Electronic Engineering.

Crucially, the team also solved the tracking precision challenge required to power moving objects. In a simulated trial, a drone flying at 30 km/h successfully received a stable 143 watts of power from 30 meters away. This capability is considered essential for space applications, where satellites and orbital stations are constantly moving relative to one another.

An expert panel organized by the Shaanxi Provincial Technology Transfer Center evaluated the project and concluded that the results had reached a world-leading level, with broad prospects for engineering and industrial applications.

Duan said that the team will continue to address key challenges. This includes adapting systems from ground-based validation to actual space environments, improving wireless power transmission efficiency over long distances, and achieving ultra-precise beam steering control while the satellite is moving at high orbital speeds.

Easing stress


Students interact with a lamb during a stress-relieving activity at a mental health fair held at Southeast University in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Wednesday. LIU LI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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POLICY REVIEW

Push to create 'youth-friendly' cities

Urban centers use policy to compete in attracting talented young professionals

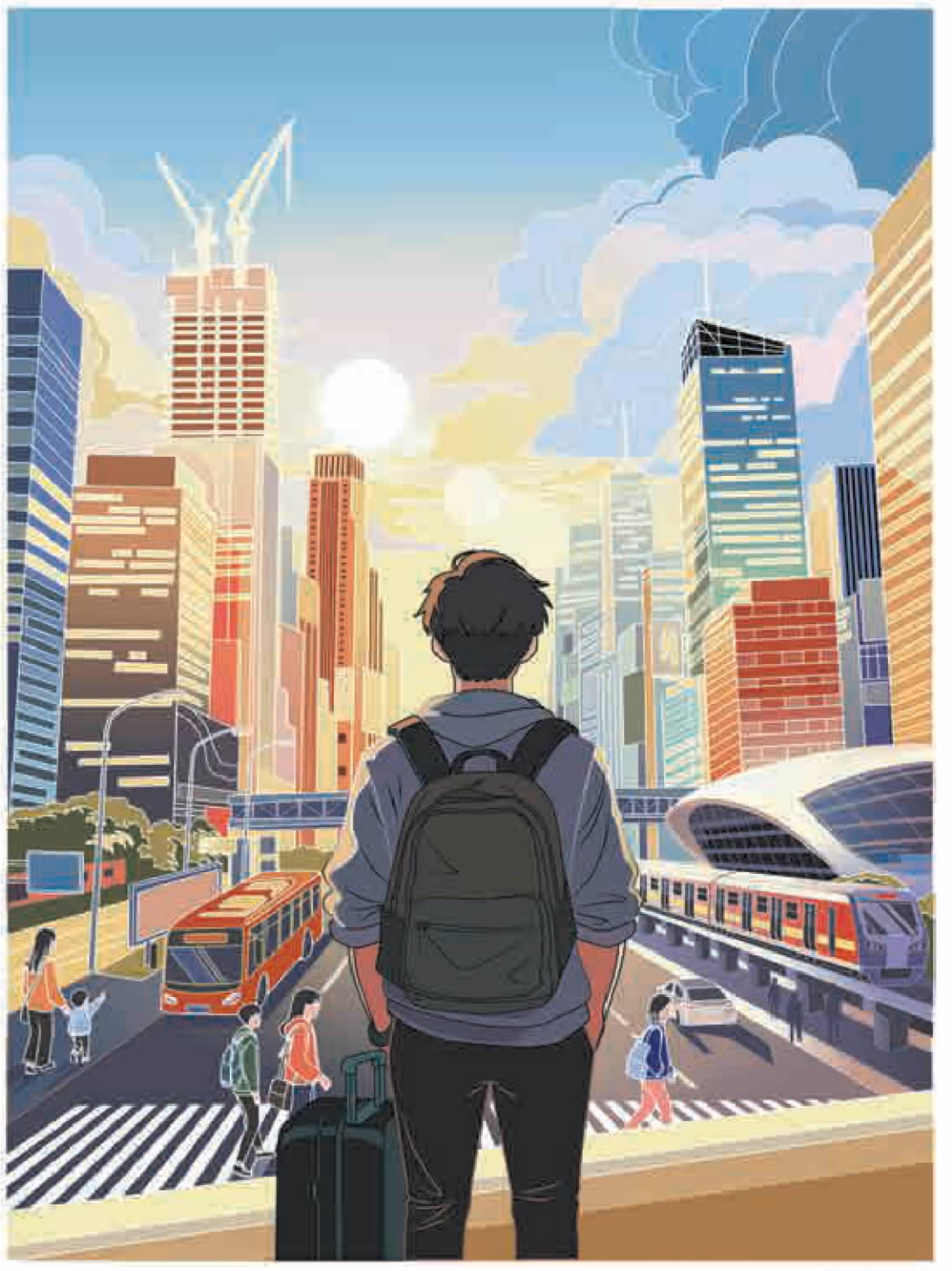
By **ZOU SHUO** in Beijing
and **HE CHUN** in Changsha

A recently released national guideline aims to transform China's urban centers into launch pads for the next generation, with the ultimate goal of tackling young professionals' most pressing hurdles, those of housing costs, job hunting and the risks of early entrepreneurship.

The guideline, released on April 22 by 15 central departments, including the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China, the Cyberspace Administration of China, and the National Development and Reform Commission, outlines 18 measures covering industrial foundations, innovation support, urban planning, housing, childcare and employment.

By 2030, the concepts promoted in the guideline are expected to have been widely rolled out, and by 2035, a mature institutional framework for youth development should be in place.

City governments across China are actively competing to attract fresh talent to boost local high-quality economic development. By addressing daily pressures like childcare and high rent, major hubs are trying to ensure young workers can put down deep roots.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

Slashing costs

For recent graduates, the transition from campus to the workforce is often a financial shock. Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang province, is targeting this vulnerability directly through digital integration and cash subsidies.

The city has introduced a specialized youth area on its online government services platform. The area integrates job searches, entrepreneurship support and policy access, providing over 100,000 job listings, according to the city's Committee of the Communist Youth League.

There are 97 specialized youth hostels offering seven days of free accommodation for job-seeking graduates, clocking 260,000 nights as of April this year, the committee said.

The city also provides one-time living subsidies of up to 100,000 yuan ($14,700) for doctoral graduates, 30,000 yuan for master's graduates and 10,000 yuan for graduates with bachelor's degrees.

An additional rental subsidy of 10,000 yuan per year is offered to all qualifying college graduates for three consecutive years, backed by 248,000 units of subsidized rental housing. Young people have accounted for 70 percent of the beneficiaries so far.

"The policy precisely addresses our urgent needs in job hunting and stable living," said recent graduate Chen Nuo. Fellow graduate Ding Yiling called it "a protective umbrella" that enhances young people's sense of belonging.

Free workspaces

Suzhou in Jiangsu province has 145 youth hostels offering free accommodation for up to 14 days in total, spanning a wide eligibility window from one year before graduation to two years after, the city's Communist Youth League committee said.

For young entrepreneurs, the city offers up to 500,000 yuan in seed funding and three years of rent-free workspace up to 200 square meters. It has also offered 43 youth apartment projects, with over 27,000 units available at discounted rents.

Critically, the city is also addressing the "double-income trap" facing young parents by managing seasonal childcare gaps. Over the past five years, the Suzhou youth league committee has organized more than 6,900 subsidized winter and summer daycare classes, serving 1.63 million children during school vacations to alleviate the domestic burden on working parents.

Serving startups

In Southwest China's Sichuan province, Chengdu is proving that the most valuable asset a city can give a tech startup is not just cash, but a market.

When Liu Yang graduated from the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, he launched his drone software startup, Shine Tech, with just two free desks in a government-run youth entrepreneurship park. The true breakthrough came a decade later when the government integrated his systems into the city's operational infrastructure.

The city provided Shine Tech with "application scenarios" — a policy where local governments act as the first major client for local tech startups, allowing them to test and prove their emerging technologies, like low-altitude urban drone governance, in real-world public management settings.

"Chengdu gave us a lot of support," Liu said. His low-altitude digital operation system has since been replicated in 11 cities and 28 districts and counties nationwide. Liu added that Chengdu's stable housing market — with prices well-regulated between 10,000 and 20,000 yuan per square meter — makes homeownership a realistic goal. "Chengdu is inclusive and not exclusive. People say, 'After drifting to Chengdu, you never feel adrift again'," Liu said.

The city has built 40 youth talent stations serving 138,000 people and has also established a youth housing security system offering free short stays, low-cost long-term rentals and subsidized talent apartments. Matchmaking events are held regularly.

Funding safety net

Hunan province, with its capital Changsha serving as the primary talent magnet, has taken an aggressive stance on funding high-risk startups, explicitly building a safety net for business failure.

At a recent recruitment drive at Zhejiang University, Jiang Difei, vice-governor of Hunan, announced that the province is offering 100,000 annual internships and over 300,000 quality jobs, backed by a 500-million-yuan university startup fund and 6.2 billion yuan in guaranteed entrepreneurship loans.

Policies include up to 14 days of free accommodation, up to two years of housing subsidies, and a minimum 10,000-yuan subsidy for first-time entrepreneurs, Jiang said.

The warmth of this policy was felt directly by Liu Yehuan, a tech printing entrepreneur who stayed in Changsha after graduating from Hunan University. After four failed start-up attempts, Liu and his classmates founded VMonkey.cn. Between 2020 and 2022, the company lost nearly 10 million yuan.

"As a small asset-light enterprise with no collateral, we could not get conventional loans," Liu said. The local entrepreneurship service center helped him secure a 5-million-yuan unsecured credit loan backed by government risk compensation.

"Policy has the most warmth not when it adds flowers to brocade, but when it sends charcoal in the snow," Liu said.

His company now has 300 employees and its online campus printing brand is among the nation's front-runners. "Hunan is a place that tolerates failure and encourages young people to go through trial and error," Liu said.

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Policy Digest

Baseline standards set for school facilities, staffing

A revised set of baseline requirements has been issued for the basic operating conditions of primary and secondary schools, in a move aimed at advancing balanced and high-quality compulsory education, ensuring more standardized development of schools.

The requirements, released by the General Office of the Ministry of Education and three other departments on May 22, are designed to better meet teaching needs and support the physical and mental well-being of students.

The document lays out 20 baseline requirements in five areas: school building construction, safety and security facilities, living facilities, teaching equipment and staffing. These requirements represent the minimum standards that ordinary primary and secondary schools across the country must meet, while small-scale schools and teaching sites may apply them in light of local conditions.

The document gives particular emphasis to facilities and staffing for mental health, aesthetic and physical education, providing stronger support for students' all-round development.

Priorities laid out for quality growth of digital economy

The National Data Administration has issued its 2026 work priorities for the development of the digital economy, setting out eight key tasks to promote high-quality growth in the sector.

The document calls for deeper market-based reform in the allocation of data resources, including faster efforts to establish a unified national data property rights registration system and improving the pricing mechanisms for authorized public data operations.

It also emphasizes stronger digital infrastructure, with plans to accelerate the building of an integrated national computing power network and better coordination of data, networks, computing capacity and energy resources.

To support artificial intelligence development, the administration will advance special actions covering stronger foundations, expanded capacity, application empowerment, quality improvement, management services, value creation and data labeling.

The document also calls for cultivating competitive digital industry clusters and innovative digital economy enterprises, while deepening the integration of the digital and real economies, particularly in manufacturing and key industries.

Plan issued to advance ecological compensation

The National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance have issued an implementation plan to advance integrated ecological compensation.

Integrated ecological compensation is an effective means of coordinating ecological compensation policies to strengthen the protection of key areas and important ecosystems, and better motivate those engaged in ecological protection.

The plan calls for increasing the targeting and coordination of ecological compensation policies, expanding market-based compensation channels, better leveraging fiscal funds to guide such compensation, and boosting ecological protection in critical areas.

The plan also aims to build a government-led compensation framework with social participation and market mechanisms, and help turn ecological strengths into economic benefits.

The plan outlines measures for the protection and development of major water source areas, the green development of key ecological function zones, integrated compensation for important ecosystems, and the improvement of mechanisms that benefit multiple parties.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

Hyper-focused founder hails Suzhou support

By **ZOU SHUO**

Dong Zhen, 32, has a closet full of awards. A Forbes 30 Under 30 award, a Suzhou Young Scientist award and more. But ask him about these honors, and he shrugs.

"They were given to me by others," he said. "I didn't actively apply for most of them. If the company falls behind, that's real pressure. The rest — having them or not — doesn't matter much."

That kind of unfiltered honesty runs through conversations with the 30-something founder of SEEExTECH, a hydrogen energy control startup in Suzhou, Jiangsu province.

Dong has a theory about Suzhou's character — and why it suits his company.

"Suzhou doesn't have much nightlife. People work during the day, go home to help their kids with their homework, and go to bed early," he said.

For a hydrogen energy hardware startup, he added, that's a plus, not a bug. "We don't need young people's nightlife. We need to stay effective."

His company's 100 employees — mostly young people — seem to share that rhythm.

Dong founded the company in 2021 while still a PhD student at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

The early years were brutal: sleeping in a windowless, damp storage room, driving alone past midnight to a factory in another province, surviving on savings from his scholarship.

Suzhou, he said, made survival possible.

"The local government — human resources, science and technology, organization departments — they work together. The officials genuinely care," Dong said. "They proactively come to you and say, 'You should apply for this talent program, you qualify for that certification'."

Dong and his company have been supported through district-level, city and now provincial recognition. "This year, even the Central Committee of the Communist Youth League of China and some ministries know about us. Suzhou won't let a pearl be buried — but first you have to be a pearl."

Suzhou is preparing to build a 2.67-hectare hydrogen industrial park with Dong's company as the anchor. "We don't buy the land — State assets hold it — but we can bring in our upstream and downstream partners. That takes courage from the government," he said.

Dong started his research career with pure passion. As a master's student at the Harbin Institute of Technology, he published seven high-quality papers, three in top journals — a record that would impress many PhDs. He won a full scholarship to Manchester and kept writing.

Then something snapped.

"Around my second year of the PhD, I began to feel that the flood of papers was no longer the crystallization of human wisdom — it felt more like stuff churned out on an assembly line," said Dong.

He said his company developed the industry's first fully integrated hydrogen-electricity control system, covering power from 100 watts to megawatts. It manages how hydrogen is converted, stored and dispatched — making it work in places where batteries fail: extreme cold, remote areas, long-haul flights.



Dong Zhen (center) discusses a product with colleagues in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Last year, a hydrogen drone using the company's technology flew to Antarctica's Zhongshan Station aboard the icebreaker *Xuelong*. "It was the world's first green hydrogen flight in Antarctica," Dong said. "The polar research center is already discussing phase two."

Annual revenue has been doubling year-on-year, he added, and 2026 is expected to surpass 100 million yuan ($14.7 million).

If there is one phrase Dong repeats, it is living with the end in mind, so you live fully now.

"I have no hobbies. No interest in killing time. I don't need to kill time — I have too many things to do," he said.

His only relaxation is playing with his 3-year-old son. "That lets me relive the childhood I never had. I didn't know what Ultraman was until middle school, or Pokemon until college. Now I go to Disneyland and Universal Studios with my son — and sometimes I play harder than he does."

Back to the awards. He keeps the trophies but attaches no weight. "If the company fails, those titles mean nothing. If the company succeeds, their shine fades compared to real success," Dong said.

"I grew up in a village where we ate only what grew in the ground. Now I see the country's rise in my own life. There is still a pathway for ordinary people to change their fate through effort. I am grateful for that," he added.

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BUSINESS



An image shows a wind farm in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on May 8. LI XINJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Targeted consumption strategies urged as green power supply rises

Upgrading grid seen as critical as $722b investment targets renewable bottlenecks

By **ZHENG XIN**
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As China's green and low-carbon energy transition accelerates, bringing challenges such as the integration of fast-growing renewable power, industry experts are calling for the country to step up efforts in adopting targeted consumption strategies.

"During the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, China's new energy consumption and utilization will face greater challenges, requiring differentiated and targeted measures to promote consumption," said Gan Mengying, a researcher at the State Grid Energy Research Institute.

The industry must comprehensively enhance the flexibility of all links including sources, grids, loads and storage systems, and perfect the regulatory resource supply system so as to absorb the massive influx of intermittent wind and solar power, and fundamentally optimize its power supply architecture, Gan said.

430 million kW
China's newly installed solar and wind power capacity in 2025

This urgency is underscored by the record-breaking pace of renewable energy installations.

The National Energy Administration said China's newly installed solar and wind power capacity exceeded 430 million kilowatts in 2025, an increase of 22 percent year-on-year, hitting a record high.

This surge propelled the cumulative grid-connected capacity of wind and solar power to 1.84 billion kW, accounting for 47.3 percent of the country's total installed power capacity and surpassing thermal power for the first time.

According to plans by the NEA, by 2035, a new power system capable of accommodating a high share of new energy should be established, along with further improvements in new energy consumption and regulation systems.

While this achievement marks a massive leap forward for the nation's environmental goals, the rapid addition of clean energy has introduced varying regional grid stability issues, said a recent report by the State Grid Energy Research Institute.

A traditional "one-size-fits-all" approach to grid management is no longer viable given the drastically varied resource endowments and economic realities across different provinces, it said.

To tackle this, the report suggests that while coal power is transitioning towards a more regulated, supportive and strategic reserve power source, hydropower is being upgraded into a composite power source integrating flexible regulation, peak power supply and system support functions.

Nuclear power should transition toward a combination of base load guarantee and comprehensive utilization of nuclear energy, it said.

To prevent energy curtailment moving forward, the report said regional nuances must dictate grid upgrades.

For instance, some eastern provinces with high power demand only face minor curtailment during holidays or specific mid-day hours, requiring simple optimization of existing coal plants.

Conversely, western regions with an overwhelming penetration of renewables require massive investments in pumped-storage hydroelectricity, advanced electrochemical storage and expanded interprovincial power transmission corridors to maximize green energy use.

China is set to pour a record-high 5 trillion yuan ($722 billion) into its power grid over the next five years — a massive investment in new infrastructure designed to eliminate renewable energy bottlenecks and propel the nation toward its 2030 carbon peak goal.

By shifting traditional baseload behemoths like coal into highly responsive backup units and expanding the multigenerational capabilities of nuclear and hydro facilities, the power grid can effectively counterbalance the unpredictability of weather-dependent renewables, it said.

Key platforms in place to boost industrial ties among BRICS members

By **ZHANG YI** in Xiamen, Fujian and **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou

The two-day 2026 BRICS Forum on Partnership on New Industrial Revolution opened on Wednesday in Xiamen, Fujian province, marking the launch of an international cooperation initiative on intelligent manufacturing and a new partnership city network to boost cooperation.

The new manufacturing initiative, jointly launched by the International Coalition of Intelligent Manufacturing and leading companies to drive smart transformation, builds on recent BRICS progress in co-constructing smart factories, sharing digital solutions and aligning technical standards.

Concurrently, the China-initiated "Network of Partner Cities on New Industrial Revolution" was established to enhance urban policy alignment and industrial synergy, featuring a first cohort of 10 cities across five nations.

Co-hosted by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Fujian provincial government, the forum drew representatives from over 20 countries and international organizations to focus on smart manufacturing solutions and developing-world industrial upgrades.

Delegates said artificial intelligence, the industrial internet and robotics are rapidly reshaping global supply chains and manufacturing competitiveness.

Tri Supondy, an Indonesian Ministry of Industry official, said that rapid technological advances, industrial restructuring, AI and robotics are actively reshaping global manufacturing supply chains and competitiveness, making this transformation urgent for the Global South.

Supondy said no single nation can navigate this transformation alone, and called for upgraded talent, international cooperation and technological modernization.

John Owan Enoh, Nigeria's Minister of State for Industry, said global industrial systems are being driven by AI, digital technology and green innovation, redefining the future of production processes and global value chains.

For developing economies like Nigeria, Enoh said these changes offer unique opportunities to leapfrog traditional paths and build resilient, competitive and inclusive industrial ecosystems.

Andrei Kuznetsov, Belarus Minister of Industry, said China's short product development cycles in the digital economy and smart manufacturing make it highly attractive for foreign investment and international cooperation, while significantly promoting experience-sharing among BRICS partners.

Zeng Yuqun, chairman of CATL, said that the new industrial revolution allows BRICS nations to transition from mere raw material suppliers to core participants and builders of the green value chain, leveraging their rich minerals and renewable energy.

Zeng said CATL's $6 billion investment with Indonesian firms for an integrated electric vehicle battery chain — spanning mining to recycling — is expected to create over 8,000 direct and 35,000 indirect jobs.

To turn volatile renewable energy into stable industrial power, CATL is advancing zero-carbon solutions, he said, adding that the company will officially launch the world's largest one-stop energy storage testing platform on Thursday in Xiamen.

Xiang Wenbo, chairman of Sany Group, called the BRICS bloc a primary growth engine for the group's overseas business, and its international sales topped $10 billion last year, with BRICS markets accounting for half.

Sany has built industrial parks in four BRICS markets — including Indonesia and Kazakhstan — and the group aims to leverage industrial innovation to make green energy more efficient and universally accessible, he said.

Concurrently, the forum hosted an industrial exhibition and the "Golden Egret" scholarship workshop, bringing 25 participants from 14 countries for field studies at leading companies like Alibaba and Unitree Robotics.

The Xiamen-based BRICS PartNIR Innovation Center has finalized 138 projects over five years, exceeding 62 billion yuan ($9.1 billion) in total investment.

Fujian's 2025 trade volume with BRICS markets reached 365.5 billion yuan, accounting for nearly one-fifth of the province's total foreign trade.

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Pop Mart's Labubu keeps on heavy lifting

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Visitors gather at a Pop Mart store in Shanghai on May 5. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Collectible toy giant Pop Mart has deepened its partnership-driven growth strategy through a new Twinkle Twinkle collaboration with McDonald's China. Since launching on May 20, the campaign has drawn long queues, social media buzz and growing resale prices, with some co-branded toys reportedly trading more than 30 percent above their original price on the secondary market.

Si De, chief operating officer of Pop Mart, said the company's intellectual property portfolio continues to demonstrate strong commercial vitality across global markets.

"Our IPs have maintained strong momentum in recent months. Labubu continues to enjoy strong popularity among global consumers," Si said. In the first quarter, collaborative products including Labubu x Sanrio and Labubu x FIFA delivered excellent performance, he said.

The remarks came as Pop Mart recently released its first quarter 2026 financial update, signaling revenue growth of between 75 percent and 80 percent year-on-year. Revenue in the Chinese market surged between 100 percent and 105 percent, supported by a 150 percent to 155 percent increase in online sales.

Despite the strong domestic performance, overseas markets have seen growth slowing sharply compared with the previous year. Revenue in the Americas increased between 55 percent and 60 percent, while Europe and other overseas regions grew 60 percent to 65 percent. Growth in the Asia-Pacific region reached 25 percent to 30 percent.

Executives cautioned investors against overinterpreting short-term fluctuations, and said that the country's trendy toy market remains in a rapid expansion phase as consumers increasingly seek products delivering emotional and cultural value.

Industry analysts expect the sector to maintain robust long-term growth momentum. According to a KPMG report, the country's trendy toy market was projected to reach 82.5 billion yuan ($12.1 billion) in 2025, a year-on-year growth of 40.5 percent. The market is forecast to exceed 213.3 billion yuan by 2030, with a compound annual growth rate of 18.7 percent.

The report found that more than 90 percent of young consumers recognize the importance of "emotional value", while nearly 60 percent are willing to pay a premium for such products and experiences.

Pop Mart recorded a breakthrough year in 2025. Operating revenue reached 37.12 billion yuan, giving the company a domestic market share of more than 30 percent. Its flagship IP Labubu generated revenue of 14.16 billion yuan.

The company is also accelerating expansion into immersive entertainment and lifestyle businesses. On April 30, a new section of Pop Land, its theme park, officially opened in Beijing, featuring upgraded attractions centered around Labubu and Dimoo characters.

"We introduced several large-scale amusement facilities for the first time, and the market response has exceeded expectations," Si said.

He added that Hirono standalone stores are set to expand to Seoul following launches in Shanghai, Bangkok and London.

The company has also expanded its Popop accessories unit's retail stores into six Chinese cities, launched its first Labubu-themed refrigerator and continued development of its first film project.

Corporate sales on steady growth track

By **REN QI**
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China's enterprise sales revenue registered steady growth in the first four months of the year, with multiple bright spots emerging across various sectors, according to the latest invoice data released by the State Taxation Administration.

"The invoice data reflect that the foundation of China's economic recovery and upward trajectory is continuously consolidating, while growth momentum is strengthening," said Huang Lixin, director of the Tax Science and Research Institute under the administration. "It shows that high-quality development is moving toward new and optimal levels, powerfully demonstrating the resilience and vitality of China's economic development."

During the January-April period, industrial sales revenue increased by 6.6 percent year-on-year. Specifically, sales revenue in the manufacturing and mining sectors grew by 6.9 percent and 6.4 percent, respectively, maintaining a relatively fast growth trend.

Equipment manufacturing continued to play its role as an economic ballast, with sales revenue rising 7.6 percent year-on-year. Notably, the manufacturing of computer and communication equipment, electrical machinery and equipment, and instrumentation saw sales revenues surge by 14.7 percent, 10.3 percent and 9.1 percent, respectively.

6.6 percent
growth in industrial sales revenue tracked by the State Taxation Administration during the January-April period

Industries representing new growth drivers also expanded rapidly. Sales revenue in high-tech industries jumped 15.3 percent year-on-year. High-tech manufacturing saw a 14.9 percent increase, accounting for 18.1 percent of the total manufacturing sales revenue, up 1.3 percentage points from the same period last year.

The vitality of digital industrialization was continuously unleashed, with sales revenue of core industries in the digital economy growing by 9.4 percent year-on-year. Within this sector, the manufacturing of digital products and the application of digital technologies experienced growth of 12.9 percent and 12.3 percent, respectively.

Fu Linghui, chief economist of the National Bureau of Statistics, noted that from January to April, China effectively implemented more proactive and effective macroeconomic policies. Efforts were focused on stabilizing employment, enterprises, markets and expectations, allowing the national economy to maintain a trend of steady progress.

The driving effect of artificial intelligence became increasingly prominent. Sales revenue of specialty electronic material manufacturing and integrated circuit manufacturing, which are directly related to AI production and application, skyrocketed by 70 percent and 54.4 percent year-on-year, respectively. Meanwhile, sales revenue of smart in-vehicle devices and robots, linked to AI terminal applications, surged 50.7 percent and 27.5 percent, respectively.

Looking ahead to the economic trajectory in the next stage, Wang Guanhua, a spokesperson for the NBS, said that while acknowledging the internal and external pressures and challenges in economic operations, it is even more important to recognize that the internal driving forces for steady economic improvement remain unchanged and will not change. There is a solid foundation and favorable conditions to promote steady and positive economic development, Wang added.

Furthermore, consumer potential continued to be unleashed. Driven by policies such as the trade-in program for consumer goods and lottery invoices, retail sales revenue of communication equipment grew by 17.4 percent year-on-year. The services consumption market remained robust, with sales revenue from leisure and sightseeing activities; travel agencies and related services; and the cultural, sports and entertainment sectors increasing by 32 percent, 14.6 percent and 14 percent, respectively. Additionally, sales revenue from catering delivery services and homestay services rose by 7.7 percent and 14.1 percent, respectively.

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WORLD



People bathe in the sunshine at a beach in Brighton, United Kingdom, on Tuesday, as temperatures continue to soar. GARETH FULLER VIA AP

Why Europe is world's fastest warming continent

PARIS — Europe, which is in the throes of a record-smashing heat wave this week, is the world's fastest-warming continent and stretches into an even more rapidly heating Arctic.

After record-high temperatures for May were broken in Britain, Ireland and France on Monday and Tuesday, the continent still faces more brutal heat in the coming days.

A so-called "heat dome" of warm air from northern Africa trapped under a high-pressure system over western Europe is behind the sort of heat not usually seen until high summer. The planet is around 1.4 C warmer than in preindustrial times, defined as 1850-1900.

By comparison, Europe is around 2.4 C hotter than the preindustrial era, according to the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service.

"Almost all of this heat is driven by the human-induced greenhouse effect from fossil fuel emissions, with the actual distribution of this excess heat determined by (several) factors," Ben Clarke, a researcher in extreme weather and climate change at Imperial College London, told AFP.

Shifts in atmospheric circulation have driven more frequent and more intense heat waves in the European summer, according to Copernicus.

High-pressure systems have become more common in Europe, Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo said.

"If you look over the last 20, 30 years, there has been a prevalence, especially in summer, of those sorts of anticyclonic conditions that are making heat waves more likely," Copernicus Director Carlo Buontempo told AFP.

Whether the increased frequency of that specific type of high-pressure system is due to climate change or is just a "statistical fluctuation" is still a scientific debate, Buontempo said.

Such high-pressure systems are also known as "blocking highs" because they can remain stationary and stop other weather systems from moving into a region.

Explaining how they work, Mary Bourke, a professor at Trinity College Dublin, said: "The sky is exposed to us, there are no clouds. It's a stable mass of air that is bringing warm air down to the surface and taking away moist air, so the air is not only warm, but it's also dry."

Another reason is geography. "Europe is connected to the Arctic, which is warming much faster than the rest of the planet," Clarke said.

The Arctic is 3.2 C warmer than in preindustrial times, according to Copernicus.

The region's rising temperatures are partly due to a process known as the albedo feedback.

Bright snow and ice reflect much of the sun's heat back into space, but as they melt they reveal darker, heat-absorbing surfaces such as land and the ocean. "So as sea ice melts it leads to greater absorption of heat, which in turn further warms waters and melts more ice," Clarke said.

In other parts of Europe, the area where snow was very frequent in winter has shrunk, Buontempo said.

"We have many of the historical regions that had a week or more of freezing conditions now, not having that. And this means exposing dark land rather than white snow," he said.

Stricter air quality regulations have reduced aerosol emissions since the 1980s.

But tackling the pollutant had the side effect of contributing to global warming, as these tiny airborne particles have a cooling effect by reflecting sunlight and making clouds more reflective.

"While a reduction in air pollution is hugely important for respiratory health, it also increases the solar radiation at the surface, as many types of particulate matter deflect sunlight," Clarke said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

US steel tariffs hit domestic can makers and raise prices

By BELINDA ROBINSON
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US steel tariffs have hit the humble tin can, with domestic manufacturers saying it costs more to produce cans at home than import them from overseas, despite President Donald Trump's push to bolster domestic steel production and limit imports.

China dominates global steel manufacturing and processing, accounting for 53 percent of global crude steel output, according to the World Steel Association. China is also the world's largest manufacturer and consumer of tinplate, according to the China Iron and Steel Association.

A decade ago, American producers made 60 percent of tinplate and other packaging steel used in the US, according to Harbor Intelligence, a steel analysis and research company. Last year they produced less than 20 percent, with the remaining 80 percent imported, The New York Times reported.

Over the past several years, American steelmakers deliberately moved away from producing tinplate for packaging in favor of other types of more lucrative steel production used in cars and buildings.

However, US industry groups are urging the president to remove tariffs on steel.

Scott Breen, president of the Can Manufacturers Institute, said in a statement that the Trump Administration's "recent aluminum and steel tariff actions keep costs high to make metal cans in America".

Trump used Section 232 of the Trade Expansion Act of 1962 to implement a 25 percent steel tariff and 10 percent tariff on aluminum during his first presidency.

On April 2, the Trump administration restructured the tariffs on steel, aluminum and copper, lowering some rates and adding new sourcing rules, The White House said.

The Urban-Brookings Tax Policy Center, an independent research organization, found that these changes "significantly reduce tariffs on steel and aluminum, with the average rate falling by over 20 percentage points".

David A. Gantz, Will Clayton Fellow for Trade and International Economics at Rice University's Baker Institute for Public Policy, told China Daily that Trump's tariffs on steel, aluminum, copper and other goods imported from virtually all US trading partners have a "negative impact" on the US economy.

The US currently imports its canned food from Asia, South America and Europe. Key global suppliers include China, Peru, Spain, Greece and India.

China and Thailand supply preserved fruits, seafood and tropical goods, according to the United States Department of Agriculture.

Worldwide, China exported over 206,468 tons of canned goods in April 2026 alone, data from CEIC and China's General Administration of Customs showed. One of the largest areas for this kind of production is Shandong province in eastern China.

China's top three export destinations for its private label canned goods by value were the US, Japan and Germany between 2025 to 2026, Yahoo News reports.

In the US, the cost of a can accounts for a third of the wholesale price of canned vegetables or fruits.

Trump's tariffs have not only raised the cost of tinplate, but also canned food, The New York Times reported.

Canned fruits and vegetables cost 5.7 percent more in March this year, compared with March 2025, government data showed.

Robert Ayars opened the first American cannery in the US in 1812.

Today, cans are an overlooked, everyday item. But they remain very important.

On West 36th Street in Manhattan, New York, directly opposite a luxury condo building site, a line of people wait in the middle of the afternoon in the searing heat for a food pantry to open.

A clipboard is passed around so that people can write their names down to ensure that no one jumps the line.

Mikaela, manager of the Metropolitan Community Church food distribution service, is in charge of the food pantry, which gives those in need free meat, produce and canned food. They also provide hot meals.

"The canned goods are probably the most important thing we offer, because if we run out of everything else or we don't get enough donations, the cans are always helpful," she told China Daily. "We feed at least 40 to 50 people per day over a period of three days. Sometimes it's more, it depends who is in need."

She explains that most of the canned food comes from New York City's local government and City Harvest, one of the largest food rescue organizations in New York. The local government also helps with funding. Public donations are welcomed.

"If people didn't get the food or the canned goods, they might not eat that day, that's what they tell me," Mikaela said. "So, we make sure we have enough to give them because the canned food is very important."

Top leader of DPRK oversees key weapon system test

PYONGYANG — Kim Jong-un, the top leader of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, has overseen weapon tests involving a lightweight multipurpose missile launching system and a multiple tactical cruise missile weapon system, the official Korean Central News Agency said on Wednesday.

The tests were conducted on Tuesday by the Missile Administration and the Academy of Defence Sciences. They analyzed and estimated the power of a special mission warhead of a tactical ballistic missile, the reliability of a 240mm controlled artillery rocket with an expanded firing range and an ultraprecision autonomous navigation system, and the AI-guided hit accuracy of a tactical cruise missile, said the report.

The tactical cruising shell features a combination of the ultraprecision autonomous navigation system, the terrain contour matching, or TERCOM, navigation system and an AI terminal guidance function. It is a powerful weapon system that can make an ultraprecision strike against any target 100 kilometers away by multimodal flight based on gliding and propelling, it said.

Kim said the tests were a clear signal of an upgrade of the country's military force and showed great technical progress in the strengthening of its combat power, according to the report.

The leader also outlined tasks for stepping up the steady growth of the country's defense capabilities and developing ultramodern military hardware.

XINHUA

Iran hits out at violation of truce by US

Tehran says it's ready to repel any attack while ruling out renewed war

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

Iran's Foreign Ministry has condemned the "flagrant and unjustified" ceasefire violations by the United States in the Strait of Hormuz, noting that these took place despite ongoing diplomatic efforts mediated by Pakistan.

In the latest developments, an Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps official said a renewed war with the US is unlikely, but warned that Tehran stands ready to repel any attack, Al Jazeera reported.

"The possibility of war is low because of the enemy's weakness, but the armed forces are lying in wait," said Mohammad Akbarzadeh, a commander of the IRGC Navy.

In a statement issued on Tuesday, reported by Mehr News Agency, the foreign ministry slammed the US Army for continuing its "illegal and unjustifiable actions" since the announcement of the ceasefire on April 8.

The ministry said the US had committed "a flagrant violation of the ceasefire in the Hormozgan region over the past 48 hours", particularly following "multiple instances of maritime piracy against Iranian commercial vessels".

The US has said its attacks were defensive in nature, targeting missile sites and boats attempting to lay mines.

In his call with Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani and other regional leaders, Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian reaffirmed Tehran's readiness to establish a "dignified framework" aimed at ending the ongoing fighting and regional tensions.

Pezeshkian spoke with heads of state from several mostly Muslim-majority countries on the occasion of Eid al-Adha.

He and his Egyptian counterpart, Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, exchanged greetings on Tuesday. They also underscored the necessity of Islamic unity and indicated a new chapter in regional relations.

Pezeshkian emphasized the need to strengthen cooperation across the Islamic world and expand bilateral relations between Tehran and Kuala Lumpur in his phone call with Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim.

Meanwhile in the US, President Donald Trump was expected to meet with his Cabinet on Wednesday at a precarious moment for talks aimed at ending the conflict with Iran. He took to social media on Tuesday to grumble that even if Tehran were to offer a complete surrender, the media would paint the end of the conflict as Iran scoring "a masterful and brilliant victory".

'A few more days'

US Secretary of State Marco Rubio said negotiations between the US and Iran on extending the ceasefire and reopening the Strait of Hormuz will take "a few more days".

According to Iranian sources, an initial deal would end hostilities on all fronts, get traffic moving through the strait within 30 days, and possibly provide some financial relief. More difficult issues such as Iran's nuclear program would be negotiated in the second phase. Iran has been allowing some ships through the strait, giving preference to vessels linked to countries with which it has close ties, Reuters has reported.

The conflict, which began on Feb 28, has caused an unprecedented oil supply shock, pushing up the costs of fuel, fertilizer and food.

The IRGC Navy said in a statement on Tuesday that as many as 25 other ships and oil tankers have been able to transit through the strait in coordination with the IRGC naval forces, Iranian media reported.

Also on Tuesday, the United Nations Security Council condemned what it said was an "egregious drone attack" that targeted an electricity generator outside the inner perimeter of the Barakah nuclear power plant in the United Arab Emirates on May 17.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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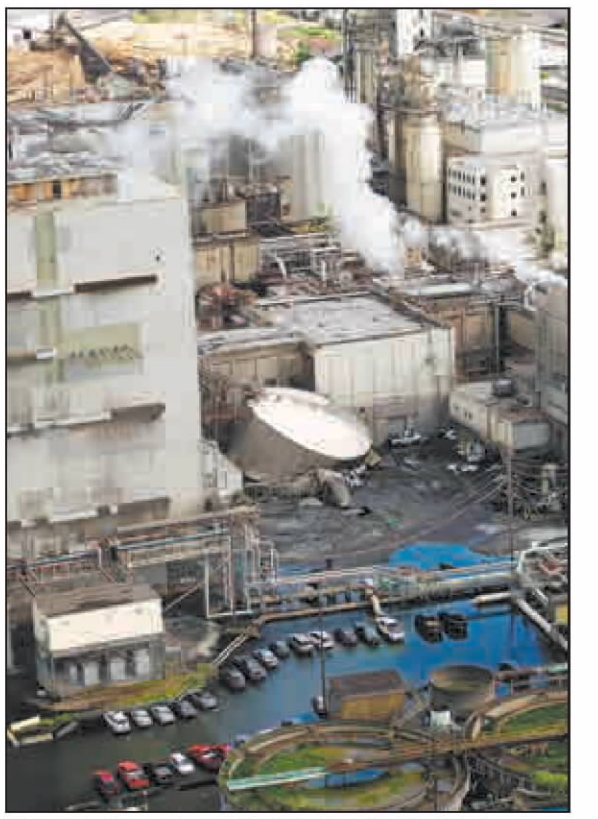
Corrosive catastrophe



Steam rises from a paper mill in Longview, the US state of Washington, on Tuesday after a massive chemical tank that held 3.4 million liters of a corrosive liquid imploded and collapsed. The incident killed at least one worker and left nine others missing with no hope of rescue, authorities said. DAVID RYDER / REUTERS

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WORLD

Japan faces backlash over intel agency

System could silence anti-war voices under banner of security, critics warn

By **HOU JUNJIE** in Tokyo
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Concerns are growing in Japan over what critics describe as a dangerous drift toward suppressing anti-war voices in the name of national security, as the government pushes ahead with constitutional revisions and the creation of a new national intelligence structure.

Japan's House of Councillors on Wednesday passed legislation establishing a national intelligence council, as Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi moves to centralize and strengthen the country's intel capabilities. The bill had cleared the House of Representatives last month.

Under the legislation, Japan will build an intelligence system centered on the national intelligence council, with a national intelligence bureau serving as its operational arm.

Chaired by the prime minister, the council will comprise relevant Cabinet members, including the chief Cabinet secretary and foreign minister, while the bureau will coordinate intelligence work across government ministries and agencies.

Critics warn the move could pave the way for a broader expansion of executive power.

Japanese lawyer Shunkichi Takayama said the Takaichi administration is attempting to open the door to constitutional revision through the introduction of an "emergency clause", which would allow the Cabinet to temporarily assume parliamentary functions during major crises.

The deeper intention behind the move is to seriously consider how Japan could seize opportunities for military action under critical circumstances, Takayama said.

The establishment of a national intelligence council should be understood within this broader context, he said, adding that its purpose would be to identify, monitor and suppress anti-war activists to advance pro-war policies.

Both the proposed intelligence agency and potential anti-espionage legislation are being viewed as tools serving that wider agenda — developments that are increasingly raising concern within Japanese society, he said.

Protests against the bill were held in Tokyo on Tuesday and Wednesday, with demonstrators carrying signs reading "No laws for war preparations" and "No public surveillance! Intelligence agency bill monitors citizens".

Makoto Konishi, a former member of Japan's Air Self-Defense Force, said one objective behind the government's push to establish a new intelligence framework is to suppress anti-war and pro-peace voices.

> "The Japanese government has consistently used claims of an increasingly severe security environment to justify expanding defense spending."
>
> **Hiroshi Shiratori,** a professor of political science at Hosei University in Tokyo

Nikkei Asia reported that opposition lawmakers warned that the new institution could expand government surveillance powers, characterizing the move as a return to a dangerous path Japan once followed.

Before and during World War II, Japan's Special Higher Police, known as Tokko, and military police organizations actively suppressed anti-government movements and civil society groups.

In an earlier editorial, the Ryukyu Shimpo warned that Japan should learn from the prewar misuse of public security legislation and remain cautious about expanding state intelligence systems.

Since taking office, Takaichi has repeatedly argued that Japan faces "the most severe and complex security environment of the postwar era".

Justification questioned

Hiroshi Shiratori, a professor of political science at Hosei University in Tokyo, told China Daily, "The Japanese government has consistently used claims of an increasingly severe security environment to justify expanding defense spending."

However, he questioned what concrete evidence or standards the government relies on to conclude that Japan is facing a "security crisis" and to continuously heighten public anxiety.

Shiratori warned that repeatedly emphasizing crises, intensifying perceptions of threats from neighboring countries and further expanding military capabilities could unnecessarily heighten regional tensions and increase the risk of accidental conflict.

The Mainichi Shimbun reported that the Japanese government could establish the national intelligence council and the national intelligence bureau as early as July, while also setting up an expert panel to discuss counterespionage legislation.

The government is expected to formulate its policy and submit related legislation during the regular parliamentary session in 2027.

Immigration clash



United States federal agents detain a protester after taking him outside an immigration center in Newark, New Jersey, on Tuesday. The US Immigration and Customs Enforcement is housing detainees at the center. The protests, which have become tense over the holiday weekend, come amid reports of an ongoing hunger strike by those being held. ADAM GRAY / AFP



Residents inspect a damaged building after an Israeli airstrike in the southern Lebanese port city of Tyre on Tuesday. EPA / STRINGER

Israel says it killed new head of Hamas' armed wing

JERUSALEM/CAIRO — Israel said on Wednesday it had killed Hamas' newly appointed armed wing chief in Gaza, days after it killed his predecessor, while intensifying military pressure in Gaza and expanding operations in Lebanon.

The Israeli military said Mohammed Odeh was killed in an operation in Gaza on Tuesday.

A relative of Odeh confirmed his death to Reuters and said the funeral would take place after noon prayers in Gaza City. Hamas has yet to issue an official statement.

Gaza health officials said six people were killed and more than 20 others wounded in the same Israeli strike that destroyed an upper floor of an apartment building in the Rimal neighborhood in Gaza City. Rescue workers were still at the scene looking for more possible casualties.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said in a statement that Odeh, whom he described as Hamas' fourth-ranking official, had been killed.

"We promised that Hamas will not have military or civilian control over Gaza, and so it will be," Katz said.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Tuesday night that Israeli forces had attempted to assassinate Odeh in a strike carried out under his and Katz's direction, but gave no details on the outcome.

Odeh was appointed about a week ago to succeed Izz al-Din al-Haddad, who was killed in an Israeli strike on May 15.

Lebanon operations

Hours before the attack, Israel announced it had expanded ground operations in Lebanon, where it has been fighting Hezbollah militants since it launched attacks on Iran with the United States at the end of February.

"The (Israel Defense Forces) are operating with large forces on the ground and seizing strategic areas," Netanyahu said after meeting with Katz and senior military officials.

On Wednesday, Hezbollah said its fighters "clashed with the enemy forces at point-blank range" in the town of Zawtar al-Sharqiyah, on the edge of an Israeli-declared "yellow line" in southern Lebanon, where its troops have been operating.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

Africa underscores role of stable China-US ties

By **EDITH MUTETHYA**
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The recent visit by US President Donald Trump to China has renewed discussions among African observers about the importance of cooperation between the world's two largest economies for global stability and Africa's development.

Analysts and business leaders say collaboration between Beijing and Washington could ease geopolitical tensions and create broader opportunities for trade, investment and infrastructure development across Africa.

Mark Badmus, chief executive of AMB Global Trade Finance Consultants, said a partnership between the two countries is essential to maintaining peace and sustaining global economic progress.

Developments between the United States and China often have far-reaching implications for Africa because global economic disruptions can quickly affect energy prices, trade flows and financial markets, Badmus said.

China-US cooperation can create opportunities for African economies in infrastructure, technology, climate action and trade, he said.

However, African countries must also strengthen collaboration among themselves to fully benefit from engagement with global powers, he added.

A unified African position in global affairs would help the continent secure better outcomes when engaging with major economies, Badmus said.

"If Africa speaks with one voice, it will gain more advantage," he said. "But if countries continue aligning individually based on historical ties, such as with former colonial powers, they may not achieve much."

Steph Davy Nguimbi, deputy CEO of Warwyck Private Bank in Mauritius, said China-US ties are crucial for global economic stability.

"The world today is like a village," he said. "When those two fight, the repercussions are felt everywhere, even in African countries that may not be directly involved."

Nguimbi expressed hope that outcomes between Washington and Beijing during Trump's visit could help address ongoing economic and geopolitical challenges.

While African nations maintain diplomatic and economic ties with both powers, a cooperative relationship between the US and China would reduce global uncertainty and help foster a more stable environment for Africa's growth, he said.

James Mwangi, CEO of Africa Climate Ventures, said stronger China-US cooperation would have a significant impact on Africa. Geopolitical rivalry between them could undermine Africa's efforts to address climate change, food insecurity and industrial development, he said.

Climate-smart farming solutions in Africa rely on interconnected global partnerships, he said.

Mwangi said agricultural projects across Africa depend on carbon demand from US and European Union buyers, manufacturing inputs with significant Chinese participation, and implementation by African farmers and businesses.

"All three have to work together," he said. "When geopolitical rivalry creates friction in any one of those links, an East African smallholder farmer loses access to a product that could protect her yields through a drought year."

Green transition

Mwangi added that China-US cooperation is also essential to Africa's transition to cleaner transport systems and green industrialization.

"Chinese technology is what makes the economics viable at African price points, while US development finance is what makes early-stage investment bankable," he said. "Rivalry doesn't produce a winner in Africa. It produces a gap."

Citing climate-related risks, Mwangi warned that Africa could face a projected 5 to 10 percent decline in crop yields with less than 2 degrees of global warming, while an estimated 52 million Africans have already been affected by droughts or flooding over the past two years.

"The businesses we are building are a direct response to that and they need the world's two largest economies pulling in the same direction," he said.

Heavy draw



A visitor tries out a Chinese-made excavator at the International Trade Fair for Construction Equipment and Technologies in Moscow on Tuesday. FENG KAIHUA / XINHUA

'Brexit moment' feared in Iceland's looming EU vote

By **JONATHAN POWELL** in London
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Iceland may face a "Brexit moment" in its looming European Union referendum amid concerns about misinformation, foreign interference and AI, the country's foreign minister says.

The northern European island nation will hold a referendum on whether to continue EU accession talks on Aug 29, and developments are being watched closely in Washington, Moscow and Brussels.

Speaking to The Guardian, Foreign Minister Thorgerdur Katrin Gunnarsdottir accused domestic and foreign actors of "fearmongering", saying Iceland was being hit with misinformation and rhetoric "from the playbook of Nigel Farage and Reform", referring to the United Kingdom's far-right party Reform UK and its leader.

The minister warned that the referendum risks becoming a target of foreign interference and that misinformation could shape the result.

"I am fearing that we will face a Brexit moment," she said. "That would be ... a rather dangerous path because ... there were all kinds of lies put forward by the Brexiteers."

Thorgerdur pointed to disputed figures used by the UK's Leave campaign about how much money the country sent to the EU.

She said Brexit "should be an example of how not to run a campaign" rather than something to replicate. "Nothing of what they promised has actually been activated or realized," she added.

In March, Iceland's coalition government unexpectedly brought the EU referendum forward from 2027, citing heightened external pressures from the United States and strategic concerns over its closest neighbor, Greenland, following US threats to forcibly acquire the Danish territory.

"The international order that underpinned our security and prosperity for decades is under serious pressure," Thorgerdur said. "The world has changed so decisively ... so Greenland has of course affected, or had influence on, our decision."

She warned that trade is being used as a political weapon. "You do not treat a friend and an ally like Greenland and Denmark like the US did in the beginning of this year."

Yet, Iceland's ties with the US remain strong, she said.

"Iceland being a member of the EU is not contradicting all the good relationship with the US. One thing does not exclude the other thing," she added.

Icelanders will not decide on EU membership itself in the August vote, but on whether the government should resume accession talks.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Hungary for success: PSG eyes historic win

Enrique's side is targeting rare UCL title repeat in Budapest

If Paris Saint-Germain's maiden triumph last year allowed the French club to break its Champions League hoodoo, winning the title again this season would allow it to be remembered as one of Europe's all-time great teams.

Twelve months after crushing Inter Milan 5-0 in Munich to claim the trophy with the biggest final win in European Cup history, PSG heads to Budapest to face Premier League champion Arsenal.

Stopping Luis Enrique's thrilling PSG side has proved an impossible task for just about everyone over the last 18 months, from Pep Guardiola's Manchester City to the seemingly unbeatable Bayern Munich in their recent semifinal clash.

Arsenal tried, and failed, in last season's semis, and the Parisians are the favorites to retain their title this time.

"We understand that we are the reigning champions and we can win again," Khvicha Kvaratskhelia said in an interview with UEFA.

"Of course, this will be difficult, but we've proved, once more, that we can beat any team as long as we play our way and give our all on the pitch," added the Georgian winger, who is arguably the best player in this season's Champions League with seven goals and three assists in the knockout rounds.

When Enrique, a Champions League winner with Barcelona in 2015, arrived in 2023, PSG was transitioning away from the era of highly paid superstar players.

Lionel Messi and Neymar left that same summer, ending underwhelming spells in the French capital. Kylian Mbappe departed a year later.

PSG had been completely transformed since the Qatari takeover of the club in 2011, but — one run to the final in 2020 and a semifinal in 2021 apart — it had become associated with frequent disappointment in the Champions League, and occasional humiliation.

Enrique has overseen a radical change, completely altering perceptions of the club outside of France.



Vitinha will be looking to add to the six goals he already has in PSG's current Champions League campaign in Budapest. AFP



If PSG retains the Champions League title, Luis Enrique will become only the fifth manager to win three European Cups. AFP

'Still things to be achieved'

PSG was almost once seen as a little bit of a joke in Europe, due to its enormous spending and lack of continental success.

Now, it is taken very seriously and has won admirers for the breathtaking soccer played by an exciting young team, built with the transfer market nous of its "soccer advisor" Luis Campos and coached by Enrique.

"He is a top-class coach with clear ideas. He is full of energy. He is exceptional and we hope he stays for a very long time," said Ousmane Dembele.

The France forward has been transformed from a dazzling but often wasteful winger into a prolific striker.

He scored 35 times last season and won the Ballon d'Or. This season, his minutes have been carefully managed amid numerous fitness scares, but he has still scored 19 goals and set up 11 more in just 24 starts.

Dembele, at 29, is the fourth-oldest player in the squad, behind only Fabian Ruiz, Lucas Hernandez (both 30) and 32-year-old captain Marquinhos.

The youthful energy all over the team allows it to play with a terrifying intensity that has blown away most opponents.

Things might not be so easy against Arsenal, but PSG has already reached three consecutive semifinals under Enrique.

Reaching consecutive UCL finals is incredibly hard, but retaining the title is almost impossible.

Zinedine Zidane's Real Madrid, which won three on the bounce from 2016-18, is the only side to have gone back-to-back in the modern Champions League era — before that you have to go back to Arrigo Sacchi's AC Milan in 1989 and 1990.

In a French context, the country had only ever produced one Champions League winner before last season, with Marseille in 1993.

This is not a fairytale story for a club backed by the wealth of Qatar and with the fourth-highest revenue in world soccer last year, according to the Deloitte Football Money League, behind only Real, Barcelona and Bayern.

But, it shows it did the right thing in abandoning the old superstar project, even if plenty of its current squad — Dembele, Kvaratskhelia, Vitinha, Achraf Hakimi — could now be considered as such.

The true superstar, though, is the coach, and Enrique can become just the fifth manager to win three European Cups after Carlo Ancelotti, Bob Paisley, Zidane and Guardiola.

"When I came to the club I said my objective was to make history," he told UEFA.com.

"We want to keep writing history, because we feel there are still things to be achieved."

AFP



Under Luis Enrique, Ousmane Dembele has been transformed from a profligate winger into a prolific striker and Ballon d'Or winner. AFP

Winger Khvicha Kvaratskhelia is arguably PSG's most dangerous player, with the Georgian racking up seven goals and three assists in the Champions League knockout stages. AFP

Miserly Arsenal looks to nullify French flair in continental clash of styles

Arsenal's immovable object meets the unstoppable force of Paris Saint-Germain in Saturday's Champions League final, offering a pronounced clash of styles.

Holder PSG's flowing attack is arguably the continent's most exhilarating, while Mikel Arteta's Arsenal is wedded to the pragmatic approach that ended its 22-year wait to win the Premier League.

The Gunners' soccer this season has not won over many neutrals, but after years of being the league's perennial "nearly men", Arteta's strategy has paid dividends.

Arsenal's consistency beat out Pep Guardiola's Manchester City to be crowned champion of England and led it back to Europe's summit two decades after reaching the 2006 final.

In the current Champions League campaign Arsenal has conceded only six goals in 14 matches and is unbeaten — by contrast PSG has let in 22 through the tournament.

"Without the ball, they are the best team in the world," said PSG coach Luis Enrique of the north London side.

Arteta's side depends on structure and discipline, seeking to control opponents by stopping it reaching dangerous areas, limiting its shots in the box — no Premier League team has conceded fewer.

The Gunners aggressively press opponents high, seeking to dominate territory, and hate giving the ball away themselves, avoiding risk in their passing.

They possess imposing, physical players, from impressive center-back pairing Gabriel and William Saliba, through the spine of the team with Declan Rice to imposing strikers Viktor Gyokeres and Kai Havertz.

That aids Arsenal's dead ball mastery, under the cunning eye of set piece coach Nicolas Jover, who it signed from Manchester City in 2021.

Swiss newspaper Blick pondered whether Jover was "ruining soccer", with the Frenchman reportedly paid a bonus for every goal scored via set-pieces.

"We want to be the best and the most dominant team in every aspect of the game," said Arteta, imploring his team to score even more from dead balls.

With 27 Premier League goals scored this season from dead ball situations, 38 percent of its total, some have labeled Arsenal "Set Piece FC".

"Every time they get a corner, my head is in my hands," former Liverpool defender Jamie Carragher told Sky Sports.

"I've never seen anything like this before in football."

After three consecutive second-place finishes, though, Arsenal recognizes winning ugly is better than not winning at all.



Arsenal's style of play depends on structure, discipline and an aggressive high press, marshaled by the likes of (from left) Declan Rice, Viktor Gyokeres and Kai Havertz, and while some have poured scorn on its tactics, Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta remains unperturbed. AGENCIES

"I don't know how you celebrate one goal different to another — maybe for YouTube one is nicer (to look at) than another," said Arteta unperturbed by the criticism.

Arsenal won seven Premier League games by a slender 1-0 scoreline this season, managing to keep 19 clean sheets.

If teams do penetrate the backline, then they must beat David Raya, who is enjoying a superb season in goal.

The Spaniard has matched the record of nine clean sheets in the Champions League. A 10th could secure the trophy.

Arsenal's struggles from open play, particularly when star winger Bukayo Saka was out injured, frustrated even its own supporters at times.

Yet, as tens of thousands turned up to celebrate the Premier League title, nobody was complaining.

The joyous scenes outside the Emirates stadium, with some players joining the fans until past 5 am, will give Arsenal license to double down on its approach, particularly against a team as lethal as PSG.

AFP

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Ebola response

New plan aims to contain virus outbreak in Africa

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Smallest nation defies odds for World Cup debut

SPORTS, PAGE 16



Coastal revival

National push restores mangrove wetlands, supports livelihoods

NATURAL FRONTIERS, PAGE 12

CHINA DAILY

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Students enter a national college entrance examination site in Yuncheng, Shanxi province, on Sunday. This year's national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, kicked off on Sunday nationwide. XUE JUN / XINHUA

Parents embrace calm as millions appear for *gaokao*

By ZOU SHUO
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The national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, got underway on Sunday with millions of Chinese students appearing for it, while their parents gathered outside examination venues in quiet support.

Rather than being fretful and anxious, most parents were the very picture of calm — a sure sign that the long-held belief that the *gaokao* alone determines a child's future is becoming history.

A total of 12.9 million candidates are taking this year's exam, which can stretch over two to four days, depending on the region. According to the Ministry of Education, authorities have put candidates first by strengthening comprehensive support in transportation, accommodation, food safety, noise control and psychological counseling, to ensure a safe and orderly exam process.

On Sunday, many parents arrived at the examination centers well ahead of time. Fu Jing, a Beijing mother of an art student, showed up an hour before the exam began. She said that her daughter had already identified her target universities and appeared in good spirits before entering her designated room.

Fu noted that she had made no special changes to her daughter's diet or daily routines in the run-up to the exam to keep things as normal as possible. She planned to leave the venue once the exam started and return at noon, rather than wait for the entire duration of the test.

Liu Jinqiao, another Beijing mother, admitted feeling a bit nervous but remained composed.

She said that she has set no specific targets for her son as far as scores or universities were concerned. She felt that such decisions could wait till the exams were over. For her, the *gaokao* is an important milestone in every child's life, but it is not a decisive turning point.

Not all parents, however, were keen to downplay the exam's significance. Lu Qiang, the father of a Beijing sports student, said the *gaokao* still carries great weight. He said that his son hoped to get into a good sports college, which also emphasized solid academic performance.

Lu noted that competition remained fierce, and doing well in the exam could help young people gain a broader vision and better chart their future path.

For Lin Hong, a Beijing mother, the focus was on respecting her daughter's wishes. Lin recalled her own *gaokao* in 1997, when her father traveled a long distance to bring her homemade food. Now as a parent herself, she feels that showing care is more about following her daughter's lead. So the family skipped exaggerated exam rituals and maintained a relaxed atmosphere instead.

She is proud of how brave and self-aware her daughter has become — a transformation she finds far more valuable than any test score.

"I've watched her strive relentlessly for her goal over the past three years," Lin said. "My heart aches for all her hard work, but I'm incredibly proud of how she has grown."

"She has learned to recognize her strengths and weaknesses, set goals and make plans, and push forward through hardships. That kind of growth means far more than any exam score," Lin added.

Cheng Lu, a teacher in Qingdao, East China's Shandong province, has embraced a similarly peaceful attitude. For her, the *gaokao* marks a culmination of years of study and a true test of perseverance and self-discipline, but it can never define one's life. She values her son's curiosity, independent learning ability and upbeat personality far more than high scores.

"I want my son to know that no matter how important a day is, the sun rises and sets as usual," she said. "Just do your best. Life is a long journey — feel it, experience it and live it to the fullest."

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SUMMER TRADITION BREEZES BACK INTO FASHION

After long being relegated to mere 'objets d'art', folding fans are once again finding favor

By YANG FEIYUE
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Although air conditioners across China are humming to life as the summer heat begins to climb, the folding fan that was once pushed to the margins of daily life is reappearing in subway cars, museum shops and tourist streets.

Once associated mainly with traditional aesthetics or seasonal nostalgia, the bamboo-and-silk folding fan is again being picked up by younger consumers as a functional accessory and a form of cultural expression.

At the 22nd China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair in Guangdong province in May, bamboo folding fans made by Mingde — a traditional brand that is based in Guangde, Anhui province, and has a production process that requires dozens of steps per fan — drew large crowds.

Meanwhile, in Yiwu, Zhejiang province, officially licensed Portuguese national soccer team folding fans are currently rolling off production lines, bound for global markets as the 2026 FIFA World Cup prepares to kick off.



A tourist opens a folding fan printed with a pattern of the Forbidden City to shield against the sun at the Palace Museum in Beijing on May 28. WANG XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

A traditional Chinese folding fan consists of two sections: the ribs, typically carved from bamboo, and the fan surface, often made of silk or mulberry bark paper.

Unlike mass-produced plastic fans, each piece is hand-assembled, with the ribs radiating from a single rivet — allowing the fan to fold flat into a sleeve or snap open with a single flick of the wrist. The surface is often painted with landscapes, calligraphy or birds and flowers, turning a functional object into a portable work of art.

"It is a small, mobile art gallery," Zheng Zhigang, an art critic with a doctorate in history (archaeology) from Nanjing University, said about the charm of the traditional Chinese folding fans.

"It contains paintings, calligraphy, poetry and seals, all within a frame of a few inches," he said.

China Vibes — GIFTS —

Sun Yaqing, chairwoman of Hangzhou's 151-year-old fan producer Wangxingji, sees the same cultural depth in the fans' physical construction. "The ribs are made of bamboo. In Chinese culture, bamboo represents humility, integrity and resilience," Sun said. "When a scholar held a fan, he was reminding himself of those virtues."

Sun attributes the rekindled interest in traditional folding fans to changing consumer values, the rise of *guochao* (a youth-driven wave of pride in traditional Chinese aesthetics), and a growing global appetite for objects with rich backstories.

As summer heats up, Sun has been busier than ever, as international guests can't seem to get enough of the fans.

Wangxingji now exports to more than 40 countries and regions, and Sun has noticed clear patterns. Japanese buyers prefer plain bamboo fans for tea ceremonies. European customers seek silk fans as wall art or fashion accessories. Middle Eastern collectors favor heavy, ornate fans with gold foil.

Sun believes the folding fan is no longer just a seasonal tool. "It is a message — folded, carved, painted and ready to be opened," she said.

Xi's DPRK visit expected to deepen ties

Envoy says two leaders to hold historic meeting, draw new blueprint for relations

President Xi Jinping will kick off a state visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Monday, his first trip to the neighboring country in seven years and his first overseas visit this year.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, will make the two-day visit at the invitation of Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

Wang Yajun, China's ambassador to the DPRK, said in an article published by People's Daily that Xi and Kim will hold an "important and historic meeting" to set the direction and draw a blueprint for China-DPRK relations in the new era.

"The historic scene of General Secretary Xi Jinping and General Secretary Kim Jong-un standing side by side on the Tian'anmen Rostrum in September last year remains vivid, and now, Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang is set to resound with a magnificent melody of China-DPRK friendship," Wang wrote.

Xi's upcoming visit is expected to draw a new blueprint for the development of relations between the two parties and the two countries, inject strong impetus into the joint cause of socialist construction, and make new contributions to regional peace, stability and prosperity.

Strategic guidance

In a congratulatory message to Kim, on the 80th anniversary of the founding of the WPK in October, Xi noted that in recent years, he has held multiple meetings with Kim to guide and steer the development of relations between the two parties and two countries, opening a new chapter in the China-DPRK friendship.

In March 2018, the two leaders held their first meeting, during which they reached principled consensus in four aspects on developing China-DPRK relations in the new era. Xi and Kim met three times in less than 100 days that year, making history in high-level exchanges between China and the DPRK.

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The two leaders exchanged visits in the first half of 2019, and in September last year, Kim made another visit to China. Since 2018, the top leaders of the two parties and the two countries have held six meetings and maintained close communication in various forms, leading China-DPRK relations to forge ahead in the new era.

The strategic guidance of top leaders of the two parties and the two countries is the greatest political advantage and strongest guarantee for the development of relations between the two sides.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the signing of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, making Xi's upcoming visit to the DPRK even more important.

Unwavering choice

For the two sides, deepening the friendship has always been an unwavering strategic choice.

No matter how the international situation changes, it remains the unwavering policy of the CPC and the Chinese government to maintain, consolidate and develop China-DPRK relations, Xi said in the congratulatory message on the 80th anniversary of the founding of the WPK.

"This is a strategic choice and the only right choice both sides have made based on history and reality, the international and regional structure and the general situation of China-DPRK ties. This should not and will not change because of any single event at a particular time," he said in the meeting with Kim in 2018.

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Classics can help shape proper perspectives today

WORLD WATCH
By Igor Radev

In a chapter called "In the World of Men" from the *Zhuangzi* — the Daoist text attributed to the thinker of the same name, who lived more than 2,200 years ago — there is a story about a carpenter called Shih who comes across a massive oak tree at a village shrine.

The tree is so large that thousands can rest under its shade, yet the carpenter ignores it. When his apprentice asks why, Shih explains: "That tree is useless. A boat made from it would sink, a coffin would soon rot, a tool would split, a door would ooze sap, and a beam would have termites. It's worthless timber and is of no use. That is why it has reached such a ripe old age."

In the same vein, the simplest, and yet most cogent, definition of classics could be: "human culture that has been able to reach ripe old age".

One might naturally ask, "But what is the use of classics?" In a strictly utilitarian sense, they have none. For me, classical studies embody what Zhuangzi described as the "useless tree" — a tree spared the axe precisely because it appears to serve no practical purpose. Yet its most profound utility lies in this very "uselessness".

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INDEPTH

From a bowl of soup, to a shared melody and getting a joke, immersion in culture a gentle process



From left: American-German content creator Adrianna Rommeswinkel, who grew up in Dongguan, Guangdong province, says her roots are in the life she has lived in China; British creator Emma Sandford, dressed in traditional ethnic group costume, says she has adopted Chinese customs while living in the country; US singer-songwriter Carly Beth believes she is bridging cultures through performing Chinese music. She says Chinese music "chose her", not the other way around. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The imperceptible steps to 'becoming Chinese'

By YU RAN
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More than two decades after a photograph of five blonde foreign children entering a local primary school in Dongguan, Guangdong province, appeared on the front page of the Yangcheng Evening News, one of them has returned to the public eye.

Adrianna Rommeswinkel, a 29-year-old content creator known as Addy, was 6 when she arrived in the country in 2002, just a year after China joined the World Trade Organization.

For her, feeling like she belonged in China did not emerge from a single moment. "That feeling grew into my bones… through so many small, unremarkable moments," she said.

That process unfolded through everyday experiences that gradually reshaped her sense of home. One vivid early memory Rommeswinkel has is of her and her siblings joining classmates in morning exercises. "That's the thing about belonging, when you're in it, you don't notice. You just are," she said.

Over time, belonging became rooted less in physical places than in relationships. She recalls being quietly comforted at her best friend's home as a child.

"My godmother took one look at me and put a bowl of soup in front of me. Didn't ask questions. Just… soup," she said.

Even today, she remembers the landline telephone number of that family and still returns to the neighborhood market where vendors recognize her and recall her childhood preferences.

Her understanding of "becoming Chinese" extends beyond language. While her fluency in Cantonese and Mandarin is the most obvious aspect, she points to the deeper meanings embedded in everyday interactions.

"Language isn't just words. It's the jokes you get, that you learn from years of sitting at dinner tables, listening, absorbing," she said, noting that even her dreams are sometimes in Cantonese.

These experiences were accompanied by shifts in habits and values, from everyday politeness to understanding social connections through relationships.

Growing up in a Chinese school system also shaped her worldview, as the classes emphasized collective identity rather than individual focus.

"You don't really exist as just 'you'. You exist as part of something… fitting in, contributing, being reliable, that's what mattered," she said, noting that this perspective ultimately felt "freeing".

Cultural contrasts still arise, particularly when she is in the United States, but her response upon returning to China is telling. "Every time I land in China, every single time, there's this moment when I step out of the airport and the air hits me. The humidity, the smell, the noise, the chaos. And my whole body just… relaxes," she said.

Reflecting on her parents' decision to raise the family in China, Rommeswinkel said: "That choice gave me something I couldn't have gotten anywhere else. It gave me two worlds instead of one. It wasn't easy. But it was everything."

Today, when asked where she is from, her answer is simple. For her, identity is no longer defined by nationality alone, but by lived experiences.

"I grew up in China… that's the most important part, where I became me. My roots aren't in a passport or a bloodline. They're in the life I actually lived," she said.



Zhao Danyang (center with her thumb up), a co-founder of Lumiverse Media LLC, takes her team of foreign influencers on a visit to Xiaohongshu's headquarters in Shanghai in January. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Shared words

In recent years, more foreigners in China have shared similar stories of cultural immersion shaped by long-term, everyday interactions.

Emma Sandford, a 31-year-old from Northern Ireland, has spent much of the past decade moving in and out of China, building a life closely connected to the country.

From an internship at a charity music festival in Zhuhai, Guangdong province, in 2017, to teaching in Haikou, Hainan province, and Chengdu, Sichuan province, her connection evolved from curiosity into something more personal.

Language was the turning point in her journey, reshaping how she thinks, expresses emotions, and understands the world.

"Through the language, I began to better understand Chinese history, humor, and ways of expressing emotion, opening a deeper path into the culture," she said, adding that certain ideas and feelings can feel more precise in Chinese than in English, giving her a new way to articulate everyday experiences.

Her immersion deepened after moving to Chengdu in 2022, when she made a conscious effort to build friendships with locals who did not speak English. Working in a kindergarten and interacting with older colleagues offered a closer look at everyday perspectives. Living with Chinese roommates, and now with her boyfriend and his mother, further grounded her in daily life.

"These experiences offered me an understanding of culture that goes beyond what short-term visits can provide," said Sandford.

She often describes herself as having "a foreign body but a Chinese soul", a phrase that has taken on more meaning over time. "I drink hot water and I enjoy traditional Chinese medicine. … These things have become part of my daily life now. Such habits have become instinctive, shaping my routines and sense of comfort," she said.

Over time, these routines have also influenced her mindset, as she has come to value a stronger sense of community.

"Shared meals, close family ties and everyday social interactions reshaped my understanding of well-being. I may be heavier now, but I'm much happier and more relaxed about life," said Sandford.

Despite this, she does not see her identity as a replacement of one culture with another.

"My Irish background remains the foundation of who I am, while China has added another layer to how I live and understand the world," she said.

When she returns to Ireland, she notices subtle shifts in her behavior, from bringing small gifts when visiting others to preferring quieter social activities and more collective ways of socializing.

Songs of praise

Carly Beth, an American singer-songwriter, pianist and livestream artist based in New York, began her journey with Chinese music unexpectedly while living in London, when a Chinese acquaintance encouraged her to livestream to audiences in China. She continued streaming daily while learning the language and developing her music, building a strong connection with Chinese listeners.

"When I first started livestreaming to China, the response was overwhelming in the most beautiful way. I suddenly had thousands of people connecting with my music at once, but I couldn't communicate with many of them yet," she said.

"I stayed up until 4 am night after night teaching myself Chinese just so I could talk and sing to them."

A turning point came when she encountered the classic song *Later* by singer Rene Liu that reflects on love and regret.

"I looked up the translation and I cried. The emotional depth of the lyrics hit me so hard that I immediately knew I wanted to continue learning Chinese music," she said.

She developed her own way of learning, slowing songs down and mimicking each sound, finding that melody helped guide both tone and emotion.

"Singing in Chinese actually felt easier than speaking at first, because melodies help guide the tones and emotion… The most rewarding part has been the emotional connection with my Chinese audience. Music stopped being just performance; it became communication," said Beth.

As her work reached wider audiences through platforms such as Xiaohongshu and television appearances, she observed differences in how her music was received. Chinese listeners, she said, tend to respond strongly to emotional depth and poetic expression, while Western audiences often focus more on the conversational aspects of her songwriting.

Chinese music has become "an emotional anchor" in her life, shaping her sense of identity. "It feels less like I chose Chinese music, and more like Chinese music chose me," she said.

Friends and family in the US who had never listened to Chinese music before have begun listening to the songs she performs, forming what she describes as a cultural bridge.

Mixed cultural content

Zhao Danyang, the 26-year-old co-founder of Lumiverse Media LLC in Shanghai, has worked with over 1,000 foreign influencers and links the growing interest to shifts in content production and distribution.

"In recent years, we can clearly feel that more foreign creators are actively engaging with and sharing Chinese culture. If we look at it on a timeline, there are two key phases," she said.

"The pandemic was an overlooked turning point, when many people began exploring other countries through the internet, and China produced a large amount of content."

From 2023, especially with the "TikTok refugee" phenomenon, the trend took hold, as foreign users not only watched but also began sharing Chinese culture.

A 2024 report by Tencent Research Institute and Newrank found that foreign content creators are gaining significant traction on Chinese short-video platforms. Fifteen overseas influencers each have more than 10 million followers, with combined followers of 290 million. More than 100 creators have over 1 million followers, while nearly 1,000 active foreign accounts have surpassed 10,000 followers.

Citing overseas data, Zhao noted that certain types of content perform better across cultures.

"Food is still the most effective entry point. Hotpot, street food, breakfast comparisons and snack tasting are among the easiest for foreign creators to share. The second is internet culture, such as high-speed rail, mobile payments, food delivery, as well as memes, short videos and livestream e-commerce," said Zhao.

She added that the third category is traditional crafts, such as Jingdezhen ceramics, which carry cultural meaning and are more attractive than industrial products.

Beyond content categories, Zhao sees a deeper shift. "Chinese cultural communication has moved from an 'official, institutional model' to a 'content ecosystem model'," she said. "Many creators start with content opportunities because they attract traffic. But after six months to a year, they begin to understand more subtle aspects like communication styles, humor and social norms."

In some cases, this leads to hybrid forms of expression.

"When creators stay in China for a longer period, they begin to produce 'mixed cultural content'. We often call them 'natural cultural translators' because they can connect audiences from both sides," said Zhao.

She said these changes in language and behavior are a sign of deeper cultural internalization, as creators gradually move beyond surface-level content production and begin to engage more meaningfully with Chinese culture.

She also highlighted the role of digital platforms. "Short-video platforms have completely changed the structure of cultural communication. Algorithms decentralize distribution, allowing content itself to determine reach. At the same time, short videos lower the threshold for understanding culture and create a two-way interaction, which leads to co-creation," she said.

Zhao said that in the future, cultural communication will become global co-creation. "It may not be about 'exporting culture', but about letting it spread naturally through content ecosystems, with creators from different backgrounds participating together."

Data from the Ministry of Commerce indicates that China's cultural trade reached 1.4 trillion yuan ($206 billion) in 2024, with digitally driven sectors, including online audiovisual content, exceeding 370 billion yuan and accounting for more than a quarter of the total.

Sun Zhe, a sociologist at the Chinese Modernization Institute of Shanghai University of Finance and Economics, described the trend as "a very positive phenomenon" and "another form of globalization in the high-tech era".

"It reflects a shift toward 'plural modernities', where development is no longer defined by a single model but allows for multiple paths, with China offering 'an alternative paradigm' that expands global choices," said Sun.

"We are moving from the television era to the short-video era. Traditional media was highly centralized, while today's platforms are shaped by the diverse technologies, enabling more decentralized and diverse cultural production," said Sun.

Short-video formats also lower the barriers to cultural understanding by making content more direct and easier to interpret. "Instead of grand narratives, foreigners now engage with China through everyday practices such as tea, food and daily routines, with bottom-up, life-based expression," he said.

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TOP NEWS

Visit: Over the years, mutual trust grows

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Over the years, Xi and Kim have had in-depth exchanges of views on major issues through various forms, supported each other on issues of major concern to each other, continuously consolidated mutual trust and built consensus.

Xi said in a meeting with Kim in Beijing last year that China has always maintained an objective and impartial stance, and stands ready to continue strengthening coordination with the DPRK in order to strive to maintain the peace and stability of the peninsula.

The top leaders of the two parties and the two countries have stood together through thick and thin, enabling the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK to demonstrate vigorous vitality in the new era.

In a speech at the welcoming banquet held by Kim during Xi's state visit to the DPRK in 2019, Xi hailed the traditional friendship between the two sides as a shared, valuable asset forged and left by leaders of elder generations of both countries, saying that such a friendship has remained strong and vigorous despite constant changes.

The traditional friendship between China and the DPRK was forged by the elder generation of leaders of the two parties and two countries, cemented in the revolutionary struggle, and continuously deepened in the course of socialist construction, Xi said in his exchange of New Year greeting messages with Kim in 2024.

The friendship between the two countries has been further reinforced by friendly exchanges between the two peoples. During their exchange of New Year greeting messages in 2024, Xi and Kim jointly designated that year as the China-DPRK Friendship Year.

In the message, Xi called on the two sides to carry forward the long-standing friendship, deepen strategic mutual trust, enhance exchanges and cooperation, and ensure that the bilateral ties move forward with the times for greater development.

Joining hands

"Development" and "cooperation" have frequently been brought up during talks between Xi and Kim.

During the state visit to the DPRK in 2019, Xi suggested that the two sides expand practical cooperation to bring more benefits to both peoples.

The Chinese side stands ready to enhance strategic communication, maintain close exchanges and cooperation with the DPRK, and join hands to promote the China-DPRK friendship and the socialist cause of the two countries, Xi said in a congratulatory message in 2025 on the 77th anniversary of the founding of the DPRK.

On March 12, the international passenger trains connecting China and the DPRK began operating in both directions. On March 30, an Air China passenger plane from Beijing arrived in Pyongyang, marking the formal resumption of the Chinese carrier's passenger flight operations between the capitals of China and the DPRK.

In 2025, bilateral trade returned to pre-pandemic levels, while trade in the first quarter of this year grew 14.3 percent year-on-year, showing a steady upward trend, said Wang, the Chinese ambassador to the DPRK, in the People's Daily article.

In early May, a group of Chinese students arrived in Pyongyang and began studying in universities including Kim Il Sung University. In February 2025, the DPRK delegation participated in the 9th Asian Winter Games held in China in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang province.

From economic and trade exchanges to education and sports cooperation, China-DPRK exchanges and cooperation in various fields have continued to deepen and have grown ever solid, bringing benefits to the peoples of both countries.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

Medical outreach



A doctor from the 25th Chinese medical team to Cameroon assists a local patient on the way to a consultation at a free clinic in Ngat-Bane village, Cameroon, on Saturday. The team conducted the outreach event as part of China's "100 Medical Teams in 1,000 Villages" program. KEPSEU / XINHUA

Trade cooperation with Belarus set to deepen

Minsk event highlights China's innovative move to share opportunities of its vast market

By **LIU HONGJIE** in Minsk and **REN QI** in Beijing

Vice-President Han Zheng has called for further strengthening solidarity and cooperation between China and Belarus, with a focus on fields such as mechanical equipment, agriculture, e-commerce trade and the digital economy.

Addressing a business event on Sunday in Minsk themed "Big Market for All: Export Goods of Belarus to China", which was organized by the Chinese Ministry of Commerce and the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Han highlighted the continuous development of bilateral trade, noting that the two countries will jointly promote the building of an open world economy.

The "Export to China" series of events is one of China's pragmatic measures to actively expand independent and unilateral opening-up. It highlights China's innovative move to share the opportunities of the country's vast market with the world and create a new pattern of win-win cooperation, as well as a proactive contribution to supporting economic globalization and safeguarding the multilateral trading system.

Ling Ji, vice-minister of commerce and deputy China international trade representative, stated that China and Belarus are all-weather comprehensive strategic partners, and expanding bilateral trade is an important consensus reached by the two countries' heads of state. He noted that, for this reason, China selected Belarus as the first overseas stop for the "Export to China" series of events.

He said the special event, held during the Belarusian agricultural exhibition, will build a platform for Belarusian enterprises to expand their exports to China and facilitate the entry of more high-quality Belarusian products into the Chinese market.

Belarusian First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Snopkov said that Belarus is an open economy, with exports generating 60 percent of its GDP. He pointed out that Belarus trades with more than 150 countries and continues to expand its catalog of export commodities. In its cooperation strategy, China represents a key direction, with approximately 200 Belarusian enterprises approved to supply food products to China and the variety of export commodities to China reaching into the hundreds.

Snopkov said that Belarus is willing to provide a comprehensive plan for win-win development for its Chinese partners, adding that Belarus has become a key hub for the Belt and Road Initiative in the region.

He emphasized that these achievements are deeply rooted in strong people-to-people ties, noting that more than 30 cooperation agreements have been signed between Belarusian regions and various parts of China.

With the implementation of a mutual visa exemption system, business and tourism exchanges have become increasingly close, he said, highlighting that sincerity and friendship serve as the most important strategic resources.

Belarusian Deputy Minister of Agriculture Alexander Yakovchits said China is the primary market for Belarusian products in the Asian region. He noted that in the Chinese market today, Belarus ranks as the second-largest source of rapeseed oil, the sixth-largest source of whey and milk powder, and the seventh-largest source of frozen beef, while its alcoholic beverages, chocolates and confectionery products are also widely popular.

Yakovchits added that as of today, there are 265 valid export registration numbers in the China Import Food Enterprise Registration system, covering 193 Belarusian food producers. He said that newly approved products for the Chinese market include wheat flour, oatmeal, dry baking mixes, wheat bran, sauces, honey and numerous other items.

Cao Derong, president of the China Chamber of Commerce of Import and Export of Foodstuffs, Native Produce and Animal By-products, said that in 2025, China imported $520 million worth of food and agricultural products from Belarus. This represented a 21.4 percent increase compared with 2021, which was 26.8 percentage points higher than the growth rate of China's global imports of food and agricultural products during the same period.

Cao added that China is the second-largest export market for Belarusian food and agricultural products. He highlighted that five major categories of Belarusian products, namely rapeseed oil, beef, whey, chicken and flax, collectively account for 93 percent of China's total imports of food and agricultural products from Belarus, and that these products enjoy broad export prospects in China.

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EU protectionism can backfire, warn experts

By **YANG RAN**
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Trade issues have become a flashpoint in relations between China and the European Union of late, with experts warning that the EU's shift toward protectionism, under the "de-risking" banner, could backfire, damaging its own global competitiveness.

Experts said the path forward lies in internal reforms and collaborative strategies that contribute to mutually beneficial economic ecosystems.

There has been an increase in trade friction between China and Europe in recent months. On May 29, after a meeting on China-EU relations, the European Commission defined the trade and investment dynamics with China as "not sustainable" and reaffirmed a strategy of "de-risking".

Europe has introduced a series of measures, many of which are seen as erecting barriers against imports from China. These include the proposed revisions to the Cybersecurity Act, or CSA2, and the Industrial Accelerator Act, or IAA. Reports said the EU is considering stricter public procurement rules that would force companies to source from at least three different suppliers, with no single supplier accounting for more than 30 to 40 percent of critical components.

The China Council for the Promotion of International Trade has opposed the CSA2, stating that the draft introduces "nontechnical risk" factors, and directly links cybersecurity risks to companies from specific countries or backgrounds, seeking to exclude them from relevant EU supply chains.

Sebastien Maillard, an associate fellow at Chatham House's Europe Programme, described the IAA as "some sort of sophisticated protectionism" for the EU's trading partners. He noted that "European discrimination is already introduced" in the bloc's new defense financing instrument, which limits the share of component costs from outside the EU, European Free Trade Association, or Ukraine to 35 percent.

Dong Yifan, an associate research fellow at the Institute of Country and Regional Studies at Beijing Language and Culture University, said Europe's recent policy moves essentially use the so-called "de-risking" slogan as a cover for trade protectionism.

"These policy proposals are largely aimed at Chinese companies. Once implemented, they will disrupt industrial and investment ties and effectively shut many Chinese companies out of the European market," Dong said.

Experts said the EU's proposed measures could result in greater losses than gains for itself. A report by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU and KPMG estimated that the CSA2 could cost nearly 367.8 billion euros ($428.22 billion) if it forces the replacement of Chinese suppliers across 18 critical sectors.

Dong said the EU, despite recognizing the risk of potential economic losses, continues to shape its policies through a lens of "pan-politicization and pan-securitization".

Jian Junbo, director of the Center for China-Europe Relations at Fudan University's Institute of International Studies, said the EU's concerns over China's trade surplus stem from structural shifts in bilateral trade that cannot be fixed through finger-pointing.

For Europe, Jian argued, the real solution lies in boosting its own competitiveness through innovation and re-industrialization. "The EU needs to invest more in high-tech R&D, tackle energy challenges and reform labor markets to make 'Made in Europe' truly competitive again.

"From China's perspective, continuing efforts to expand imports is a crucial step in demonstrating its responsibility as a major country. The China International Import Expo and the Hainan Free Trade Port, for example, are signs of China's efforts to advance its opening-up. China remains a vital market for Europe and the globe, poised to continue to fuel global economic growth," Jian said.

According to Chinese customs data, in the first three quarters of 2025, China was already the top export destination for 79 countries and regions. For the full year, China imported a total of 18.48 trillion yuan ($2.72 trillion) in goods, keeping its share of global imports at around 10 percent. The EU is China's largest source of consumer goods imports.

Protests in Los Angeles



Protesters confront federal law enforcement officers outside the Metropolitan Detention Center in Los Angeles, the United States, on Saturday. The demonstration commemorated federal immigration raids and community protests that took place a year ago. JILL CONNELLY / AP

Classics: Space for inquiry is limitless

From page 1

We must recognize that the highest value of knowledge does not reside in superficial gains. As the writer and poet Yang Xiong of the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) observed in his Model Sayings (*Fayan*): "The noble person learns for the Dao; the petty person learns for personal gain."

History does not repeat itself, but it often "rhymes". Ancient knowledge remains vital because it preserves responses to human problems and conditions that are not fundamentally bound to any particular historical era. Therefore, the answers given throughout the ages — regardless of whether we ultimately accept or reject them — are significant even today. The Colombian thinker Nicolas Gomez Davila captured this sentiment succinctly: "Truth is in history, but history is not the truth."

The pursuit of classical studies also serves as a necessary corrective to our modern temporal parochialism. In his essay *On the Reading of Old Books*, C.S. Lewis argued that every age is defined by its own particular blind spots and prejudices — biases that those living within that era are often unable to perceive. Our own age is no exception. Crucially, because different eras harbor different prejudices, it is only through engagement with the literature of ages unlike our own that we can recognize the limitations of our own intellectual horizon. Only then can we transcend the constraints of our era and broaden our perspective.

The role of classical studies is not limited to preserving and transmitting literary heritage. It also has to — if not primarily — contextualize it through the use of strict scientific methodology. In doing so, classical studies render the cultural products and literary output of the past "contemporary" again. Would it be pretentious to claim — albeit half-jokingly — that classics fulfill the function of a "time machine"?

However, besides the temporal dimension of the classics, we should not overlook the spatial one. Every civilization possesses its own inherited corpus of cultural patterns and literary canon. The danger of spatial parochialism is no less real than that of the aforementioned temporal parochialism. When one dwells exclusively within one's own heritage, the temptation always lurks to mistake the particular for the universal. This danger — both intellectual and moral — in the case of Western European civilization was clearly identified and sharply criticized by Nikolai Trubetzkoy, who, in his 1920 essay *Europe and Mankind*, observed: "Romano-Germanic peoples (those of Western European ethnic background) have long naively believed that only they truly represent humanity. Thus, they portray themselves as 'humanity,' their culture as 'universal human civilization,' and their chauvinism as 'cosmopolitanism.'"

Therefore, one of the principal tasks of classical studies at this historical juncture lies in bringing the different classics of different civilizations into dialogue, holding them opposite one another as mirrors. In this way, classical studies, by overcoming the limitations imposed by one's particular civilizational background, could become an instrument through which we may transcend our spatial limitations in cultural terms.

In the process of translating works from the Chinese intellectual tradition, I have often confronted the conundrum of whether, or to what degree, one is justified in identifying patterns and concepts from one classical tradition in another. Yet the essence of translation itself lies precisely in the ability to identify, within the target language and culture, concepts, approaches and aesthetic principles analogous to those of the source.

We might ask, for instance: Did the Chinese historian Sima Qian and the Greek historian Plutarch share a common historiographical vision, and to what extent do their methodologies converge? Or how do Chinese philosopher Zhu Xi's concepts of *li* (principle) and *qi* (material force) diverge from — or converge with — Aristotle's notions of morphe (form) and hyle (matter)?

The space for inquiry in this context is limitless.

The author is a sinologist, chair scholar at the Macedonian Academy of Sciences and Arts. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL LENS



Members of the Ghetto Kids, a Ugandan dance group, rehearse in Nakawuka, Wakiso, Uganda, on May 25. The group is to perform at the 2026 FIFA World Cup Final in New Jersey on July 19. PHOTOS BY BADRU KATUMBA / AFP

From dusty roads to super stars

Uganda's Ghetto Kids to perform at the 2026 FIFA World Cup



Dauda Kavuma (center), manager of the Ghetto Kids, guides a dancer during a rehearsal in Nakawuka on May 25.



Members of the Ugandan dance group the Ghetto Kids rehearse in Nakawuka on May 25.



Members of Ugandan dance group the Ghetto Kids rehearse at their home in Nakawuka on May 25.



Dauda Kavuma, manager of the Ghetto Kids, guides dancers during a rehearsal on May 25.



Members of the Ugandan dance group the Ghetto Kids react during an interview in Wakiso on May 25.



Members of the Ghetto Kids skip rope during a break from rehearsals in Wakiso on May 25.

Their journey began as they danced barefoot on a dusty street in Uganda in 2014, and will soon reach the FIFA World Cup stage at New Jersey's MetLife Stadium in the coming weeks.

The Ghetto Kids, a Ugandan dance troupe composed of street children, expressed excitement at being invited by Colombian singer Shakira Isabel Mebarak Ripoll to perform at the World Cup this year.

The soccer tournament, set to kick off on June 11, will span the US, Mexico and Canada. The last World Cup final drew more than a billion viewers worldwide, according to FIFA.

Shakira announced in May that the group, composed of orphaned or vulnerable children, will join her for the final on July 19. The children have already appeared in the video for her song *Dai Dai*, the official anthem of the tournament.



Dauda Kavuma, manager of the Ghetto Kids, displays an award on May 25.

"I've already invited the Ghetto Kids from Uganda," Shakira said in a video on social media, adding she wanted the performance to feel "unforgettable".

"We can't wait to show the world what we are!" said one of the young performers, 8-year-old Busingye Josephine Daniella.

"We feel so excited to perform with Shakira," said Daniella.

"Getting outside the country ... and performing on one of the biggest stages ... it feels good and it brings a lot of opportunities," said 15-year-old Ssegirinya Madwanah King.

Dauda Kavuma, founder of the Ghetto Kids — a foundation that cares for vulnerable children — and a former street kid himself, expressed hope that the attention would help them raise funds for a rehabilitation and education center.

"We have that big dream ... It's a very huge opportunity for the Ghetto Kids, for me, for the children," he said.

The group first drew attention in 2014, when five children posted an energetic dance video of Ugandan singer Eddy Kenzo's *Sitya Loss*, going viral after being shared by the singer himself.

Over the years, their videos on YouTube and other social media platforms became less blurry, with their choreography becoming more intricate.

But the infectious energy and their "comedic dance style" remain. "We are using music, dance and drama to make lives better," Kavuma said.

Kavuma said he never imagined the children would get such an opportunity. "I've been hoping, but I didn't see this coming," he said.

However, there is still uncertainty over the performance, as Uganda works to prevent the spread of Ebola from its neighbor Democratic Republic of Congo.

Seven cases of Ebola and one death have been confirmed in Uganda, and Ugandan authorities on May 27 ordered the closure of the border with DR Congo "with immediate effect".

People who have visited DR Congo, Uganda or South Sudan in the past 21 days are barred from entering the US, except for US citizens, according to a US order in May.

Nonetheless, Kavuma is optimistic about the trip.

The group will be Uganda's only representation at the tournament, with its national team having failed to qualify for the World Cup.

The performance holds great significance for his group, which he said is now "one big family" — one that started from the fringes of Ugandan society.

"Before joining the group, we weren't going to school, we weren't traveling, we weren't getting the basic needs," Ssegirinya said.

"If I weren't part of the group, I don't know where I would be," he added.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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WORLD

Trump: Iran conflict not 'endless war'

Ceasefire under strain as tensions between Israel and Hezbollah continue to flare up

By **SHI GUANG** in New York
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US President Donald Trump said on Sunday that the conflict with Iran was not an "endless war", as diplomatic efforts to secure a lasting settlement continued and new exchanges of fire tested a fragile ceasefire.

In an exclusive interview with NBC News, Trump denied promising not to involve the US in more wars during his presidential campaign.

> This is not an endless war. We've been doing this for three months. Much of it has been under the form – a pretty good form of ceasefire."
>
> **Donald Trump, US president**

"I didn't promise anything. I don't like these endless wars," he told Meet the Press.

"This is not an endless war. We've been doing this for three months. Much of it has been under the form — a pretty good form of ceasefire."

Trump's comments came as the war with Iran reached 100 days, and a lasting settlement remained elusive.

Mediation efforts have so far failed to produce any further agreements in a war that has strained the global economy and threatened food security in some of the world's most vulnerable countries.

In a fresh bid to restart negotiations between Iran and the US, Pakistan's interior minister was in Tehran on Sunday to deliver a message to Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei from Pakistan's army chief Field Marshal Asim Munir, according to the Iranian state-run IRNA news agency.

The US and Iran have engaged in largely indirect negotiations for an interim deal to halt the three-month-old war that would leave issues including Iran's nuclear program to further negotiations.

Pakistani authorities have said that Islamabad, with support from regional countries including Qatar, Turkiye and Egypt, has been working to help bridge differences between the United States and Iran and encourage efforts aimed at reducing tensions and ensuring the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz.

US and Iranian negotiators reached a tentative deal a week ago to extend the ceasefire by 60 days and start a new round of talks on Iran's nuclear program. The US has called for unspecified changes, and Iranian officials have shown no public signs of agreeing to the deal.

Trump has said in the past that Iran could not be allowed to possess nuclear weapons.

Moderator Kristen Welker on Meet the Press asked Trump: "Would you be open to sending in US forces to retrieve the nuclear stockpile?"

Trump replied: "Yeah ... But the way you do it is if we make a deal, if we make a deal now we're friendly, we'll all go together. It'll be our equipment. We'll take it out and destroy it, whether it's onsite or whether we take it offsite."

However, he added that, "if we don't make a deal, then we're going to take them out militarily very harshly. And we'll wait till we do that before we go, in which case we'll have safety either way."

On Sunday, Iran fired missiles at Israel, which were claimed to have been intercepted without causing casualties, marking the first attacks on Israel from Iran since the April ceasefire took effect.

Iran's Revolutionary Guards said the Israeli army must stop attacks on Lebanon, and if it expands its attacks or responds to Iran's actions, it will face "more crushing and regretful blows".

Despite Trump's warnings against retaliation, Israel's military chief of staff said the military will strike "the enemy" with determination as soon as the order is given.

'No choice'

Trump said Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu would have "no choice" but to accept any agreement reached between the United States and Iran, the Financial Times reported late Sunday.

Washington, not Israel, would determine the outcome of negotiations with Tehran, Trump said during a telephone interview with the British daily shortly after Iran launched a salvo of ballistic missiles at Israel.

"He won't have any choice," Trump was quoted as saying. "I call the shots. I call all the shots. He doesn't call the shots."

Asked whether Iran's missile strikes on Israel would affect Washington's willingness to continue negotiations with Tehran, Trump said the attacks would have no impact on a potential agreement.

"I think the deal is going on. We'll see what happens," he said, adding that any agreement would succeed or fail on its own merits and that the strikes would not alter his calculations.

Agencies and Xinhua News Agencies contributed to the story



People inspect damage following an Israeli bombardment on a building in the village of Saksakiyeh in southern Lebanon on Saturday. AFP

Israeli strikes kill 14 in S. Lebanon

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM — At least 14 people were killed in Israeli attacks across southern Lebanon on Saturday, according to Lebanon's National News Agency.

The Lebanese army said the three soldiers were killed while patrolling in a vehicle on the Khardali-Kfar Tebnit road in the Nabatieh area.

The Israel Defense Forces said it has launched an investigation into the strike, claiming that the vehicle was found in an active combat zone with intelligence indicating a Hezbollah threat. The IDF stressed that its operations target Hezbollah, not the Lebanese army.

The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon condemned the attack as a "gross violation" of Lebanon's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and UN Security Council Resolution 1701.

Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri rejected Israeli justifications, calling the strike "by no means a mistake or an accident".

Elsewhere, six people were killed in an Israeli airstrike on the town of Saksakiyeh in the Sidon District, according to a preliminary toll.

Additional strikes killed one person on the Deir al-Zahrani highway, two in the town of Harouf, one in Jouaiya, and one on a motorcycle in Abbassiyeh, who was identified as assistant nurse Ali Samadi.

Meanwhile, the Israeli military issued evacuation orders for several towns and villages in the Jezzine District and Ansariyeh.

The IDF said it struck around 150 Hezbollah military infrastructure sites in southern Lebanon over the weekend, including weapons depots, command centers, and rocket launchers.

Hezbollah said its fighters confronted an Israeli Hermes 450 drone over the town of Sharqiyeh in southern Lebanon and forced it to retreat. The Israeli military did not immediately comment on the claim.

In a separate statement, Lebanon's Public Health Emergency Operations Center said the cumulative casualties from Israeli attacks since March 2 had risen to 3,593 killed and 10,990 injured.

Lebanese army commander General Rodolphe Haykal has left for Pakistan on a visit, Lebanon's army said on Saturday.

The army said the visit was at the invitation of Haykal's Pakistani counterpart, but did not immediately provide further details on the purpose or duration.

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Calls for collaboration on drug innovation mount

By **LIA ZHU** in San Francisco
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A Chinese-developed lung cancer therapy drew significant attention at the American Society of Clinical Oncology's annual meeting, the latest illustration of China's rapidly growing role in global pharmaceutical innovation and a rise that experts say demands collaboration rather than confrontation.

The experimental drug, ivonescimab, targets a type of lung cancer that is especially difficult to treat. In a late-stage clinical trial involving 532 patients in China, the therapy cut the risk of death by 34 percent, according to results released at the meeting, known as ASCO, which concluded on Tuesday in Chicago.

David R. Spigel, president and chief scientific officer at Sarah Cannon Research Institute and an ASCO expert in lung cancer, said in a news release that the therapy "provides a vital new path forward for patients with these difficult-to-treat cancers who have limited treatment options".

Ivonescimab was developed by the Chinese biopharmaceutical company Akeso. US-based Summit Therapeutics licensed the rights to the drug outside China in a deal worth up to $5 billion. Summit announced earlier this year that the US Food and Drug Administration had accepted its application seeking approval for the therapy.

The licensing deal is part of a surge in dealmaking between Western pharmaceutical giants and Chinese drugmakers. AstraZeneca, Pfizer, Sanofi and Eli Lilly are among the multinationals that have struck agreements with Chinese companies, mostly targeting oncology and obesity treatments, with potential values ranging from $3 billion to $18.5 billion.

"Deal volumes have increased dramatically, and the value of Chinese pharmaceutical companies has grown much faster than their Western counterparts," Joseph Scheeren, a pharmaceutical R&D and regulatory affairs expert with more than 35 years of experience across the US, Europe and Asia, told China Daily.

Last year alone, Chinese companies achieved four times the value creation of US companies. Currently, 30 percent of global business development deals involve Chinese companies, four times as many as in 2021, according to Scheeren, who is also a member of the advisory board of the University of Arizona R. Ken Coit College of Pharmacy.

"I was told in oncology, specifically, that figure is more than 50 percent, so you can see there's a lot of activity going on in China's innovation sector," he added.

Those observations are backed by research published by the National Bureau of Economic Research. The paper, titled "From Free Rider to Innovator: The Rise of China's Drug Development", found that Chinese companies' out-licensing transactions to multinational corporations doubled relative to 2015 levels.

The researchers said the figures point to genuine indigenous capacity-building rather than multinationals simply relocating research and development operations to China.

Clinical trial activity

China's clinical trial activity has grown at a similar pace. The country accounted for less than 8 percent of global clinical trials in 2010. By 2020, it had surpassed the US in annual registered trial volume, reaching more than 5,000 trials per year by 2024, a 172 percent increase relative to the US.

Meanwhile, China's pharmaceutical ascent has also raised concerns in Washington. The US Biosecure Act bars US pharmaceutical companies that receive federal funding from working with designated Chinese biotech firms.

"Attempts to frame these developments as geopolitical threats risk undermining the very partnerships that are driving scientific progress," a group of US and China-based researchers wrote in a paper recently published in the Cureus Journal of Medical Science.

"The organizing principle for global drug innovation should be health, not geopolitical competition," the authors wrote.

The researchers pointed to China's growing alignment with international standards and its participation in global harmonization efforts as a foundation for deeper cooperation.

They highlighted Project Orbis, an international regulatory initiative led by the FDA's Oncology Center of Excellence, which, if expanded to include China, could accelerate access to promising therapies for nearly half of the world's cancer patients.

"Geopolitical tensions are real, but they need not dictate the trajectory of global drug innovation," the researchers concluded. "Regulatory collaboration, mutual trust and evidence-based evaluation of foreign data offer a path toward shared benefit."

WHO urges global action to contain Ebola outbreak

By **VICTOR RABALLA** in Nairobi
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Global health leaders have called for strengthened international cooperation to contain the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda and prevent its spread to neighboring countries.

Nearly 500 Ebola cases have now been confirmed in the deadly outbreak raging in central Africa, a WHO overview showed on Saturday, amid mounting concerns over the swelling scale of the epidemic.

The global appeal for strengthened international cooperation came during a high-level briefing on Friday by the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, or Africa CDC, and the WHO, which warned about the rapid spread of the Bundibugyo Ebola virus.

"The outbreak is moving fast and we are still playing catch-up. But my trip to the DRC also gave me real hope that together, under the government's leadership, we can bring this outbreak under control," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said.

He announced the launch of a joint continental preparedness and response plan by the WHO and Africa CDC aimed at containing the outbreak, supporting affected countries and strengthening preparedness in neighboring states.

The six-month plan, from June, is estimated to cost $518 million and is built around a coordinated approach guided by the principle of "one plan, one budget, one team".

It focuses on emergency coordination, surveillance, laboratory testing, infection prevention and control, clinical care, community engagement, research, logistics and maintaining essential health services.

"The only way to beat this outbreak is through close partnership, working together under the leadership of the affected countries in one coordinated effort," Tedros said.

Africa CDC said a range of emergency measures have already been implemented, including high-level political engagement with heads of state and ministers, deployment of multidisciplinary response teams, expansion of laboratory capacity and delivery of more than 200 metric tons of medical supplies by international partners.

Among other organizations and countries, Africa CDC director-general Jean Kaseya noted that China has joined a growing list of international partners supporting response efforts, highlighting the importance of global solidarity in tackling public health emergencies.



A medical officer is disinfected upon leaving hospital rooms for Ebola patients in Bunia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, on Friday. GLODY MURHABAZI / AFP

His announcement came days after a multidisciplinary team of experts in epidemiology, clinical diagnosis and treatment, research and traditional Chinese medicine arrived in Kinshasa, the capital of DR Congo, for a three-month mission to strengthen Africa's Ebola response capacity.

The outbreak has expanded rapidly from one province and three health zones in eastern DR Congo in mid-May to three provinces and 25 health zones, with confirmed cases reported in Uganda's capital, Kampala.

Ituri Province in DR Congo remains the epicenter, accounting for 90 percent of confirmed infections and 76 percent of deaths, Kaseya stated.

Health authorities warned that the outbreak is already the largest recorded outbreak of the Bundibugyo strain of Ebola, surpassing the previous outbreaks in Uganda in 2007 and the DR Congo in 2012.

They also raised concerns about the lack of licensed vaccines and therapeutics for the Bundibugyo strain, noting that while several promising candidates are being developed, none have yet been approved for widespread deployment.

Mohamed Yakub Janabi, WHO regional director for Africa, said community trust remains central to the success of the response.

"Without community participation, contact tracing falters, safe care is delayed and transmission continues. Misinformation is almost as dangerous as the virus itself and spreads just as fast," he said.

Agencies contributed to this story.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Visit to further consolidate relations of good neighbors, good friends and good comrades

General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese President Xi Jinping is paying a state visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from Monday to Tuesday at the invitation of Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

The visit marks Xi's first overseas trip this year and his first state visit to the DPRK in seven years. It is of great significance for advancing China-DPRK relations and will surely inject new impetus into the traditional friendship between the two countries, enabling it to stand the test of the times and weather all challenges.

The friendship between the two countries has deep roots. It was forged in the struggle against foreign aggression and for national independence, and has been continuously consolidated and developed throughout the course of socialist revolution and construction. China and the DPRK are good neighbors, good friends and good comrades who have shared weal and woe and helped each other in times of need.

In recent years, Xi and Kim have met on multiple occasions and maintained close communication. Xi has stressed that maintaining, consolidating and developing China-DPRK relations has always been an unwavering policy of the CPC and the Chinese government.

Under the strategic guidance of the top leaders of the two sides, China-DPRK relations have been advancing with a clear direction and strong momentum.

The two countries should be good neighbors that strengthen practical cooperation and maintain close, friendly exchanges.

China-DPRK cooperation is thriving, fueled by growing exchanges and collaboration at all levels and across various sectors.

The two countries maintain exchanges and cooperation in culture, education, science and technology, sports and other fields. The two sides have also concluded a range of agreements and treaties, including those on trade and navigation, air transport and consular affairs. Multiple provinces and cities in both countries have also established sister-city relationships, helping build bridges of friendship between their peoples.

The two countries should be good friends who continually deepen strategic coordination and strengthen mutual support.

This year marks the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance. It also marks the first year of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). Pyongyang has drawn up a blueprint for the DPRK's economic and social development over the next five years. Xi's visit is expected to further enrich and expand ties, propelling the vigorous deepening of strategic coordination and strengthening mutual support.

From the DPRK's active support for the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and the four major global initiatives, to the two sides' close coordination within multilateral frameworks such as the United Nations and on regional and international issues, the two countries have worked together to safeguard their common interests, uphold international fairness and justice, and contribute to peace, stability and development in the region and beyond.

Both the regional and the broader geopolitical landscape have become increasingly complex and volatile. In this context, the two sides should uphold the spirit of the treaty of friendship to effectively safeguard their shared interests as well as regional peace and stability, thereby providing a solid guarantee for the steady development of China-DPRK relations and the stability of the region.

The two countries should be good comrades that forge ahead in their shared cause and contribute to each other's national rejuvenation.

As socialist countries led by communist parties, both nations share common ideals, convictions and goals. They are committed to pursuing development paths suited to their respective national conditions and share the aspiration of achieving national prosperity and a happy, secure life for their peoples.

At present, China is comprehensively advancing the building of a strong nation and the great cause of national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization, while the DPRK is fully dedicated to growing its economy, improving people's livelihoods and pursuing comprehensive national development.

The two sides should remain steadfast in their shared ideals and convictions, continuously enhance exchanges on Party building and state governance, and open up new horizons for their respective socialist causes, thereby injecting lasting momentum into the development of China-DPRK relations.

No matter how the international landscape evolves, as long as the two countries adhere to the head-of-state strategic guidance and the two peoples remain committed to working together, the two neighbors will surely carry forward their traditional friendship and deepen cooperation for the benefit of their peoples and the cause of peace, stability and prosperity in the region and beyond.

Tokyo-Manila collusion real threat to peace

China's Ministry of Transport announced on Saturday that it has launched a special maritime traffic law-enforcement operation in waters east of China's Taiwan island.

According to the ministry's statement, the operation aims to fully exercise China's maritime administrative jurisdiction, enhance deep-sea patrol and law enforcement capabilities, strengthen traffic management in key waters and safeguard national rights and interests. The operation serves as a justified response to the unilateral announcement by Japan and the Philippines of their so-called "maritime delimitation talks" regarding the area, as well as a warning to the secessionist-minded Lai Ching-te authorities of Taiwan that openly "acclaimed" the collusion between Tokyo and Manila.

The plan of Japan and the Philippines to start the negotiations to "delimit the maritime boundary of an exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf" infringes on China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

It also contravenes the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the basic norms governing international relations.

According to China's domestic law and international law, including UNCLOS, China has exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the area involved.

If Japan had truly learned the lessons of history, it would not be accelerating its re-militarization under the pretext of "safeguarding regional stability" while being a source of instability.

Notably, the Nagasaki Atomic Bomb Museum reportedly plans to refer to the Nanjing Massacre as the "Nanjing Incident" — a shameless denial of history. The judgment of the International Military Tribunal for the Far East dedicated a special chapter to documenting the massacre. The massacre's chief perpetrator, Iwane Matsui, was sentenced to death by hanging as a Class-A war criminal.

The Asahi Shimbun has reported on the outline of the Japanese government's 2026 defense white paper, which once again frames the regional security environment as "increasingly severe" and makes unfounded claims hyping the so-called "China threat". At its core, the document is designed to deliberately amplify "external threat" in order to shape domestic public opinion and create international "justifications" for a significant military budget increase, looser arms export controls, revised security strategies, and ultimately, the dismantling of the postwar constraints.

For Japan, elevating its military ties with the Philippines serves to promote the advance of its neo-militarism in the region.

For the Philippines, its government seeks to use "external threat" to divert public attention from domestic problems such as struggling economy, unemployment, poor healthcare and corruption.

The defense chiefs of the two countries jointly staged an ugly spectacle at the Shangri-La Dialogue in Singapore last month, turning a platform meant for communication into an opportunity to flatter the United States, divide the region, and stoke bloc confrontation. The whole region sees clearly they are the troublemakers and the real threat to regional peace and stability.

Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr even brazenly claimed during the dialogue that although China has offered fertilizer and fuel to the Philippines, there is no demonstration of "good faith on a long-term basis", and it is actually "guileful".

This rhetoric shows his disregard for the welfare of the Philippine people and lack of appreciation for kindness. He only cares for selfish personal gains to the point that he is willing to perform political theatrics even when people's well-being is at stake.

Japan and the Philippines will only be increasingly isolated on the international stage if they continue down this wrong path of instigating confrontation.

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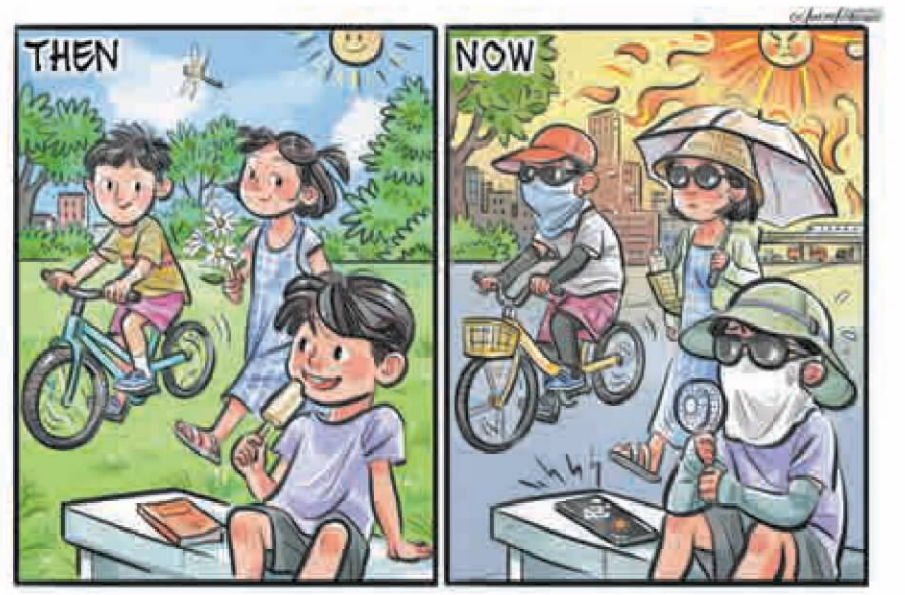

Opinion Line

Gaokao continues to evolve in line with changing times

Outside 7,981 examination centers across China on Sunday, the summer air shimmered under the relentless June sun as millions of students faced one of the most important tests of their lives. Beyond the school gates, anxious family members gathered in crowds. Shielding themselves with umbrellas and handheld fans, they waited patiently despite the heat.

When the 12.9 million students sit for the 2026 national college entrance examination, or *gaokao*, they are actually taking part in one of the most important merit-based exam systems in modern Chinese history — a system that has evolved alongside the country's development to be one of the world's largest economies. It is about how a society identifies talent, rewards effort and adapts to changing socioeconomic realities.

One of the enduring lessons of history is that societies prosper when advancement depends more on innovation and achievement. The restoration of the *gaokao* in 1977 was a decisive move in that direction. It replaced the previous selection mechanism with one in which performance in a common examination became the principal gateway to higher education.

For a country emerging from a decade of changes, this was not merely an educational reform; it was the improvement of procedural justice. Millions of ordinary families came to believe that efforts and abilities could change a person's future. The belief that knowledge changes one's destiny has become a firmly held conviction among the Chinese people.

There is some truth in the assertion that examinations cannot fully judge an individual's creativity, character or perseverance. But the relevant question is not whether an exam is perfect, but whether a fairer realistic alternative exists.

What is particularly notable today is that with the country's development in recent decades, the *gaokao* assessment is itself undergoing change — from testing candidates' memorized knowledge to evaluating how they apply it. Of late, questions in the exams increasingly incorporate real-world situations, scientific developments, technological innovation and interdisciplinary problem-solving. The objective is no longer simply to identify students who can remember information, but those who can apply it in practice.

This evolution reflects a larger socioeconomic reality. For decades, China's growth benefited from abundant labor and expanding industrial capacity. Today, prosperity depends increasingly on innovation, productivity and human capital. The educational system therefore faces a different challenge: merely producing more graduates won't do, it should produce graduates capable of succeeding in an economy shaped by artificial intelligence, advanced manufacturing, biotechnology and other emerging technologies. The shift in examination design mirrors that national development.

Equally significant is the gradual change from a largely single-track model of advancement. Along with the current *gaokao* and broader lifelong education systems, diversified admissions mechanisms, vocational education pathways and comprehensive evaluation systems have expanded opportunities for different kinds of talent. The system remains competitive, but it is increasingly capable of recognizing that excellence takes multiple forms.

This does not mean that the *gaokao* system has become less important. It has become a window into China's broader economic and social transformation. The evolution of examination content, subject selection, admissions policies and university programs provides a revealing measure of how the country is preparing for the future.

The value of the *gaokao* system lies not in the examination itself, but in the principle behind it: that talent should be discovered, cultivated and rewarded. The details of implementation will continue to evolve, as they should.

But as China pursues high-quality development in an age increasingly defined by technological progress and global competition, the search for merit — and the institutions that make that search possible — will remain indispensable. The *gaokao* story is therefore not just a story about education and exams. It is a story about modernization, opportunity and the continuing effort of a nation to align individual aspiration with national development.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Employment crucial for 15th Five-Year Plan period

Editor's note: *The 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) for implementing the employment-first strategy was approved at a State Council executive meeting on Friday. Senior officials of the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security and the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology, as well as experts, shared their insights on the country's employment and industrial upgrading with the media after the meeting. Below are excerpts of their remarks as reported by Securities Times and Xinhua News Agency. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

Focusing on the job-hunting needs of graduates, the human resources and social security authorities will continue to introduce high-quality employment policies and services to expand employment channels and create jobs.

Throughout the 15th Five-Year Plan period, it is essential to follow the employment-first strategy and incorporate the goal of high-quality and full employment into national economic and social development initiatives. Coordination between industries and employment should be increased. Greater efforts should be made to improve and modernize the industrial system, and priority should be given to key sectors that are capable of generating a large number of jobs. Government authorities should guide the orderly relocation of industries, and foster new drivers for employment growth by developing the digital economy, green economy and silver economy.

The fundamental solution for employment challenges lies in development. According to the requirements put forward at the State Council executive meeting, local governments should develop industries to stabilize employment, upgrade existing industries to create more jobs, and better protect employees' rights and interests to improve the quality of employment.

Carrying out vocational skills training is an important measure to resolve the structural imbalance between the needs of job seekers and employers. Improving the competence of the workforce is vital for achieving the goals of upgrading traditional industries and fostering emerging industries and industries of the future. Hence it is necessary to keep enhancing the quality of such training programs to help more workers acquire professional skills, secure jobs and increase their income.

New quality productive forces and the country's new industrialization drive are deeply related, and they contribute to each other's advancement. Scientific and technological innovation serves as the key to integrating the two.

New industrialization features high technology, sound economic returns, low resource consumption and minimal environmental pollution. This is in line with the direction in which new quality productive forces are developing. Scientific and technological innovation provides concrete approaches for the two to interact better with one another.

Efforts to cultivate industries of the future will drive both the development of new quality productive forces and the upgrading of the modern industrial system. The development of industries of the future will help boost the high-quality development of the country, and strengthen the industrial foundation for building a modern socialist China in all respects.

China has seen steady progress in the development of industries of the future, and gained some first-mover advantages in key fields. Nevertheless, challenges remain, including insufficient capacity for original innovation, reliance on others for key and core technologies, an innovation ecosystem in need of further improvement, and institutional and mechanism barriers to be removed.

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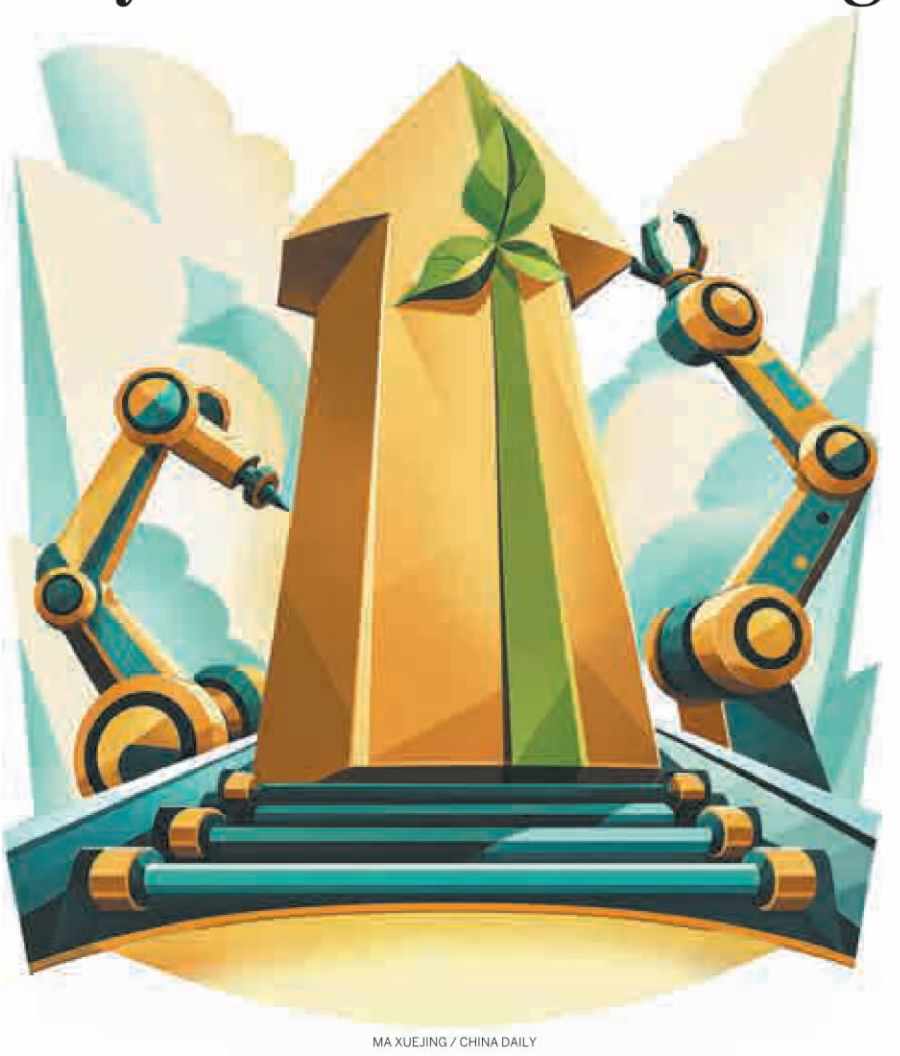
VIEWS

Souknilanh Keola

Good neighborly ties usher in sea changes



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Landlocked countries, which account for half of the least developed countries in Asia and nearly 40 percent in Africa, face a formidable obstacle in their economic development: the lack of maritime connectivity. Access to the sea is crucial as many landlocked countries rely on overseas markets. Since they can access the ocean only through other countries, friendly relations with neighbors and efficient transportation routes to the sea are essential for economic progress.

Although the Lao People's Democratic Republic has maintained friendly relations with all its neighbors, the only maritime access route that provided tangible economic benefits until recently was the one through Thailand, thanks to its favorable geographic conditions.

Access to China and Vietnam is blocked by mountainous regions that stretch for hundreds of kilometers. The Mekong River route through Cambodia, which holds great promise, is blocked by an impassable 10-kilometer-long waterfall.

Even the European powers that colonized Laos found it difficult to overcome these natural obstacles.

Dependence on the Thailand route led to rapid urban development near the Thai border, while other regions of the country struggled, posing a persistent challenge for the Lao economy.

However, China's economic growth helped break through these major natural barriers to connectivity. Driven by China's rapidly growing economic power, trade across the mountainous regions gradually picked up in the 1990s.

The China-Laos Railway, inaugurated in December 2021, was the gamechanger that ushered in a new phase in overcoming Laos's landlocked status.

Despite predictions by many experts that it would be of little use, the China-Laos Railway has achieved its targets for both passenger and freight trains well ahead of schedule.

For landlocked Laos, China's rise and improved connectivity with the country offer three major advantages. First, with a major global market now available next door, Laos can engage in trade without taking the maritime route.

Although it may be an upper-middle-income country in many people's eyes, China has become a major global market due to its sheer scale. If China becomes a high-income country in the near future, as widely predicted, it will present unprecedented opportunities for the Lao economy.

Second, improving connectivity with China, often referred to as the "world's factory", presents a significant opportunity for Laos to gain a foothold in global supply chains. Laos' relationship with global supply chains till now has centered primarily on the "plus-one" model, which involves indirect participation through neighboring countries.

The transport costs of shipping semi-finished goods back and forth to landlocked Laos further diminished the country's appeal as an industrial location. But the China-Laos Railway network has changed the situation for the country.

Third, improved connectivity between China and Laos has implications that extend beyond bilateral relations. Laos is the only country among the five Mekong countries that has land access to all of them as well as to China.

Improving connectivity with China and other neighboring countries will enhance Laos' position in connectivity networks between the Mekong region, ASEAN and China.

However, the "peer effect" — the idea that a landlocked country will grow faster if its transit neighbor experiences rapid growth — does not automatically apply.

Unless people communicate, exchange information, and make efforts to learn through the physical connections they have established, the peer effect is unlikely to occur.

In other words, people-to-people connectivity, such as cultural, educational, and professional exchanges, is essential.

Although evidence of peer effects has begun to emerge, with higher-than-average growth rates in many northern provinces closer to China or along the railway, greater efforts are necessary for these regions to fully capitalize on their potential.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Zhang Yi

The real story behind China's manufacturing might

China Shock 2.0 is a powerful phrase that offers a fake story. In this telling, Chinese electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels and advanced manufactured goods are the latest version of the low-cost imports that reshaped Western manufacturing after China joined the World Trade Organization.

The products may have changed, but the conclusion remains the same: China produces too much, sells too cheaply and threatens industrial workers elsewhere.

The vocabulary is also familiar. In the 1980s, Japan was described in nearly the same terms — subsidies, dumping, industrial targeting, unfair competition.

Some of those concerns were real, but the political framing pushed defensive policy rather than industrial renewal, and many of the predicted outcomes did not materialize.

The lesson is not to ignore competitive pressure. It is to distinguish unfair conduct from superior capability before choosing the response.

The "China Shock 2.0" argument leans on the work of David H. Autor, David Dorn and Gordon H. Hanson published in 2013, which argued that rising Chinese imports led to higher unemployment in the United States.

But that paper is treated as more definitive than it ever was.

The original finding — concentrated harm to specific US local labor markets between 2001 and 2010 — was a distributional effect inside an aggregate gain, not a verdict on trade with China, and the policy discourse has consistently over-read it.

The 2.0 case is structurally different. The sectors under scrutiny are not labor-intensive consumer goods, but capital goods, green technologies, complex assemblies and two-way supply chains dense with non-Chinese value. Price declines are at the center of the global energy transition.

Electric vehicles are the clearest example. The common assumption is that Chinese EVs are cheap mainly because of government support. Yet Rhodium Group, an organization known for its close scrutiny of Chinese industrial policy, reaches a different conclusion.

Rhodium estimates that BYD enjoys a cost advantage of roughly $4,700 per vehicle over Tesla China. Direct subsidies account for about $292 per vehicle, and preferential financing for around $12. By Rhodium's reckoning, subsidies add up to barely 5 percent of BYD's cost advantage.

The larger explanation lies in industrial organization. BYD produces around 80 percent of its tier-one components and 36 percent of its tier-two components in-house, avoiding an estimated $2,369 per vehicle in supplier markups.

Lower R&D and administrative costs contribute another estimated $1,719. So, the advantages stem not from cheap inputs but from vertical integration, dense local supply chains, rapid iteration and large-volume cost amortization.

If the gap were mainly because of subsidies, tariffs could plausibly close it. But tariffs cannot manufacture competitiveness. What Western automakers are facing are not lower prices but a different, and more efficient, production system.

China's manufacturing advantage can no longer be explained by cheap labor. Official data show average annual wages in urban non-private manufacturing reached 107,987 yuan ($15,895) in 2024, up from around 72,088 yuan in 2018, while Chinese export prices have been flat or declined over the same period.

When wages rise while export prices remain steady, the cause is not currency movements but productivity, automation, scale and supply-chain clustering. Chinese firms have compressed the design-to-market cycle inside dense local ecosystems where suppliers, engineers and manufacturers sit close to one another.

China's rise is not just because of volume but also technological accumulation. R&D spending as a share of GDP rose from about 1.3 percent in the 10th Five-Year Plan (2001-05) to 2.7 percent in the 14th (2021-25).

OECD data place China's total R&D spending close to the US in purchasing power terms, and the World Intellectual Property Organization's Global Innovation Index ranks China in the world's top 10 innovation economies.

The benefits are broader than the "shock" narrative allows. Lower Chinese prices are disruptive for some producers, but they are very beneficial for consumers, developing economies and the energy transition. Cheaper solar panels, batteries and EVs lower the cost of decarbonization.

IRENA has found that most newly added utility-scale renewable power in 2024 was cheaper than the lowest-cost fossil-fuel alternative. The same price decline that pressures some incumbent firms also helps households, grids and governments deploy clean technology faster.

The reverse evidence is also striking. If China were simply "shocking" the world, developing economies would be pulling away; instead, many are deepening integration with China.

ASEAN is now China's largest trading partner, and the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol covers the digital economy, green economy and supply-chain connectivity.

Vietnam's export boom, Southeast Asia's electronics growth and Mexico's nearshoring expansion are closely related to Chinese intermediate goods, machinery and logistics.

The trade-in-value-added perspective reinforces this point. Gross export figures make China appear to be the sole source of the impact.

But final exports from China often embody value created elsewhere: Japanese and Korean components, German machinery, Dutch equipment, Australian minerals, ASEAN inputs, and global software, design and services. A tariff aimed at "China" often strikes a production network much broader than China itself.

A fuller accounting must look beyond goods. China runs a large goods surplus, but it is also a major buyer of foreign services and a source of income for global firms.

Data show that in 2025 China recorded a $1,023 billion goods surplus alongside a $196 billion services deficit and a $115 billion primary income deficit. Tourism, education, intellectual property payments, digital services, brands and multinational profits all complicate the one-way story, making the picture look less like a one-directional shock and more like deep mutual dependence.

"China Shock 2.0" compresses three different issues into one alarm: efficiency read as unfairness, scale read as aggression, and diffusion read as threat. If the issue is efficiency, the answer is to lower energy and capital costs at home — not tariffs that shield higher-cost producers from a structural gap.

If the issue is scale, the answer is to invest in supply-chain depth and the ecosystems where suppliers, engineers and integrators sit close together — not barriers that fragment those networks further.

If the issue is diffusion, the answer is to accelerate domestic R&D and firm-building while participating in the supply chains that spread capability — not export controls premised on a single-source frontier.

The better question, then, is not how to stop China from making affordable advanced goods.

It is how other economies can build manufacturing systems capable of making complexity affordable.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Haukur Hardarson

Rethinking energy security in a changing world

Energy security is being reshaped in a rapidly changing global landscape, but the policy conversation has yet to fully adjust. As geopolitical tensions intensify and traditional fuel supply chains face disruption, governments are rethinking how energy systems are built, powered and protected. Yet, the approach remains anchored in outdated assumptions about fuel supply, overlooking the resilience of the systems that deliver energy.

Nowhere is this more evident than in heating and cooling, which account for roughly half of global energy consumption.

More than 80 percent of this demand is met by fossil-fuel based energy. For many countries, this implies continued dependence on imported fuels to meet essential needs, from maintaining habitable cities to sustaining industrial production.

Despite this, policy and investment remain heavily concentrated on electricity generation, leaving thermal systems — the largest source of energy usage — fragmented, underdeveloped and exposed to fuel price volatility. Addressing this imbalance requires a shift in perspective, from securing fuel supply to strengthening the infrastructure that delivers energy.

Geothermal energy offers a fundamentally different model of energy security, based on infrastructure rather than fuel.

In practical terms, this means replacing recurring fuel imports with long-life domestic assets that stabilize energy costs over time, reduce exposure to commodity volatility and anchor critical infrastructure in reliable, local energy resources.

Unlike fossil-based systems, geothermal requires no ongoing fuel supply, eliminating exposure to transport disruptions and import dependence. With one of the smallest land footprints of any renewable, it can also be deployed within dense urban environments, integrating seamlessly into existing buildings, districts and infrastructure systems.

Yet a key barrier to wider adoption is the persistent misconception that geothermal is limited to volcanic regions. In reality, low- to medium-temperature geothermal resources suitable for heating and cooling can be deployed in nearly every geography. Advances in drilling and subsurface engineering are further expanding geothermal's potential at greater depths.

International experience illustrates what is possible, with Iceland providing a well-established case.

Following the oil shocks of the 1970s, the country invested heavily in geothermal infrastructure to reduce dependence on imported fuels. Today, around 90 percent of Icelandic homes are heated with geothermal energy, contributing to both energy independence and long-term price stability.

Over many decades, Iceland has developed deep expertise in geothermal resource development, engineering, and system integration, creating a foundation that has informed projects well beyond its borders.

China is a more recent and large-scale example of how this expertise can be applied in practice.

Through Sinopec Green Energy — a joint venture between Sinopec Star and Arctic Green Energy — Iceland's technical expertise combines with China's industrial scale and execution capability to enable rapid deployment of geothermal district heating systems across northern China.

In China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), energy self-sufficiency and system stability are central priorities. As part of this broader strategy, the country has accelerated the development of geothermal systems, particularly in regions historically reliant on coal.

Today, geothermal systems developed through Sinopec Green Energy serve more than 120 million square meters across more than 70 cities, benefiting millions of people. This expansion is reducing emissions while strengthening domestic energy security through stable, locally sourced energy systems.

The impact extends beyond energy supply. In cities historically reliant on coal-based heating, the shift to geothermal energy has improved local air quality, supporting efforts to build cleaner, healthier urban environments.

As the global energy system evolves, maintaining reliability is becoming more complex.

Wind and solar are indispensable to decarbonization, but their variability requires complementary resources to ensure stability. Geothermal plays a critical role by offering continuous, weather-independent thermal energy, particularly in sectors where demand cannot be curtailed. In this sense, geothermal complements rather than competes with other renewables.

Policy frameworks around the world have not fully adapted to this reality. Energy strategies continue to prioritize electricity, while heating and cooling remain underdeveloped in both planning and financing. Closing this gap will require integrating geothermal into urban energy planning, expanding district heating and cooling networks, and adopting financing models that treat geothermal as long-term infrastructure rather than short-term energy supply.

Together, the experiences of Iceland and China offer a broader lesson: energy security improves when countries invest in domestic, infrastructure-based systems rather than relying on imported fuels.

In a rapidly changing global landscape, long-term energy security will depend less on access to fuel and more on the resilience of energy systems.

Countries that succeed will be those that invest in infrastructure capable of delivering stable, reliable energy over decades.

And beneath our feet lies one of the most powerful and overlooked foundations of that future.

The author is the founder and chairman of Arctic Green Energy and vice chairman of Sinopec Green Energy.
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GLOBAL VIEWS

GUO BOWEI

Digital dependency

Stable and abundant electricity is the fundamental resource for modern economies in the AI era

Total power use in China reached 10.37 trillion kilowatt-hours in 2025, crossing the 10 trillion kWh threshold for the first time and making China the world's largest consumer of electricity.



Against the backdrop of flourishing digital economy and the rapid rise of artificial intelligence, the significance of this milestone extends far beyond the energy sector.

Electricity is a unique strategic resource in the modern economy. Unlike primary fuels such as coal and oil, electricity, as a secondary energy carrier, cannot be stored in large quantities at low cost. Power generation, transmission and consumption therefore have to be kept in a real-time balance.

Therefore, operating a power system on the scale of 10 trillion kWh requires far more than large generation capacity. It also demands a highly complex grid network, sophisticated dispatch and coordination systems, and sustained infrastructure investment. In this sense, the power system is a manifestation of the country's industrial strength and capacity for long-term planning and systematic coordination.

Just as coal, steel and oil formed the bedrock of the industrial age, a stable and expansive power system has emerged as the foundation of the digital economy.

This is particularly evident in the development of the AI industry.

The AI race is often framed as a competition in chips and algorithms. In practice, computing power depends on something even more fundamental: electricity. Data centers and computing hubs are inherently energy-intensive facilities. A large-scale data center typically operates with power capacity exceeding 100 megawatts, and some supercomputing centers consume several billion kWh of electricity each year. Training large AI models often requires tens of thousands of GPUs to run continuously for weeks or even months, all sustained by enormous amounts of electricity. The International Energy Agency projects that electricity consumption from data centers will roughly double from 485 terawatt-hours in 2025 to 950 TWh in 2030, a level close to Japan's current total electricity consumption. These figures show that the AI industry is not merely a digital industry. It is also reshaping the structure of global energy demand.

The larger the scale of computing power, the higher the demands on the reliability and capacity of the power system. As the rapid rise of AI drives surging demand for computing power, the energy system is increasingly emerging as a core foundation underpinning the growth of the sector.

The scale and reliability of China's power system provide uniquely favorable conditions for the AI industry. China has the world's largest power generation system and transmission network, and it has accumulated extensive expertise in ultra-high-voltage transmission, renewable energy integration and cross-regional power dispatch. For the AI industry, these capabilities matter far beyond simply ensuring an adequate electricity supply. They are critical to the reliable operation of computing centers, the continued expansion of industrial clusters and the ability to keep energy costs under control.

A good case in point is China's "East Data, West Computing" project, which aims to align computing infrastructure with the geographic distribution of energy resources.

China's eastern regions have more developed digital economies and concentrated demands for data services, but face high electricity costs. By contrast, the western regions boast abundant wind, solar and hydropower resources, making the costs much lower.

Some computing tasks that are less sensitive to latency have been shifted to computing hubs in the western region of China. This has gradually created a more rational spatial division between data generation and computing infrastructure. The eastern regions mainly generate data and application demand, while some back-end computing and data-processing tasks can be handled by computing centers in the West.

By turning rich energy resources into strong computing power, the model ensures stable, low-cost energy to support the development of AI.

Energy researchers often talk about the "energy trilemma", which refers to the challenge of balancing efficiency, sustainability and security. The rise of AI gives this old challenge a new dimension: as the digital economy increasingly depends on computing power, the broader economy will be more dependent on a stable, clean and secure electricity system.

First, electricity is the direct energy input for computing infrastructure. Data centers, servers and cooling systems all depend on a continuous and reliable power supply. A more efficient power system therefore directly affects the cost and stability of AI development.

Second, electricity is easier to decarbonize than many forms of direct fossil fuel use. As the generation mix shifts toward cleaner sources such as wind, solar and hydropower, the expansion of computing power does not necessarily have to mean a proportional increase in carbon emissions.

Third, a stronger power system can also enhance energy security. As renewable energy capacity grows and more economic activity is supported by domestically generated electricity, dependence on imported fossil fuels can gradually decline, strengthening the resilience of China's energy system.

Therefore, over the long term, increasing the share of electricity in final energy consumption is not only an important pathway for green development, but also a more efficient and secure way of organizing the energy system.

Of course, operating the world's largest power system takes more than just a massive economy. Power infrastructure projects demand huge upfront investment, take a long time to build and deliver stable but slow returns. In many countries, such projects are often challenged by inadequate funding, grid expansion bottlenecks and the complexity of cross-regional coordination.

In China, decades of continuous power infrastructure expansion have been enabled by long-term planning and system-wide implementation. From the west-to-east power transmission program and ultra-high-voltage transmission corridors, to the construction of large renewable energy bases and national computing hubs, energy infrastructure development has always been guided by national-level planning and coordinated alongside industrial demand.

Reaching the 10 trillion kWh milestone is more than just an energy indicator. It signals the foundational capability required for the digital era. It demonstrates that China has both a massive industrial system and consumer market, as well as the energy bedrock needed to sustain the growth of AI, advanced manufacturing and the digital economy.

As AI development accelerates, a stable, green and efficient power system is vital to both the sustained expansion of computing infrastructure and the long-term trajectory of emerging industries. China's massive and evolving power system provides robust support for expanding AI application scenarios, upgrading industrial structures and advancing green development.

Looking ahead, as renewable energy, smart grids, energy storage technologies and computing infrastructure further integrate, the power system is expected to play an essential role in driving the mutually reinforcing digital and green transitions.



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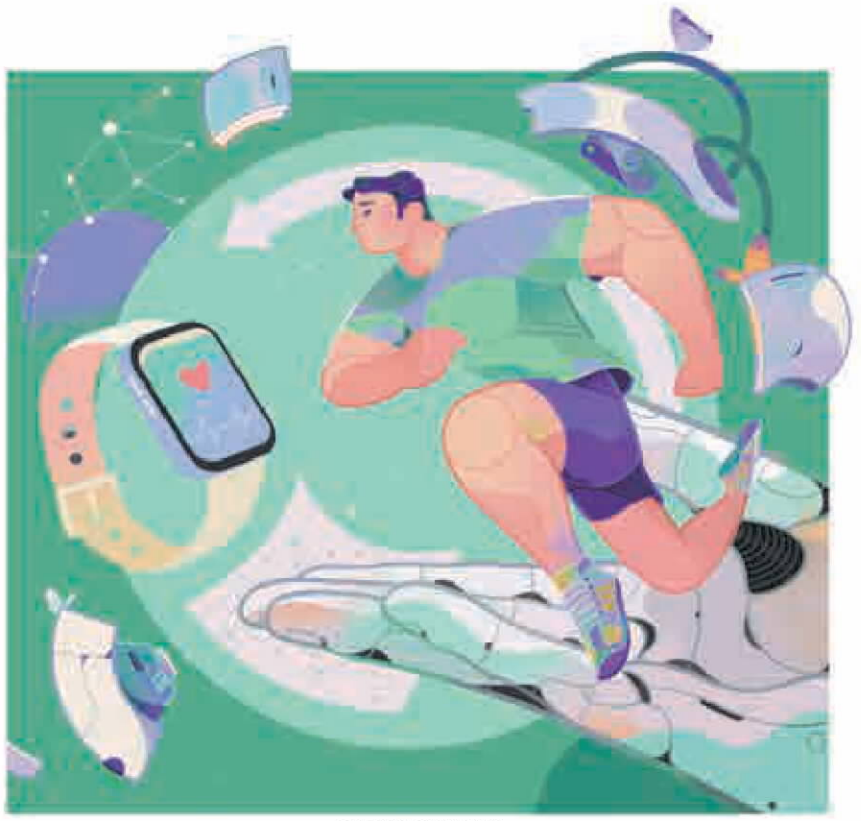

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LYU XIONGCE

Data keeps users fit

Digital technology is reshaping the new growth point of the health economy via smart sports

According to the latest data from the World Health Organization, global health expenditure as a percentage of GDP increased from 9.2 percent in 2010 to 10.9 percent in 2021. Simultaneously, the digital economy is rapidly permeating the realm of public welfare.



Technologies such as artificial intelligence, big data and digital twins are becoming deeply integrated with sports education, physical fitness assessment and exercise intervention, giving rise to the emerging field of smart sports.

In developed economies such as the United States, Japan and the European Union, smart sports are seen as a key pathway to reducing healthcare costs and improving the overall health of the population. In China, the Outline of the Healthy China 2030 Plan and the New Generation Artificial Intelligence Development Plan explicitly propose the deep integration of AI with sports health, with smart sports evolving from campus pilots to a societal-wide initiative to transform the health economy.

The core value of smart sports lies in the optimal allocation of resources. Through big data analysis and AI algorithms, individual physical health status can be categorized into different risk levels — from health maintenance and risk warning to critical intervention — and matched with differentiated exercise prescriptions for each level. This evidence-based stratified intervention strategy is becoming a global trend in health management.

In Japan, pilot areas using an exercise prescription system for AI-guided stratification of middle-aged and elderly individuals have shown significant effects in curbing healthcare expenditure growth, according to the Japan Sports Agency's interim verification conclusions.

According to comprehensive estimates from the National Health Commission's Report on the Nutrition and Chronic Diseases Status of Chinese Residents (2020) and the China health management white paper, more than 50 percent of China's adults are overweight or obese, with direct medical costs related to obesity-induced diabetes, hypertension, cardiovascular and cerebrovascular diseases accounting for an increasing proportion of annual health expenditures. If the smart sports model can slow the growth of obesity rates from current trends, it could potentially avoid tens of billions of yuan in incremental annual medical expenditures in the long term.

Finland's national sports digital platforms, such as HeiaHeia and Polar Flow, have demonstrated through long-term tracking data analyzed by the former Finnish Institute of Sports Sciences that AI dynamic adjustment of exercise load can increase the rate of physical fitness compliance by 15 percent to 25 percent.

Similar effects have been validated in pilot projects at Chinese universities. The Ministry of Education's 2023 national student physical fitness survey report indicates that in universities implementing AI-personalized exercise programs, the incidence of student sports injuries has shown a significant downward trend, and the rate of excellent physical fitness test results has steadily increased. The promotion of this technology could potentially reduce youth sports injuries by hundreds of thousands annually, correspondingly decreasing medical expenses and class absences, forming a virtuous cycle of less injury — more exercise — better health.

China's 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) for National Health clearly proposed shifting the checkpoint of health forward, with AI smart sports being a key tool for achieving this goal. Research by the Ministry of Education's Department of Physical, Health and Arts Education, in collaboration with the General Administration of Sport's Research Institute, shows that improving students' physical health levels has a significant positive effect on reducing long-term medical expenditures for chronic diseases. If China can fully unleash the preventive potential of smart sports, it could form a proactive health paradigm with Chinese characteristics in the health economy sector.

According to the "smart sports market report (2023-28)" by MarketsandMarkets, the global smart sports market size is expected to grow from $18 billion in 2023 to $42 billion in 2028, with a compound annual growth rate of approximately 18 percent. China's smart sports education equipment and service market is expected to grow even faster, with a compound annual growth rate exceeding 22 percent, higher than North America and Europe, making it the fastest-growing region globally.

On the policy front, China has issued the "Outline for Building a Leading Sports Nation" and the "Opinions on Promoting Mass Sports, Sports Consumption and High-Quality Development of Sports Industry", supporting AI sports technology research and industrialization. Over the next five years, the domestic smart sports sector alone could create hundreds of thousands of jobs in technology development, data analysis and content operations, while driving new business forms such as intelligent wearable devices, virtual sports courses and digital exercise prescriptions to international markets. Smart sports are not only the internal demand engine of the health economy but also a distinctive business card for China's service trade going global.

Improvements in physical fitness are translating into long-term value appreciation in national human capital. Both domestic and international studies confirm this correlation: The OECD's Programme for International Student Assessment data show that students in Beijing, Shanghai, and Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces who participate in moderate to vigorous physical activities three times a week score significantly higher in science, mathematics and reading tests than those with insufficient activity, with score differences reaching over half a grade.

When physical improvement shifts from a slogan to an actionable, trackable and intervenable practice, we are essentially investing in one of the highest-return "original capitals" for national economic growth. Institutionalizing this logic, China has incorporated student physical health into school performance evaluations.

Looking ahead, as technologies such as large-model AI technology, federated learning and edge computing continue to mature, personalized health management tailored to individuals will expand from campuses to the entire society.

As data technology and the sports health industry deeply integrate, China is poised to be the first country globally to establish a proactive health economic paradigm. This is not only a positive response to domestic population health challenges but also provides a replicable and promotable Chinese solution for global health governance. Smart sports will be elevated from a technical means to a lifestyle concept, reshaping the return structure of national health investments and becoming one of the most promising new growth points in the digital economy era.

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BUSINESS

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Leveraging intelligent technology pivot

Humanoids, smart glasses, AI demand catapult nation's innovation globally

By **MA SI** and **CHEN BOWEN** in Haikou



An AgiBot humanoid robot gives a calligraphy demonstration to visitors during the Digital-Intelligent Technology Ecosystem Conference 2025 in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Dec 5. QIN ZIHANG / FOR CHINA DAILY





Left: A demo of a robot vacuum with wheellegs takes place at the Roborock booth during the second day of the AWE 2026 trade fair in Shanghai on March 13. GETTY IMAGES **Right:** A humanoid robot from the Honor Qitian Dasheng team, named "Lightning", wins the championship during the 2026 Beijing E-Town half marathon and humanoid robot half marathon in Beijing on April 19. HE GUANXIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Out of every 10 humanoid robots shipped worldwide, eight come from China. That single statistic from a market research company captures a remarkable shift in the country's export story.

Gone is the reliance on sheer scale and rock-bottom prices. The new wave of Chinese tech exports — embodied in robots, artificial intelligence systems and smart hardware — is defined by sophistication, speed and a distinctly high-tech appeal, experts said.

The transformation is perhaps best illustrated by an unusual race held on a crisp April morning in Beijing's southern suburbs. More than 12,000 human runners lined up for a half-marathon. Alongside them, jostling for position at the start line, stood over 100 humanoid robots.

One of them, a nimble machine named "Lightning" from the Honor Qitian Dasheng team, crossed the finish line in 50 minutes and 26 seconds. To put that in perspective, the men's half-marathon world record, set by Uganda's Jacob Kiplimo in March, stands at 57 minutes and 20 seconds. Lightning, built in China, beat it by nearly seven minutes.

Yet the real headline was not the winning time — it was how the robots ran. Nearly 40 percent of the teams used fully autonomous navigation, a dramatic leap from the previous year's remote-controlled field. Technologies borrowed from self-driving cars, including LiDAR and vision-only navigation, have been successfully grafted onto two-legged machines.

Zhao Mingguo, a researcher at Tsinghua University's Department of Automation, watched the race closely. "This proves that once Chinese industry sets a goal, it has the ability to get it done," he said.

Behind the marvel on the racecourse lies the relentless pursuit of technological breakthroughs and advanced manufacturing in China. The confidence that powers these robots at full speed comes from a strong industrial and supply chain system.

Today, China is home to more than 140 humanoid robot manufacturers, with annual shipments reaching 14,400 units — accounting for 84.7 percent of the global total. Out of every 10 humanoid robots shipped worldwide, eight come from China, according to a report jointly released by CCID Media and China Electronics News in March.

More importantly, Chinese technology is arriving on the global stage with a sleek, high-tech confidence. Leading the charge is AgiBot, a Shanghai-based company that has become the world's top humanoid robot shipper, according to a report by market research firm Omdia.

The company began delivering to overseas customers in 2025 and opened its first international experience center in Malaysia in January.

Then, in late February 2026, AgiBot made a decisive move into Europe. At a launch event in Munich, Germany, the company officially announced its entry into the German market, unveiling a full portfolio of general-purpose embodied robots and industry-specific system solutions tailored for Europe.

But the announcement that drew the most attention was a strategic partnership with Minth Group, a global leader in automotive exterior and structural parts.

Under the agreement, Minth's network of modern factories around the world will serve as dedicated training grounds for AgiBot's robots — real-world environments where machines can learn, collect data and refine their algorithms.

Esther Wei, Minth Group's chairwoman and CEO, said: "This partnership not only drives Minth's own smart manufacturing upgrade, but also injects precious real-scenario data into the robotics industry, accelerating algorithm iteration and technological evolution".

Customs data show that in the first quarter of this year, China's total exports of various types of robots reached 11.32 billion yuan ($1.67 billion), with shipments to 148 countries and regions. Among them, cleaning robots accounted for nearly 70 percent, becoming the main driver of exports.

For instance, walk into a tech park in Shenzhen's Nanshan district, and you will see the commercial reality behind the spectacle. Pudu Robotics has been quietly shipping service robots to more than 80 countries and regions — not only floor-cleaning machines, but also food-delivery robots that navigate crowded restaurants and customer-engagement bots that greet shoppers in malls across Europe and Southeast Asia. By the end of 2025, Pudu had shipped a total of 120,000 robots, the company said.

A few blocks away, engineers are putting a four-legged robot through its paces. At 62 kilograms, it is no toy. In one three-minute test, it performed continuous back-flips, side flips and a spinning jump that launched it 87 centimeters off the ground.

The secret? A local supply chain so efficient that the company can source all 30,000 components within half a day. That speed has allowed eight product iterations in just six months — a pace that leaves many overseas competitors struggling to keep up.

Shenzhen Dobot Corp Ltd, specializing in industrial robot arms, has also shipped its precision manipulators to more than 100 countries and regions. Walk into a factory in Germany or a warehouse in Brazil, and you are increasingly likely to see a Chinese-made robotic arm handling delicate assembly or heavy lifting.

Xie Kaixuan, marketing director of Dobot, said: "The key to embodied intelligence is moving from 'lab demonstration' to 'real-world commercial use'. At a cinema in Shenzhen, Dobot's humanoid robot has already achieved fully automated popcorn sales. It works 14 hours a day, and its daily revenue has exceeded 20,000 yuan."

Zhang Yin, vice-chairman and secretary-general of the Guangdong Artificial Intelligence and Robotics Industry Alliance, said: "The Greater Bay Area is the only region in the world that has both AI technology and mechatronics technology — and the ability to deeply integrate the two. This advantage is reflected in the collaboration and layout of Guangdong, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region."

The export boom is not limited to walking or rolling machines. Smart glasses have become another unexpected hit. Equipped with real-time translation, visual assistance and noise-cancelling communication, they are flying off shelves from Tokyo to London. Chinese manufacturers have turned the glasses into a practical tool for business travellers and tourists alike.

In 2025, smart glass shipments in China reached 2.46 million units, a year-on-year increase of 87.1 percent. Overseas shipments grew by 64.9 percent, covering 32 countries and regions, according to data from market research company International Data Corp.

Local governments are also moving fast. The Hainan provincial government said it will focus on cultivating future industries and building new engines for development in 2026. In the field of embodied intelligence, Hainan will proactively plan for "brain-like models" tailored to unique application scenarios such as deep-sea exploration and tourism, and develop a variety of embodied intelligent robots, including underwater robots and cultural tourism consumer robots.

Seeing the potential, Beijing Galbot recently established a unit in Hainan, with a business scope covering the manufacturing of service and consumer robots and the research and development of intelligent robots.

What ties all these stories together is a fundamental shift in strategy. Chinese tech companies are no longer competing on price alone. They are offering a complete business loop: hardware to attract customers, software to keep them, and value-added services to generate long-term revenue. It is a model that has already proved successful in smartphones and electric vehicles — and now it is being applied to robotics and AI, experts added.

Contact the writers at masi@chinadaily.com.cn

My toddler's take on China's robot takeover

REPORTER'S LOG

By Ma Si

My 1.5-year-old baby just taught me something Wall Street took years to figure out. Not long ago, my daughter saw a humanoid robot at our local shopping mall — a Chinese-made machine selling small plush toys. She burst into tears.

Fast forward a few months. Now, dragging me by the hand, she practically sprints toward the same robot every day. They dance together. They "chat" — or I should say, she babbles and the robot beeps back. They shake hands.

At not even two years old, she has already internalized something that took global investors years to fully grasp: humanoid robots are no longer science fiction. They're here, they're Chinese and they're going mainstream faster than anyone expected.

The numbers back up my toddler's intuition. In 2025 — the year humanoids moved from lab demos to real-world work — about 15,000 humanoid robots were deployed globally, and about 85 percent of them were delivered by Chinese companies.

The International Federation of Robotics said dominance is not new, but accelerating. In 2024 alone, China installed 295,000 industrial robots, almost eight times more than the US' 34,200 units. The operational stock in China exceeded 2 million, about five times the US' 393,700. China has turned robotics into a scale game, and no one else is even in the race.

Barclays analyst Zornitsa Todorova put it bluntly: "The decade of robotics belongs to China". The reasoning is simple. China controls 90 percent of the world's refined magnetic rare earths, 45 percent of battery exports, 22 percent of actuator exports — and about 70 percent of all global robotics patent applications.

Using European Patent Office data, China holds roughly 70 percent of global robotics patents since 2000; the US holds just 4 percent. In 2023 alone, China filed over 30,000 new robotics patent inventions — nearly 30 times the US' count.

In the humanoid subfield, China accounts for about 75 percent of relevant patents worldwide. The company that holds the most humanoid robot patents globally? Not Boston Dynamics — it's China's UBTech, with 812 patents, dwarfing Boston's 119.

That's not just an innovation edge. That's a supply-chain stranglehold. As Barclays concluded, every humanoid robot assembled in the US or Europe will still rely on key components made in China.

But here's where my daughter's story becomes genuinely revealing. It's not just about who makes the robots — it's about how fast they become normal. The robot she plays with wasn't being tested in a sterile lab; it was working a real shift, selling toys, interacting with hundreds of strangers a day. That's not a prototype. That's a product.



Ma Si

And this is where China is pulling ahead in a way that has nothing to do with patents or rare earths: real-world commercial deployment. Chinese firms are not waiting for perfect conditions. They're putting humanoids into malls, factories, cinemas, restaurants — messy, unpredictable, human-filled environments — and letting them learn on the job.

Now look at where this trajectory leads. Using China's own electric vehicle expansion curve as a reference, analysts from Barclays project that by 2035, annual humanoid robot deployments in China could reach about 11 million units, with the global total hitting roughly 13 million.

If cumulative stock reaches 24 million units, that would add about 3.8 percent to China's effective labor supply — offsetting nearly 60 percent of the projected workforce contraction caused by demographic shifts.

This is an optimistic scenario, but it is not fantasy. It almost exactly replicates the path of electric vehicles: from policy support to supply-chain build-out to explosive scale. China has run this playbook before.

But there is a deeper dimension here — one that spreadsheets and patent filings cannot capture. It is about emotion, familiarity and the quiet erasure of fear. My daughter went from terrified to delighted in weeks. She now treats that plastic-and-servo machine as a friend. She brings it imaginary snacks. She waves goodbye when we leave. This kind of early, casual exposure is happening to millions of Chinese children right now — in malls, airports, kindergartens and hospitals. They are growing up with robots as natural, trusted companions, not as threats to their jobs or existential menaces from sci-fi movies.

Contrast that with the cultural mood in much of the West. In the US and Europe, public discourse around humanoid robots remains heavily colored by job displacement anxiety, privacy fears and dystopian tropes. Surveys consistently show lower willingness to interact with autonomous machines in everyday spaces. That matters — not just for public relations, but for market adoption. A child who dances with a robot today becomes an adult who buys one tomorrow. That is a soft-power advantage no trade barrier can easily undo.

My daughter doesn't know what a supply chain is. She doesn't know about patents. But she knows that an interesting robot has become part of her daily life. That instinctive comfort — the feeling that this technology belongs here, now, in ordinary spaces — is exactly what China is scaling globally.

For everyone else, it may be a moment of reckoning: the decade of robotics really does belong to China. And it has already begun, one dance at a time.

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BUSINESSINSIGHT

EAGLE EYE

By Zhang Xu

Strategic significance of building an open world economy

Editor's note: *China Daily's Business Insight section has launched a column devoted to an in-depth interpretation of Xi Jinping's economic thought. This article is part of the series.*

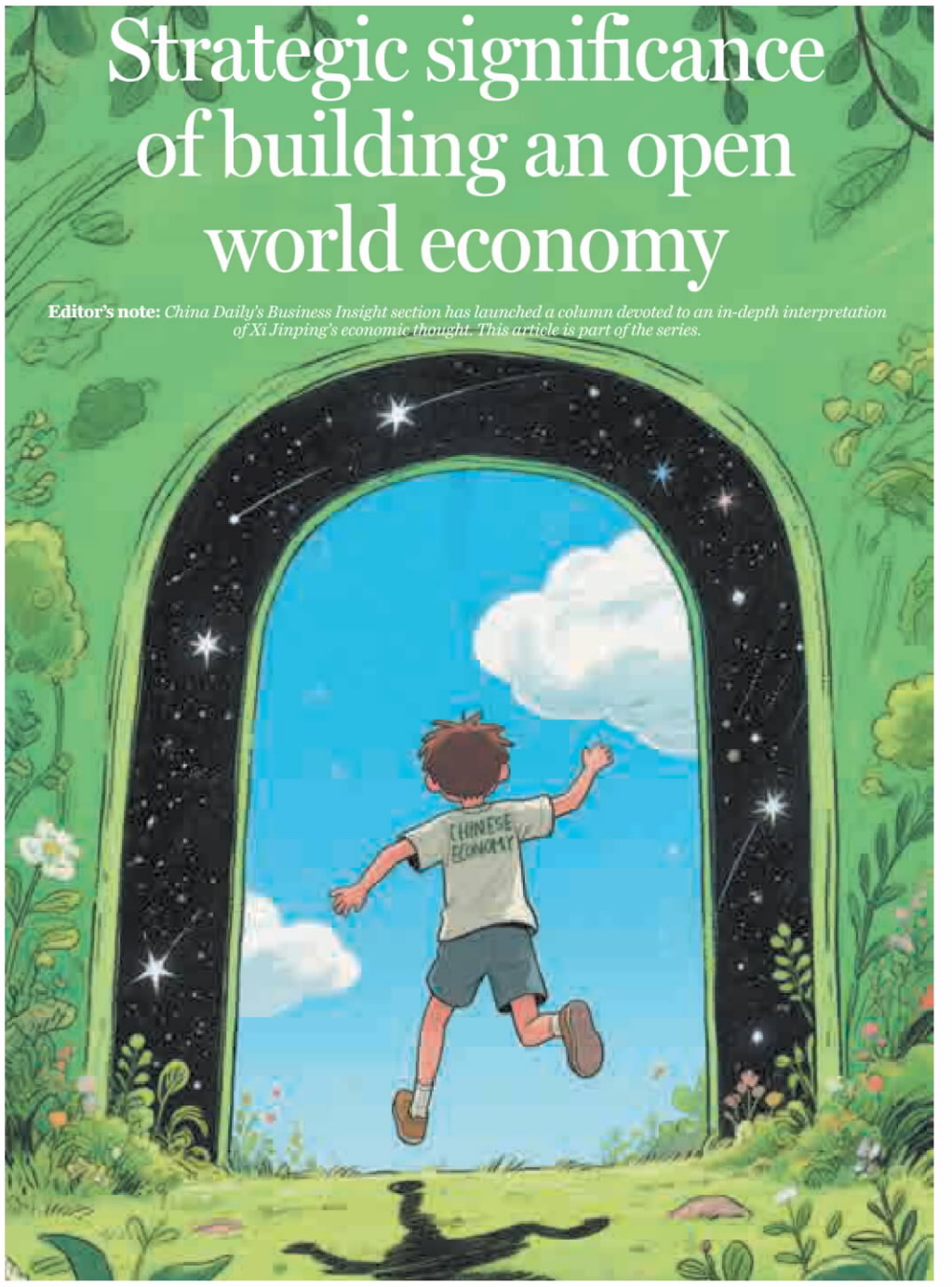

ILLUSTRATION GENERATED BY AI

President Xi Jinping pointed out when meeting with representatives of the international business community on March 28, 2025 that China upholds true multilateralism, promotes universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, actively participates in global economic governance, and is committed to building an open world economy.

China's top leadership has stated that the country is committed to its fundamental national policy of opening to the outside world and pursues a mutually beneficial strategy of opening-up. It strives to create new opportunities for the world with its own development and to contribute its share of building an open global economy that delivers greater benefits to all peoples.

Promoting economic globalization

The essence of economic globalization is the result of the dialectical movement of productive forces and relations of production. With the global expansion of socialized production and the uneven development of countries around the world, the basic contradictions of capitalism have spilled over from one country to the whole world. These trends may contribute to widening inequality, increased economic vulnerabilities and recurrent global crises if left unaddressed.

The history of human social development has repeatedly proven that openness brings progress, while isolation inevitably leads to backwardness. The correct direction of economic globalization is to follow the laws of global economic development and build an open, inclusive, cooperative and mutually beneficial world economy. Only by building an open world economy can we continuously bring about conditions and opportunities for development and expand the development space of economic globalization.

Requirement for modernization

Openness is a distinct hallmark of Chinese modernization. The present and the near future constitute a critical period for comprehensively advancing the building of a strong country and the great cause of national rejuvenation through Chinese modernization. Adhering to open cooperation and mutual benefit is an inevitable requirement of Chinese modernization. Without an open world economy, such openness will be hindered and development will be constrained.

High-quality development is the primary task of comprehensively building a modern socialist country, accelerating the creation of a new development pattern, and enhancing the endogenous dynamics and reliability of China's domestic economy. Now is a crucial period for our country to accelerate the realization of Chinese modernization. As the world is intertwined with changes and chaos, turbulence is intensifying, the international economic and trade order is facing severe challenges, the growth momentum of the world economy is insufficient, and the impact of changes in the external environment is deepening, and our country's development has entered a period where strategic opportunities, risks and challenges coexist, and uncertain and unpredictable factors are increasing.

China's top leadership has made comprehensive arrangements for building a new development pattern. The key to building a new development pattern lies in unimpeded economic circulation. This includes not only smoothing domestic circulation by building a unified national market, but also streamlining international circulation by building an open world economy. Only in this way can a new development pattern be formed in which the domestic circulation is the mainstay and the domestic and international dual circulations mutually promote each other, thereby creating a broader development space for the realization of Chinese modernization.

New international economic order

Because developed countries were the first to realize industrialization, they possess first-mover advantages in economic strength and technological levels, making them the leaders of current economic globalization. Developed countries have not only obtained massive economic benefits in the process of economic globalization by relying on their first-mover advantages, but also become the rule-makers of the world economy by leveraging their economic, political, technological and military advantages. By formulating economic rules favorable to themselves, developed countries have adopted a hegemonic behavioral approach to applying economic rules when they fit and discarding them when they do not, thus forming an unjust and unreasonable international economic order and causing development dilemmas for the vast number of developing countries.

With the deepening development of economic globalization, the economies of various countries have formed complex economic ties of interdependence. The law of uneven development of the world economy has led to the collective rise of emerging market countries and developing countries, which is changing the global political and economic landscape, gradually demanding a change in the old international economic order dominated by developed countries, and calling for the construction of a new international economic order. Historical lessons in the process of human development show that to overcome the law of uneven development of the world economy, it is imperative to build an open, inclusive, universally and mutually beneficial open world economy. With the rise of emerging economies, the inherent antagonistic contradictions of developed countries have begun to manifest, with their domestic financial risks continuously increasing, industrial "hollowing out" intensifying, and employment and economic growth becoming sluggish.

Instead of reflecting on and proactively changing the old international economic order, developed countries — in order to maintain their vested interests — blame the problems on economic globalization and have begun to engage in unilateralism and protectionism. Fundamentally speaking, solving the problems in the process of economic globalization requires building a new international economic order on the basis of building an open world economy, so as to achieve a rebalancing of the economic globalization process.

Mankind's common development

Only through mutual integration and connectivity can the economic development of various countries achieve mutual learning, mutual complementarity, mutual promotion and common development. Development and innovation are the requirements for sustainable growth of the world economy; interconnected growth is the requirement for robust growth of the world economy; and integration of interests is the requirement for balanced growth of the world economy. China is an advocate and active promoter of building an open world economy, unswervingly expanding institutional opening-up, safeguarding the multilateral trading system, expanding international circulation, promoting reform and development through opening-up, and sharing opportunities and developing together with countries around the world.

China's promotion of building an open world economy aims to provide Chinese solutions, contribute Chinese wisdom, and demonstrate Chinese strength for the common development of humanity. Through the construction of the Belt and Road Initiative, China promotes the Silk Road spirit of peace and cooperation, openness and inclusiveness, mutual learning and mutual benefit. By insisting on building with open doors, China unswervingly advances high-level opening-up, further expands market access, shares development opportunities and dividends with countries around the world, continuously brings new impetus and new opportunities to the world with China's new development, and works together to forge a high-quality world economy.

The writer is director of the Department of Political Economy at the Institute of Economics of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.
The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Supply continues to expand; industrial structure sees faster upgrading

MAIN STREET

By Yang Yiyong

Since the beginning of the year, China's economy has maintained a positive trajectory of recovery and structural improvement despite a complex and challenging external environment and tasks of reform, development and stability at home.

From the production perspective, supply has continued to expand, while the industrial structure has undergone faster upgrading driven by greater self-reliance and strength in science and technology. New quality productive forces are taking shape through practical application and have emerged as a strong driver of high-quality development.

From a livelihood perspective, employment has remained generally stable, prices have stayed moderate and manageable, and the social safety net has continued to improve.

In terms of growth drivers, the economy is witnessing a faster optimization of development momentum. Strategic emerging industries and industries of the future — including new energy, artificial intelligence, biomanufacturing and commercial aerospace — are developing in clusters.

A growing number of new sectors and business tracks are generating strong spillover effects, helping offset pressures stemming from the weakening of traditional growth drivers.

These developments demonstrate the resilience of the Chinese economy, its vast development potential and its favorable long-term prospects. While structural and cyclical challenges remain, confidence in China's development outlook should be strengthened.

The country possesses the world's most complete industrial system, a massive market with enormous potential, abundant talent resources and institutional advantages that continue to be released.

Against this backdrop, market entities should seize opportunities and place innovation at the center of modernization efforts. Sci-tech innovation should be leveraged to drive industrial innovation, particularly through disruptive and frontier technologies capable of fostering new growth engines.

Enterprises should strengthen operational management, improve modern governance capabilities and conduct business in strict compliance with market rules, as well as laws and regulations.

At the same time, greater emphasis should be placed on risk management. Enterprises need sound mechanisms for risk identification, early warning and response in order to better cope with external containment and suppression, market volatility and rising costs.

In the broader process of advancing high-quality economic and social development, businesses should not only serve as witnesses, but also as active contributors, providing solid support for the overall economy through their own stable and healthy development.

A problem-oriented approach remains essential to sustaining healthy economic growth.

Improving macroeconomic policies by addressing the most pressing concerns of market entities is a key part of this process.

At present, many enterprises continue to face common operational challenges. Some place greater emphasis on investment and project construction than on subsequent management and operational efficiency.

Others focus heavily on hard assets — such as infrastructure and fixed-asset investment — while paying insufficient attention to soft strengths, including institutional development, brand value, data assets and management capabilities.

Another challenge lies in unsustainable development patterns. In some cases, inadequate long-term strategic planning and excessive pursuit of short-term expansion have led to the accumulation and exposure of structural risks.

These issues are related not only to the management capabilities of some business entities, but also to the effectiveness of policy transmission and implementation.

Institutionalized communication between government and businesses should therefore be regarded as an important channel for improving macroeconomic policymaking efficacy. Policymakers need to engage directly with enterprises, gain a detailed understanding of practical challenges and listen to voices from the front lines of production.

Suggestions and reasonable appeals raised by businesses should be carefully categorized, systematically documented and thoroughly studied.

Efforts should combine targeted solutions with broader institutional improvements. At the micro level, precise measures should be introduced to address industry-specific difficulties and challenges faced by individual enterprises.

At the macro level, policymakers should systematically identify common and institutional obstacles, strengthen policy coordination and consistency, and avoid policy distortions caused by either overly fragmented or overly generalized approaches.

Institutional innovation is also needed to remove bottlenecks in policy implementation and ensure that policies effectively reach market entities.

Doing so will help address deep-seated problems such as inadequate operational management, insufficient investment in soft capabilities and unsustainable development practices.

More importantly, it will enable macroeconomic policies to be translated from abstract documents and figures into tangible institutional dividends and practical support that businesses can genuinely access and benefit from, thereby enhancing confidence in and recognition of government policies.

Looking ahead, achieving both qualitative improvement and reasonable quantitative growth requires adherence to the principle of pursuing progress while maintaining stability, promoting stability through progress and establishing the new before abolishing the old.

Greater innovation and vitality should be fostered through positive interaction between effective macroeconomic guidance and proactive efforts by market entities.

China should continue to uphold and improve its basic socialist economic system, unswervingly consolidate and develop the public sector, and encourage, support and guide the development of the nonpublic sector.

The legitimate rights, interests and property rights of all market entities should be protected in accordance with the law, while efforts should continue to build a world-class business environment that is market-oriented, law-based and internationalized.

Further reform and opening-up remain essential. Institutional barriers that hinder the market-based allocation of production factors and the efficient circulation of goods and services should be removed, while efforts to build a unified national market should be hastened.

At the same time, greater attention should be paid to improving the coordination, precision and effectiveness of macroeconomic policies. Policymakers need to balance the expansion of domestic demand with deeper supply-side structural reform, coordinate short-term growth with long-term development potential and better integrate development with security.

Enterprises should also be encouraged to accelerate the transformation of their development models and build core competitiveness through technological, managerial and business-model innovation. Greater efforts should be made to pursue specialized, sophisticated, distinctive and innovative development while advancing green, low-carbon and sustainable growth.

Only by better combining an efficient market with a well-functioning government can the stability and predictability of macroeconomic policies work in tandem with the initiative and creativity of market entities.

In this way, China's considerable resilience and development potential can be transformed into tangible growth advantages, opening new horizons for high-quality development, while laying a stronger material and technological foundation for building a modern socialist country in all respects.

The writer is a senior research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research.
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CHINA

China's fisheries through the eyes of intl students

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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Sebastianus Ken Chandra, a 23-year-old Indonesian student at Shanghai Ocean University, received a special award as an "Impressions of China's Fisheries" international cooperation ambassador.

Jointly launched by Shanghai Ocean University, the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences and the China Overseas Fisheries Association, the "Impressions of China's Fisheries" campaign invited international students in China, foreign crew members in the distant-water fishing industry and fisheries workers worldwide to share their personal perspectives and stories about China's fishery sector.

Through short videos, stories, photographs and handicrafts, participants from 25 countries submitted more than 100 works highlighting their firsthand experiences and observations of China's efforts and achievements in sustainable fisheries and international cooperation.

At an event held on Friday at the university, 10 outstanding works received awards, while 10 creators were presented with the title of "International Cooperation Ambassador", which aims to encourage them to bridge fishery cooperation with different countries.

For Chandra, whose ancestors came from China's southeastern coast, participating in the campaign was a journey of self-discovery. Having grown up hearing stories about China, he came to the country in 2023 to pursue a bachelor's degree in aquaculture, beginning what he described as a "fulfilling, happy and knowledge-rich" experience.

Chandra said he once believed aquaculture was simply about raising fish until they grew larger. Over time, however, he learned it encompasses the entire ecosystem in which fish live.

He said he came to understand that the strength of China's fisheries industry stems from generations of people who have spent decades studying water, fish and the relationship between humanity and nature.

In his view, China's fisheries and aquaculture sector is "like a net", with one end connected to the era when his ancestors departed from China's coast and the other tied to today's advances in science, education, ecology and the future.

"What impressed me the most in China's fisheries is that tradition and modernity always go hand in hand," he said. "On one side is the wisdom of fishermen living off the sea for generations, and on the other side are sensors, data models, recirculating aquaculture systems and green farming technologies."

Another Indonesian student at the university, Abizar Dirsan Gifari, was recognized for his work on comparative research into marine ranching.

He said he was equally impressed by China's advanced technologies and commitment to sustainable fisheries.

As they approach graduation, both students said they hope to apply the knowledge they gained in China to help improve Indonesia's fisheries and aquaculture industries while serving as bridges for people-to-people exchanges and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries.

Many other young participants from countries including Vietnam, Cambodia, Tonga, Laos, Pakistan and Ecuador also shared their impressions of China's fisheries sector.

> "What impressed me the most in China's fisheries is that tradition and modernity always go hand in hand."
>
> **Sebastianus Ken Chandra,** a 23-year-old Indonesian student at Shanghai Ocean University

As the Lancang-Mekong cooperation continues to deepen, Horn Songheng, a student from Cambodia, said he has seen new hope in the growing rice-shrimp fields in his hometown and for the Irrawaddy dolphins inhabiting the Mekong River.

Sheryl Chanena Haz Munoz of Ecuador said she hopes to see more seafood products from her home country enter the Chinese market as bilateral cooperation expands. She is also actively studying in China to gain knowledge that can help protect the ocean as the world's shared blue home.

Elenoa Veatokelau Dior Bloomfield, a student from Tonga, said she appreciates China's support through technology transfer and experience-sharing that have helped the Pacific island nation build a more resilient blue economy. She hopes to contribute to sustainable China-Tonga maritime cooperation.

"China and Tonga have demonstrated a new model of cooperation to the world, which is to collaborate rather than compete, to share rather than isolate, to safeguard vibrant oceans rather than let them fall into ruin. I see it exactly as the essence of building a maritime community with a shared future," Bloomfield wrote in her submission.

Chen Jianghua, director of the publicity department at Shanghai Ocean University, said the submissions focused on concrete areas of fisheries cooperation and captured numerous heartwarming moments of Chinese and international partners working together to protect the oceans.

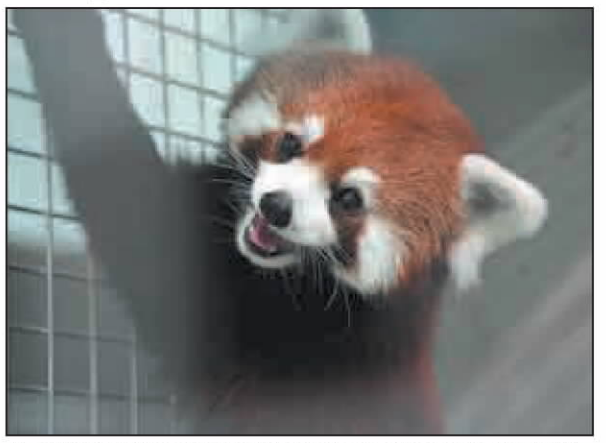
She said the firsthand experiences and observations presented in the submitted works effectively conveyed China's philosophy of responsible, sustainable and mutually beneficial fisheries development.

During the event, young people from around the world, described as future connectors and promoters of international marine fisheries cooperation, jointly proposed the "Our Ocean, Our Future: Global Youth Marine Fisheries Governance Initiative".

The initiative advocates equity and justice, calls for strengthening multilateral platforms to address global challenges collectively, and supports the principle of achieving shared growth through consultation and collaboration.

"Marine fisheries are vital to marine ecosystems, food security and human livelihoods. The sustainable development of marine fisheries is vital to the shared future of humanity. Together, we will join hands to safeguard our ocean and build our future," the initiative said.

Red pandas arrive



A red panda undergoes a health examination in a quarantine facility at Taipei Zoo in Taiwan on Saturday after arriving from Shanghai Zoo. A pair of young red pandas were transferred under a species exchange agreement signed by the two zoos during the 2024 Shanghai–Taipei City Forum. XINHUA



Innovation on display

An alumnus and his child experience a pair of AR glasses at the science and technology exhibition center of Southeast University in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, on Saturday during the university's 124th anniversary celebrations. Officially opening after two years of construction, the center showcased the university's latest advances in fields ranging from information metamaterials and deep-sea mining equipment to aerospace technology.
YANG BO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

HK, Central Asia deepen ties

Trade mission enhances investment, exchanges and research collaboration

By **STACY SHI** and **WU KUNLING** in Hong Kong

A high-profile Hong Kong Special Administrative Region trade mission to Central Asia, led by Chief Executive John Lee Ka-chiu, ended on a successful note Friday, with 96 agreements involving $1.65 billion in investments secured.

The pacts comprise 15 government-level memorandums of understanding and accords in commerce, education and development projects, as well as 81 private-sector deals spanning trade, investment, finance, energy, technology and aviation.

The 70-member trade delegation included business and professional leaders from the SAR and the Chinese mainland, including representatives from the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation and two Hong Kong universities, as well as executives from mainland enterprises including electric vehicle maker Li Auto. Lee first adopted this blended composition during his visit to Qatar and Kuwait in 2025, a move he said would amplify Hong Kong's "super connector" and "super value adder" roles.

In a statement on Friday, Lee said the visits to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan were fruitful, noting that beyond the signed agreements, the delegation witnessed strengthened government-level contacts between the SAR and the two Central Asian countries. He said it was also agreed that discussions will begin soon on areas including comprehensive double taxation avoidance.

The mission further deepened project matching and research collaboration, showcasing the Hong Kong SAR as a global platform, boosting exchanges through direct flights, visa extensions and educational, talent and cultural ties, and advancing a hub-to-hub model with Central Asia, the statement said.

Lee met with Kazakh President Kassym-Jomart Tokayev, Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev and other senior officials from both countries to exchange views on further cooperation.

Lee said he will actively push for extensions of visa-free access arrangements between the SAR and the two nations in the future.

The delegation arrived in Astana, Kazakhstan's capital, on May 31 for the first leg of the weeklong tour. Once there, they visited Astana Hub, the country's technology and innovation park; the Astana International Financial Centre; and Nazarbayev University, among other institutions.

The team proceeded to Tashkent, Uzbekistan's capital, on Wednesday and toured IT Park Uzbekistan, a national-level special economic zone, and the Center for Islamic Civilization.

They also attended various business events to exchange views on future plans and expectations.

Li Guanhua, senior vice-president of Li Auto, said the company aims to use Hong Kong's platform to boost its brand presence and service capabilities. She said the government-led initiative is key for Chinese brands to expand overseas, adding there is a bright future for new-energy development in the region.

Jackson Choi Chit-sze, director of Hong Kong-based conglomerate Sunwah Group, said his company is keen to partner with mainland entrepreneurs targeting Central Asia to tap the region's mineral resources, renewable energy potential and strategic location linking China and Europe.

Tursunboy Makhkamov, chief financial officer of Uzbekistan's Ipak Yuli Bank, said Hong Kong is ideally positioned to serve as a premier hub for attracting overseas finance and driving new investment in Uzbekistan. He added that Uzbekistan's rapidly growing economy and market offer strong opportunities for Hong Kong investors.

Nurken Bolatov, chief operating officer of Kazakhstan-based start-up Artisan Education, said his company has been accepted into the ideation program of the Hong Kong Science and Technology Parks Corporation, which provides up to HK$100,000 ($12,760) in seed funding for startups.

He said this will be a strong opportunity for Artisan Education to enter the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong markets.

Atlas Shao contributed to this story.

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Guangxi man survives drifting at sea for 7 days

HAIKOU — When fisherman Zheng Shizhong spotted a naked, unresponsive man floating about 10 kilometers off the coast of Chengmai county, Hainan province, on Tuesday morning, he could hardly believe the drifter was still alive.

The man, Qin Jianping, a wholesale businessman from South China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, had fallen into the sea seven days earlier during a late-night walk. He had no mobile phone, no life jacket and no supplies to sustain him.

A slip into the sea

Qin was on holiday in Haikou, the capital of Hainan, when the accident occurred. At about 11 pm on May 27, he stepped on a discarded fruit peel while walking along a seaside dam in windy weather and slipped into the waves.

"The sea is nothing like a swimming pool," Qin said. "I couldn't touch the bottom, and huge waves kept pushing me farther out. Every time I swam toward the shore, the waves pulled me back. There was no way I could return."

Although Qin knew how to swim, he swallowed large amounts of seawater and suffered cuts from coral reefs shortly after falling in.

As the tide carried him farther offshore and his strength faded, he stopped fighting the current and allowed himself to drift, hoping passing vessels would spot him at daybreak. But by the following morning, land had disappeared from view.

Two ships passed nearby that day, but neither saw him.

To conserve energy, Qin discarded his belongings, including his shoes, trousers, watch and ring. He stayed afloat by treading water and moving his arms.

"The sun scorched me during the day, but the water kept taking away my body heat," he said. "After two or three days, the sea felt as cold as a refrigerator."

After more than 40 hours without food or sleep, Qin managed to climb onto a floating buoy and briefly fell asleep, only to be knocked back into the water by a large wave.

On May 30, he climbed onto an iron navigation buoy, but the metal had been heated by the sun. After clinging to it for several hours, he returned to the water and continued drifting.

Desperate for water, Qin drank seawater and later his own urine. Neither relieved his thirst, and he began experiencing severe pain when urinating.

At night, he battled the cold and exhaustion.

"Urine is a stream of warm heat," he said. "I curled into a ball and tried to preserve every bit of warmth."

On May 31, the fifth day of his ordeal, Qin reached another navigation buoy with a foam base. Too weak to climb aboard, he clung to its side and discovered small sea crabs living in gaps in the foam.

He caught dozens of the crabs with his bare hands and ate them raw. They became his only source of food during the weeklong ordeal.

Rescue at the last moment

By the fifth day, Qin was so exhausted that he could hear ferries and trains from the shore but lacked the strength to move toward them. Severe dehydration and starvation triggered hallucinations.

"I dreamed there was a wedding in my hometown and I was helping to cook," he said. "I could barely breathe, but there was only one thought in my head: I can't die."

By the sixth day, his condition had deteriorated further. His eyes were bloodshot from exposure and dehydration, and memories of his childhood, marriage and family filled his mind as he feared death was near.

Then Zheng and fellow fisherman Fu Tingsan spotted him.

"My heart skipped a beat when I saw him," Zheng said. "But the current swept him away almost immediately."

The fishermen steered closer and found Qin floating on his back with his eyes closed. They first threw him a rope, but his vision had become so poor that he could not see it.

They then extended a 4-meter boat pole and tapped him on the back.

Delirious and barely conscious, Qin grabbed the pole. The fishermen pulled him aboard.

"I think I'm going to die," Qin said.

"You're with us now. You're not going to die," Zheng said.

The fishermen carefully gave him small sips of water rather than allowing him to drink freely, fearing further harm to his body. They rinsed his wounds with fresh water, provided clothing and massaged his stiff legs.

The return trip to the shore took about 85 minutes. Villagers were already waiting and helped contact police and medical workers while spreading information online in hopes of locating Qin's family.

Reunion and recovery

Back in Guangxi, Qin's family had been desperately searching for him.

A friend traveled to Hainan and reported him missing on May 29. Police later confirmed through surveillance footage that he had fallen into the sea.

His wife arrived in Hainan on May 31 and spent days searching along the coastline. Authorities told the family that survival beyond three days adrift at sea was highly unlikely.

"I had already accepted that my husband was gone," she said. "I filled three bottles with seawater to take home as a memento."

She was preparing to return to Guangxi when she received news that Qin had been found alive. When she saw him in the hospital, covered in scars and almost unrecognizable, she broke down in tears.

Qin was admitted to Chengmai County People's Hospital in critical condition.

Doctors diagnosed severe hypertonic dehydration, multiple infected wounds from reefs and marine life, oral ulcers caused by eating raw crabs, and internal injuries linked to drinking seawater and urine.

He lost about 10 kilograms during the ordeal, dropping from more than 85 kg to about 75 kg.

After two days of intensive care, his condition stabilized. Doctors said he was expected to be discharged within a week and should require only routine follow-up treatment.

Qin said the first thing he plans to do after recovering is visit the two fishermen who saved his life.

"No matter how dangerous or hopeless things get, if you keep a steady mind, you can get through it," he said.

XINHUA

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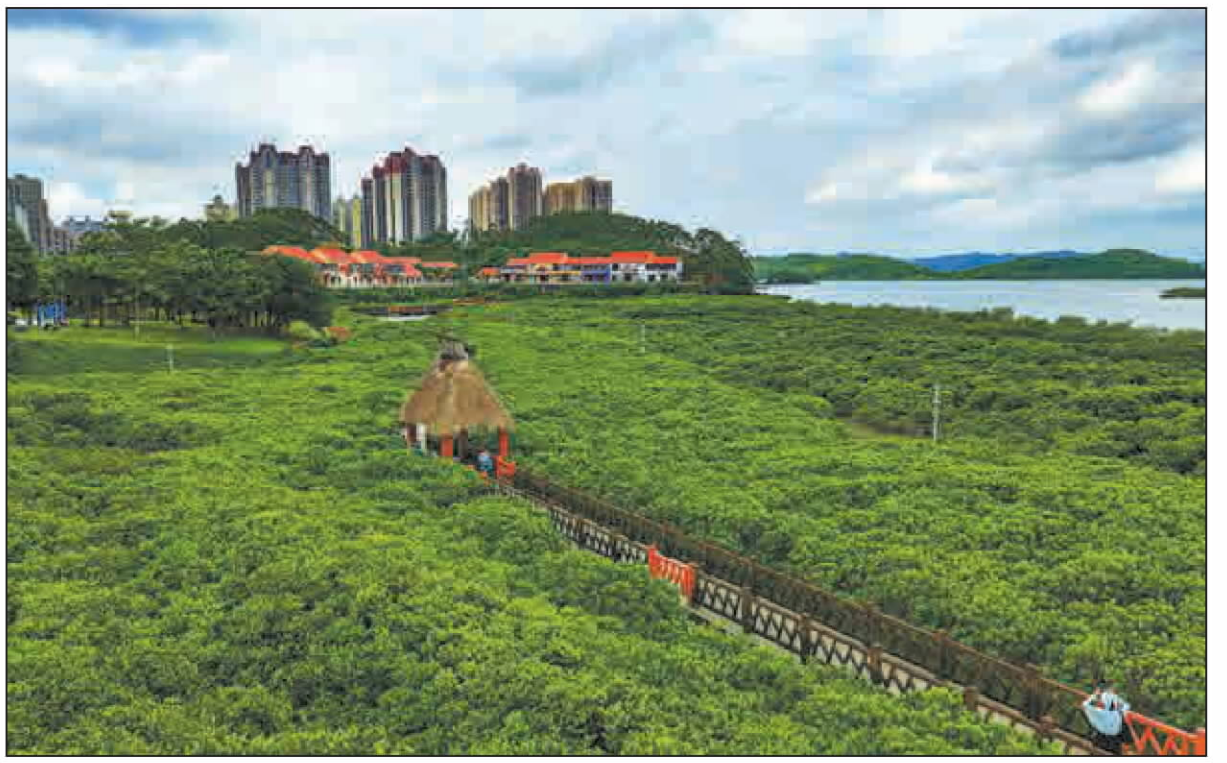

Lush mangroves thrive in Gangkou district of Fangchenggang, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, in September. LIANG JIAJU / FOR CHINA DAILY

Ecological action spurs mangrove regrowth

National push sees China reverse coastal deforestation trend









Clockwise from top left: Fishery workers load mangrove saplings onto a boat before heading to an uninhabited island in Xuwen county of Zhanjiang, Guangdong province, in December 2021. PENG ZHENQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Botanical workers plant mangrove trees in Zhanjiang in July 2024. PENG ZHENQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY
Workers set up crab pots in a mangrove swamp in Wenzhou, Zhejiang province, in July 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Waterways carve through mangroves on Donghai Island of Zhanjiang in July 2021. PENG ZHENQIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

By LI MENGHAN
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China has become one of the few countries to buck the global trend of coastal deforestation, achieving a 44 percent increase in mangrove forest area since 2000, according to the latest data from the Ministry of Natural Resources and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration.

For Xu Hechang, 38, a crab farmer who leases 53 hectares of coastal ponds in Zhanjiang in South China's Guangdong province, the rapid improvement is tangible.

"The shells of crabs raised here are harder and the meat is sweeter because of the clean water," he said.

"My family has farmed here for generations, but never at this scale. Now, with healthier mangroves, the crabs can sell for double the normal price."

The latest data shows that China's total mangrove canopy now stands at approximately 31,700 hectares, up from a low in 2000 of 22,000 hectares. The milestone establishes China as one of the few maritime nations globally to secure net-positive growth in intertidal wetlands.

China's trajectory began to diverge in the 2000s as protection efforts intensified. Progress accelerated further in the past few years after the Ministry of Natural Resources and the National Forestry and Grassland Administration rolled out a special action plan for mangrove protection and restoration (2020-25), setting targets to create 9,050 hectares of new mangroves and restore 9,750 hectares of degraded forests.

Prioritizing the protection of mangrove ecosystems, authorities banned further reclamation of tidal flats, incorporated remaining mangrove stands into ecological protection red lines and promoted tailored, science-based restoration approaches.

"Mangroves are the only woody plant communities that survive in the intertidal zones of tropical and subtropical regions — flooded at high tide and exposed at low tide," said Ding Xinyuan, an associate professor at the mangrove protection research center of the Southern Marine Science and Engineering Guangdong Laboratory (Zhanjiang).

"Despite being green, the name in Chinese translates to 'red forest', referring to their tannin-rich inner bark, which oxidizes and turns deep red when exposed to air after cutting," Ding said. "Ecologically, they are defined by their specialized aerial roots. These roots allow the trees to absorb oxygen in waterlogged mud, and some species can excrete excess salt through their leaves."

Ding said the tangled root systems act as natural nurseries, providing shelter and breeding grounds for fish, crabs and other benthic organisms. The dense roots also help purify water by slowing tidal currents, trapping suspended sediments and absorbing excess nitrogen and phosphorus from aquaculture runoff before it reaches the open sea.

"Globally, they are among the planet's most powerful carbon sinks, sequestering carbon dioxide from the atmosphere at a rate significantly higher than that of a tropical rainforest of the same area," he said.

Home to China's largest mangrove area, accounting for nearly 40 percent of the national total, Guangdong was assigned the largest share of the 2020-25 national plan: creating 5,500 hectares of new mangroves and rehabilitating 2,500 hectares of degraded forests. Yet much of its suitable intertidal land had long been converted into aquaculture ponds that supported tens of thousands of coastal households.

"The biggest challenge in restoration is not planting trees, but balancing nature with livelihoods," Ding said.

Science has offered a way forward through an integrated mangrove-aquaculture model, such as the one used by crab farmer Xu. Unlike conventional ponds that enclose all water for farming or clear all vegetation to maximize space, the approach restores ecosystems while maintaining productivity.

"We dig soil from the ponds to build islands, aiming to keep the total breeding capacity unchanged. This minimizes the impact on the yield of fish, shrimp and crabs while allowing the mangroves to breathe normally," Ding said.

He added that mangroves provide shelter for aquaculture species, purify the water and reduce disease, while nutrients and waste from the ponds serve as natural fertilizer for the trees.

Ding said his lab is exploring techniques to produce higher-value products from integrated ponds. Preliminary results include an artificial intervention method that enhances roe richness in female crabs — a trait that commands 10 times the normal market price — and the development of what is believed to be the world's first mangrove fruit wine using biological fermentation technology.

While mangrove restoration in Guangdong illustrates the balance between conservation and livelihoods, the neighboring Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region is demonstrating how mangroves can be used as protection against typhoons and storm surges.

Li Xiaoyu, an engineer with the marine bureau in Fangchenggang, Guangxi, said that during his first visit to the Hongshahuan area in 2010, the site was littered with abandoned aquaculture ponds. In 2012, an ecological seawall improvement project was proposed, selecting Hongshahuan as a pilot area.

"Mangroves are a unique ecosystem bridging land and sea. Their extensive root systems effectively reduce sediment loads in nearshore waters, while their dense yet flexible branches and trunks dissipate wave energy," Li said, adding that the restoration work capitalized on those advantages.

Completed over three years, China's first demonstration ecological seawall stretches 3.2 kilometers and features a layered structure. On the outermost tidal flats, 9,913 square meters of mangroves were planted. Moving inward, the seawall body — built with artificial reef blocks — was covered with coastal vegetation. Behind it lies a landscaped forest belt and ecological corridor.

Li said mangroves not only buffer waves and reduce erosion but also slow the solar weathering of embankments. Since its completion, the seawall has withstood more than 10 typhoons, including a severe storm in 2018 when maximum wind speeds reached 40 meters per second.

"Ten years on, the seawall remains solid. The mangroves have flourished into a verdant woodland, showcasing remarkable progress in ecological restoration," Li said.

Similar efforts have taken shape nationwide. Fujian, home to the Zhangjiangkou National Mangrove Nature Reserve, has expanded greenbelts along the Zhangjiang River estuary. Hainan province, which boasts the country's richest mangrove biodiversity, has focused on genetic research and invasive species removal. Coastal provinces have incorporated mangrove targets into their local five-year plans, helping fulfill the national blueprint.

The success reflects a broader shift in coastal governance — one led by government but supported by private capital. Environmental nonprofit, SEE Foundation, has mobilized companies to help fill funding gaps in protection and conservation across China and Southeast Asia. Partnering with the Ministry of Natural Resources' Third Institute of Oceanography, it coauthored the national standard for mangrove carbon credits, turning carbon storage into a tradable asset.

China has also shown a willingness to share its experience internationally. Efforts include building the International Mangrove Center in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, integrating mangrove conservation into the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and expanding South-South technical cooperation with mangrove-restoring countries across Asia and the Pacific.

Despite being home to only about 0.2 percent of the world's mangroves, China is demonstrating that restoration is not a choice between nature and humanity, but a synthesis of both. It is proving that even a small fraction of greenery can anchor a coastline, sustain a community and contribute to global ecological balance.

Xiamen's once polluted mudflats turned into thriving eco-sanctuary

By ZHANG YI in Xiamen, Fujian
and **HU MEIDONG** in Fuzhou

Xiatanwei Mangrove Park, the largest restored intertidal wetland in East China's Fujian province, launched a series of marine biodiversity activities this weekend to mark World Oceans Day on June 8, showcasing the site's transition from a polluted aquaculture zone into a world-class ecological sanctuary.

The three-day event features the debut of a new scientific illustrated guide on intertidal species conservation, anchoring a localized marine market that highlights what the United Nations has recognized as a global blueprint for coastal rehabilitation.

During the 1970s and 1980s, these natural intertidal flats were degraded by commercial aquaculture farms, with farming runoff destroying the native mangrove vegetation.

The turning point came in the early 2000s, when a research team led by the late academician Lin Peng, widely regarded as a pioneer of modern Chinese mangrove research, initiated a 5-hectare experimental forest on the polluted mudflats to test restoration feasibility.

Following successful trials, the Xiamen city government scaled the initiative into a comprehensive multiphase remediation campaign, restoring approximately 85 hectares.

According to data compiled by Xiamen University, the completed 85-hectare forest has fundamentally altered the local food web, triggering a large-scale return of native wildlife.

Yang Shengchang, an associate professor from the College of the Environment and Ecology at Xiamen University, said that restored mangroves function as primary producers to sustain a complex food web. This triggered a measured biological recovery, he added.

Recent data showed the park's total species richness has increased 2.4-fold compared to pre-restoration, with the biomass for fish up 2.99-fold, for shellfish up 4.76-fold, and crustaceans up 1.19-fold, according to Yang.

On the ground, when the tide recedes, the exposed mudflats reveal an active intertidal ecosystem. Large populations of fiddler crabs and mudskippers emerge across the patterned flats, creating an abundant feeding ground that draws flocks of egrets and herons down from the mangrove branches.

"In the past, this area only attracted waterbirds, but now as you walk along the boardwalk, you can observe a significant number of forest birds as well, with 76 bird species recorded so far," Yang said. "This direct influx is a clear result of environmental improvement."

As the biological community matured, the forest's physical and environmental functions multiplied. The dense root systems now serve as a vital storm barrier, while its carbon sequestration capacity was found to be two to five times greater than equivalent areas of terrestrial forests, he said.

Beyond biodiversity metrics, the park has established a distinct precedent in climate diplomacy.

A dedicated section of the replanted mangrove canopy was utilized to fully offset the carbon emissions generated during the 2017 BRICS Xiamen Summit. The initiative marked the first certified "zero-carbon" international meeting in BRICS history, earning the site its official designation as the "BRICS Carbon Neutral Forest".

Peter Thomson, the UN Secretary-General's Special Envoy for the Ocean, visited the park in 2018 and returned in 2023 during the 18th Xiamen International Ocean Week, praising it as a great example of mangrove restoration.

Since January 2023, the park's infrastructure — including an elevated 4.2-kilometer boardwalk system, five dedicated viewing piers, and island trails — has accommodated more than 3 million tourists.

The site also functions as an outdoor science classroom. Educational institutions have conducted over 500 interactive workshops there, allowing more than 150,000 students to personally observe mangrove viviparity, feel the unique breathing roots and trace intertidal wildlife.

"Young students are highly receptive to these ecological narratives," Yang said. "Whether they are exploring the elevated boardwalks, stepping directly onto the mudflats, or even getting pinched by a crab, this hands-on exploration effectively translates textbook knowledge into a lasting understanding of marine conservation."

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CULTURE

Bringing ancient philosophy into the present

Through an exhibition in Athens, great Eastern and Western thinkers merge to highlight moral commonalities and mutual learning, **Zhao Ruixue** reports in Jinan.

More than 2,000 years after Confucius (551-479 BC) and Socrates (469-399 BC) walked the Earth, an exhibition in Greece is bringing their ideas into the present, using artificial intelligence, immersive experiences and hands-on activities to bridge time, space and culture.

The exhibition, *Encounter & Enlighten: A Dialogue Across Time and Space*, which will run from Monday to Wednesday during the second World Conference of Classics in Athens, highlights the profound intellectual achievements from roughly 800 BC to 200 BC, a time that German philosopher Karl Jaspers called the Axial Age.

During this pivotal era, Eastern and Western civilizations independently produced enduring wisdom that continues to shape human thought.

"Eastern civilization gave rise to profound reflections from Chinese philosophers, including Confucians, Taoists, Mohists, and Legalists, on how to build an orderly society and establish moral norms for human relationships," says Fu Yongju, director of the Qilu Culture Research Institute at the Qilu Institute of Technology in Shandong province.

"Western civilization, meanwhile, produced the enduring wisdom of Socrates, Plato (427-347 BC) and Aristotle (384-322 BC), who explored the nature of reason, the principles of logic, and the fundamental laws of the natural world.

"Remarkably, both civilizations established institutional homes for intellectual dialogue and debate around the same time."

Plato's Academy, founded in Athens around 387 BC by the philosopher himself, became a center for philosophical and mathematical research that operated for centuries.

The Jixia Academy was located in Linzi (in present-day Zibo, Shandong province), the capital of the ancient Qi state. Funded by the Qi state and operating for more than 150 years from roughly 374 BC to 221 BC, the academy is considered China's earliest state-sponsored, privately run university.

It brought together academic schools, including Confucians, Legalists, Taoists, Mohists, and logicians who freely lectured, debated and advised rulers without holding official positions.

According to historical records, there were dozens of schools of thought during the period before the Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220), and the Jixia Academy was a central venue where these schools exchanged ideas.

This historical legacy is not just a subject of academic study in Shandong, the home of Confucius and Mencius (372-289 BC). It is being actively revived.

As part of this effort, the Qilu Institute of Technology has built the Jixia Building, which re-creates the spirit of the ancient Jixia Academy through lectures, scholarly dialogues and debates. Using digital technology and diverse artistic forms, the program enables teachers and students to experience the inclusive, free-thinking spirit.

> Hosting this exhibition in Greece is not just about presenting an equal dialogue between Chinese and Western civilizations, but also about faithfully conveying the long continuity of Chinese civilization and the essential values of Confucius ... so that the world may truly understand China."
>
> **Yang Chaoming,** a professor at the Advanced Institute for Confucian Studies, Shandong University

The Athens exhibition highlights the resonance between Chinese and Greek thinkers.

For example, a Confucian teaching — a wise person first makes their own understanding clear, and then uses that clarity to make others clear — echoes a well-known modern aphorism that education is not the filling of a pail, but the lighting of a fire.

"Both value knowledge by emphasizing the methods of education and moral cultivation," says Qi Jinjiang, a professor at the Qilu Culture Research Institute.

Similarly, Laozi's observation — humans follow the earth, the earth follows heaven, heaven follows the Way, and the Way follows what is natural — aligns with Thales' proposition that water is the origin of all things.

Both Laozi (traditionally dated to the 6th-5th century BC) and Thales (624-546 BC) sought naturalistic accounts of how things work, says Qi.

As the exhibition brings together the wisdom of East and West, its deeper significance is also being underscored by Chinese scholars.

"Hosting this exhibition in Greece is not just about presenting an equal dialogue between Chinese and Western civilizations, but also about faithfully conveying the long continuity of Chinese civilization and the essential values of Confucius and Confucianism, so that the world may truly understand China," says Yang Chaoming, a distinguished professor at the Advanced Institute for Confucian Studies, Shandong University, in Jinan.

Qi further explains that among the major schools of thought, Confucianism served as the foundation and core.

Traditionally, Confucius is said to have edited the Six Classics (including the now-lost *Book of Music*).

"These Six Classics are not merely Confucian texts, but served as the common curriculum for all the schools during the Jixia Academy period," Qi says.

Qi distills Confucian benevolence into six dimensions, each resonating with universal human values that continue to inform global ethical discussions today.

Fairness, for example, is embodied in the principle of not doing to others what one would not want done to oneself.

Development is captured in the saying: "To establish oneself, help others establish themselves; and to succeed, help others succeed." It's an early articulation of mutual benefit and shared progress that echoes modern ideas of win-win cooperation.

The Confucian understanding of democracy finds expression in the idea of harmony without uniformity, which represents the ability to hold different opinions while maintaining social cohesion.

Peace, meanwhile, is reflected in the concept of winning others over through virtue rather than force — a clear rejection of hegemony and domination in favor of a moral example.

Justice, in the Confucian framework, is summed up in the belief that the world belongs to all, a vision that prioritizes public interest over private gain.

Freedom is understood not as the absence of restraint, but as the recognition that true human flourishing requires both self-cultivation and deep respect for the dignity and development of others.

"These millennia-old ideas still possess powerful vitality today. They offer Eastern wisdom to resolve civilizational conflicts and maintain world peace," Qi says.

As the world faces unprecedented challenges, scholars say that Axial Age wisdom offers valuable insights for building a shared future for humanity.

Embracing the vision put forward by the renowned Chinese sociologist Fei Xiaotong, who called for beauty in diversity, Fu says that through equality, respect, inclusiveness, and mutual learning, different civilizations can reach consensus and achieve common development.

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Chinese schools of thought and their continuing influence



Representative figures: (from left) Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi, Han Fei, Laozi, Zhuangzi, Mozi, Sun Wu and Sun Bin. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Confucianism
Representative figures:
Confucius, Mencius, Xunzi
Core ideas: Benevolence (*ren*), righteousness (*yi*), propriety (*li*), wisdom (*zhi*), trustworthiness (*xin*).
Explanation:
Ren emphasizes harmonious relationships among people. *Yi* and *li* serve to maintain social order. *Zhi* and *xin* advocate for rational understanding and honest character.
To this day, these ideas remain widely recognized and practiced moral principles among the Chinese people.
Confucius (551-479 BC) founded Confucianism, which was spread by Mencius (372-289 BC) and Xunzi (313-238 BC), becoming a key source of intellectual freedom.
Mencius promoted benevolent governance and the idea that rulers should treat their people with kindness, a progressive concept adopted by many Chinese dynasties.
Xunzi combined Confucian propriety with Legalist law, creating the ancient Chinese tradition of using both — an innovation on the original teachings of Confucius.

Legalism
Representative figure: Han Fei
Core idea: Ruling the country by law.
Explanation:
Legalism was the school of thought among philosophers before the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) that placed the greatest emphasis on law, developing a complete set of theories and methods for its application.
Legalists regarded law as a tool for strengthening social governance, making it an effective means of maintaining social order.
Han Fei (280-233 BC) advocated integrating three key elements: law (*fa*), methods (*shu*), and authority (*shi*). He insisted that laws should be transparent, clear and specific. Rulers must possess absolute authority to ensure that laws and decrees can be effectively enforced.
Legalism exerted a profound influence on state politics, culture and morality. It has also provided important reference points for the birth and development of contemporary Chinese law.

Taoism
Representative figures:
Laozi, Zhuangzi
Core idea: The Way follows what is natural.
Explanation:
Taoism advocates following the natural laws of the universe and promotes harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. It contains profound wisdom about the natural world and the philosophy of human life, deeply influencing traditional Chinese aesthetics and ways of living.
Represented by Laozi (traditionally dated to the 6th-5th century BC) and Zhuangzi (369-286 BC), Taoism explores the relationships among nature, society and human life, emphasizing compliance with objective laws rather than forced or artificial intervention.
The Taoist concepts of "the Way follows what is natural" and "governing through non-action" should not be misunderstood as passive withdrawal from the world. Rather, they represent a dialectical unity between transcending the world and engaging with it.

Mohism
Representative figure: Mozi
Core ideas: Universal love and opposition to war.
Explanation:
Mohism advocates opposing war and pursuing peace. It calls for loving all people equally, regardless of family ties, social status or wealth. Mohists believe that the most capable and virtuous individuals should be chosen to govern the state. They oppose extravagance and waste, promote diligence and frugality, and emphasize practical action and public welfare. These ideas reflect a people-oriented philosophy and a deep commitment to peace.
Mozi (traditionally dated to the 5th-4th century BC) traveled tirelessly among the warring states to promote his anti-war doctrine. On one notable occasion, he walked for 10 days and nights to successfully prevent a war between two states.
Mozi also had deep knowledge of physics, mathematics and handicraft manufacturing. Mohist texts describe a pinhole imaging experiment demonstrating that light travels in straight lines.

The School of the Military
Representative figures:
Sun Wu (also known as Sun Tzu), Sun Bin
Core ideas: Prudence in warfare, putting people first, and subduing the enemy without fighting.
Explanation:
The school of thought focuses on military theory and practice. It represents the essence of ancient Chinese military thought, summarizing the experiences of warfare and military administration from that time.
Sayings such as "Know the enemy and know yourself, and you will never be defeated in 100 battles" reflect its emphasis on strategy, methods and tactics, combining practical military wisdom with rich dialectical philosophy.
Today, when facing problems in life, study or work, many Chinese people still draw inspiration from this school of thought.
The School of the Military does not glorify war. Instead, it advocates prudence and justice in warfare, supporting only righteous wars while opposing unjust aggression.

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LIFE





Foreign journalists and content creators enjoy their five-day trip in Henan province during an event organized by China Daily, the Information Office of the Henan Provincial Government, and Henan Daily in late May. They visited (from left) electric vehicle giant BYD's factory, Dahecun Site Museum and the headquarters of beverage chain Mixue Bingcheng. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Along China's living heartland

A journey through Henan reveals how prehistoric Yellow River settlements transformed into cutting-edge industrial hubs, reports **Thomas Jay Hopkins**.

It has been a long time since I was in primary and secondary school, but from what I remember, not much Chinese history was taught in the United States. However, one of the few things I remember learning was some chapters in my elementary school textbook that touched on early great river civilizations — Mesopotamia along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers, Ancient Egypt along the Nile River, the Indus Valley Civilization along the Indus River, and, of course, Ancient China along the Yellow River — which served as my earliest exposure to China and its history.

Little did I know, as I studied how these mighty rivers served crucial roles in the development of early human settlements, that I would one day visit Henan province, where the ever-changing Yellow River and fertile Central Plains gave birth to Chinese civilization some 5,000 to 7,000 years ago.

As part of the "Meet in Zhongyuan, Discover China Through Henan — 2026 China Storyteller Partnerships Henan Tour", I was able to explore both Zhengzhou and Luoyang to learn more about the origins of early Chinese civilization, as well as Henan's modern-day development into a manufacturing hub.

In Zhengzhou, where my trip began, a visit to the Dahecun Site Museum brought me closer to the roots of Chinese civilization than a textbook ever could. While it chronicles the earliest breaths of Yangshao culture — a vast and influential ancient culture and the first Neolithic archaeological culture discovered in China — the museum itself is less than a year old.

The museum showcases hundreds of pieces of Yangshao pottery, along with tools and other artifacts, thoughtfully displayed to guide visitors through the culture's evolution, while also incorporating immersive exhibits that take you back in time to witness scenes of ancient settlements, fishing and hunting, pottery-making and grain harvesting.

In sharp contrast, I also paid a visit to BYD's factory to learn more about its cutting-edge production lines and innovative Blade Battery design, and visited its racetrack to get an up-close look at the Yangwang U9 — a fully electric hypercar built under BYD's luxury sub-brand.

Initially, I was disappointed to learn that a professional driver would be taking me around the track. Afterward, I understood why. I climbed into the passenger seat, buckled up, and told the driver, "As fast as you can".

He said nothing. We took off and slowly made our way to the first straightaway where the drive would begin. Without a word, the driver floored the accelerator. Without a sound, I was sucked back into the seat as I watched the speedometer climb past 130 kilometers per hour in what felt like an instant.

I lost track of how fast we were going — certainly north of 200 km/h — before we started into the turns, the tires squealing and skipping as the car handled the high-speed maneuvers with ease, the seat intuitively adjusting itself to support me through it all. And just as quickly as it began, it was over.

Once again, I must put my ego aside and admit defeat. Last time, it was Fanjing Mountain in Guizhou province that made me back down before I reached its terrifyingly high summit. This time, I was humbled by the U9 and must concede that, in hindsight, it is probably a good thing a pro was behind the wheel and not me.

Had I been allowed behind the wheel, my name might have appeared in an obituary rather than at the top of this article, as I would have woefully underestimated the power of that vehicle and ended my life in a not-so-fiery — thanks to BYD's super-safe Blade Battery — blaze, well, I guess, thud of glory.



A woman stands on a robot dog during the event, which allows participants to share experiences for a deeper understanding of Chinese culture, industry and new media trends.

And I know what you're thinking, "Tom, no one is forcing you to admit these embarrassing things", and you would be right.

But, it's my commitment to the truth that makes me the intrepid journalist worthy of your admiration. Before moving on to the second leg of the trip in Luoyang, I would be remiss if I didn't mention Zhengzhou's ecological conservation efforts at Beilonghu Wetland Park.

As much as we ooh and ahh over the technological advancements of our era — electric supercars, AI humanoid robots, advanced manufacturing — just as important is the preservation of natural assets that people can enjoy and where wildlife can thrive.

The park features a wetland bird-watching area, ecological islands, flower gardens, and wooden boardwalks winding through the landscape.

In addition to providing a lovely environment where families can spend their leisure time, Beilonghu Wetland Park is also a hot spot for bird-watchers, as the park serves as a crucial habitat for migratory birds from Siberia and the Mongolian Plateau during the winter months — attracting black-headed gulls, swans, great bustards, black storks, egrets, grey herons, and rare bird species such as the Chinese merganser and the reed parrotbill.

I wish I could have spent more time there, but Luoyang called.

While the rest of the tour group visited the Luoyang Bearing Group and YTO Group Corporation to learn more about China's bearing industry and agricultural modernization, I spent the day at the Han-Wei Luoyang Ancient City Site Museum shooting a video for China Daily.

Dubbed the "Oriental Capital of Museums", Luoyang is home to more than 100 museums, which house hundreds of thousands of cultural relics. At less than a year old, the Han-Wei Luoyang Ancient City Site Museum is the city's newest addition to its ever-growing family of museums, and it is a beauty.

From its design, layout and lighting to the amazing relics on display, the museum offers a wonderful experience, which was made even more special by the kind and knowledgeable staff members who aided Russian content creator Ira Nova and me in our scavenger hunt.

We searched for the real-life relics that items in the gift shop were based on — a truly fun and unique experience.

The trip concluded with a visit to the Longmen Grottoes — a UNESCO World Heritage Site holding over 100,000 carvings of Buddhist iconography in the limestone cliffs that flank both sides of the Yi River. The carvings date back to the late Northern Wei (386-534) and Tang (618-907) dynasties — when Luoyang was the country's capital — and are a must-see.

Standing before these massive carvings and seeing the detail and character given to each figure filled me with wonder and a deeper appreciation for the beauty of life.

To me, the carvings represent the best of humanity: the human capacity to love and the lengths we will go to express it.

In this case, the Longmen Grottoes were carved to express love and worship for Buddhist figures, and while I'm not a religious man, I can appreciate the sentiment. While every city I've been to in China has its own unique character, there is a consistent thread connecting all of them: the country's commitment to marrying its economic and technological development with the preservation of its environment and culture.

Both Zhengzhou and Luoyang are no different in that regard. From the cradle of Chinese civilization to one of the country's most important agricultural and industrial bases, Henan has remained a vital part of China through the ages and a dedicated steward of its ancient history and culture.

As is always the case with these tours, they leave you wanting more. With so much more to see than could fit into five days, I'll certainly be returning to Henan in the future.

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Museums build bridges across countries

By **DENG ZHANGYU**
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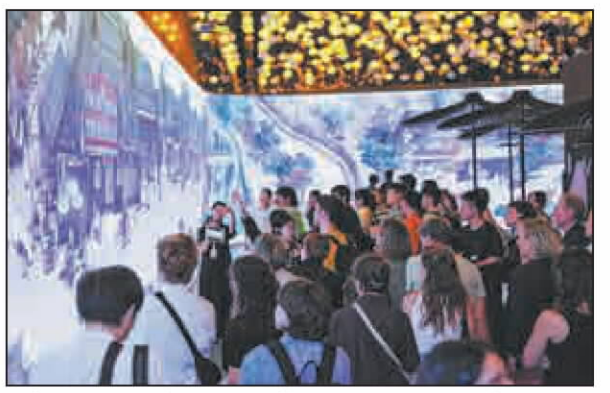
The 2026 Intermuseum BRICS+ Festival, held in Russia's capital city of Moscow at the end of May, brought together museum directors, scholars and experts from 26 countries, including Russia, China, Brazil, India, South Africa, and the UAE. Under the theme "Museum — Territory of the Future", participants explored how cultural institutions can serve as bridges between generations and technologies — and, more importantly, between civilizations.

At a forum focusing on how to help audiences understand foreign cultures, a discussion between experts from China and Russia offered fresh ideas for deeper Sino-Russian museum collaboration and the transformation of cross-cultural communication.

Both Chinese and Russian museum professionals reached a consensus during the discussions: a high-quality cross-cultural exhibition is by no means a simple transfer of exhibits or a pileup of symbols. It is a dialogue between civilizations based on deep research, two-way communication, and adaptation to local conditions.




Left: *An Era in Jinling* is inspired by an ancient painting depicting prosperous street scenes in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, which was called Jinling during the Song Dynasty (960-1279). **Right:** The 2026 Intermuseum BRICS+ Festival is held in Moscow. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Ai Lin, director of the Deji Art Museum in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, shared the case of a world tour of the digital art exhibition, *An Era in Jinling*, which is inspired by a 10-meter-long ancient painting depicting prosperous street scenes in Nanjing, which was called Jinling during the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Wearing electronic bracelets, visitors can travel back 1,000 years to experience a day in ancient China by "walking" into the 110-meter-long digital painting. They can create their own digital avatars that can interact with characters in the painting, talk to street vendors, stroke cats and dogs, and even set off fireworks.

In the past few years, the digital show has toured cities in France and the US, attracting large audiences.

Ai said that during the exhibition's international tours, in-depth research is conducted on the local culture of each host city and country, seeking points of connection and resonance between local heritage and the culture portrayed in the ancient painting.

As an example, she said that the Qinhuai River, which is depicted in the exhibition, runs through the entire city of Nanjing and carries profound historical significance. However, simply telling audiences, "This is the Qinhuai River, and it is very important", does little to create an emotional connection. To solve this, they look for an "urban mother river" in the host city of the traveling exhibition — a river that, like the Qinhuai, has supported transportation, trade, agriculture, fisheries, and a rich cultural heritage. In the case of Moscow, they found such resonance between the Qinhuai River and the Moskva River.

Ekaterina Pronicheva, director of the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Moscow, spoke highly of *An Era in Jinling*, and said that there is currently an excellent opportunity for cooperation between Russian and Chinese museums. At the moment, Russian people's interest in Chinese culture and Chinese cities is at an unprecedented high. More and more Russian audiences hope to visit famous historical and cultural cities like Xi'an in Shaanxi province and Nanjing to further explore China's rich heritage.

Ksenia Guseva, curator of the Museum of Moscow, agreed that many people in Russia are interested in Chinese culture. Previously, the Museum of Moscow hosted the exhibition *New Year in Old Beijing*, focusing on traditions during the Chinese New Year.

In February, red Chinese lanterns, along with spectacular dragon and lion dances, filled Moscow's streets, giving the city a festive Chinese New Year atmosphere that was enjoyed by locals. But Guseva found that behind the lively scenes lay a common challenge in cross-cultural communication: Russian audiences could only appreciate the visual symbols of the Chinese festival, yet knew nothing about the underlying meanings of reunion, the culture of blessings and the millennia-old folk traditions.

"Everyone loves to watch and take photos, but they cannot understand the culture behind the celebrations," Guseva said. This is a widespread problem of "surface-level communication" faced by foreign cultural exhibitions today.

Therefore, in the show *New Year in Old Beijing*, a large number of folk artworks were displayed and there were many performances of intangible cultural heritage, which explained to the audience their significance. These included why fireworks are used during Chinese New Year, at what time they should be set off, and how Chinese families traditionally decorate their homes.

"We hope that through exhibitions, the audience can truly step into the culture and realize that these cultures still exist today and continue to radiate new vitality," Guseva said.

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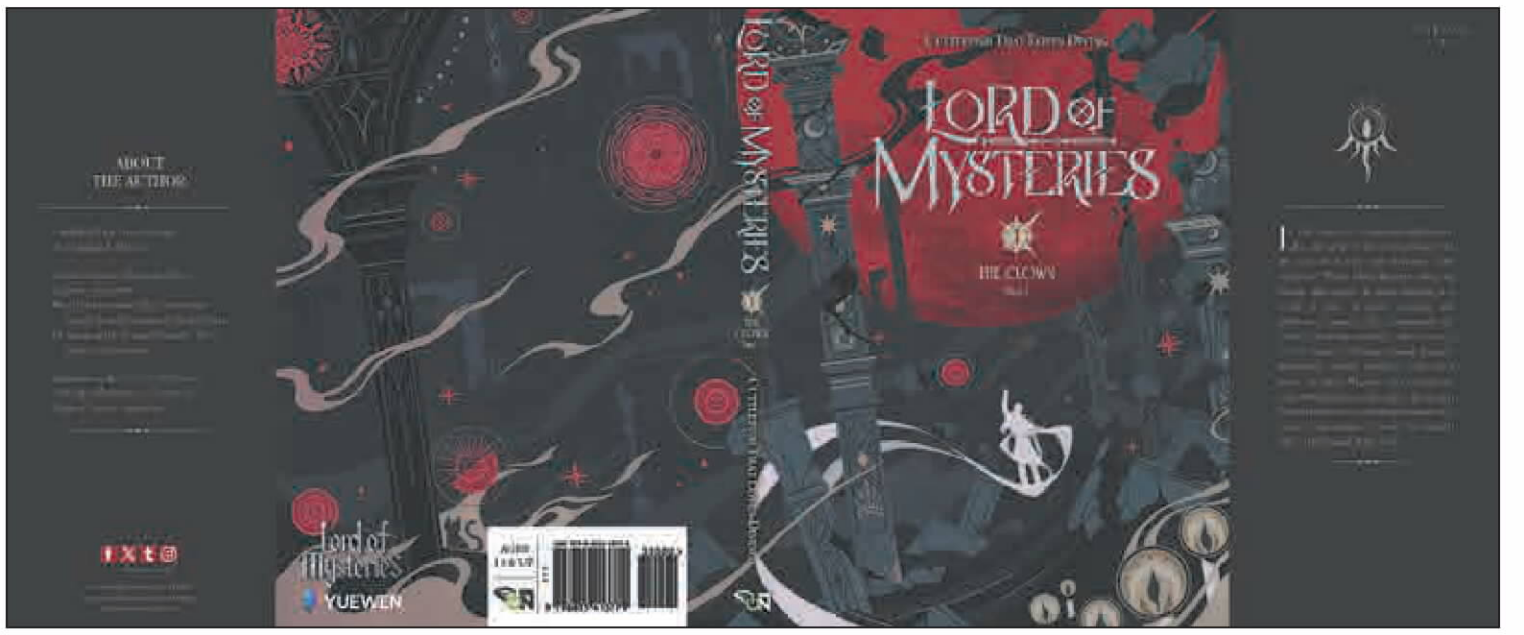
CULTURE



The cover of the English edition of *Lord of Mysteries* by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, a best-selling web novel translated and published in multiple languages.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Reinventing the martial hero

Drawing on ancient mythology and addressing modern concerns, a leading web novelist opens a new chapter in storytelling, **Yang Yang** reports.

Following the separation of the celestial and human realms, the mythical beasts, deities, and spiritual herbs described in *The Classic of Mountains and Seas*, which were said to have existed around 5,000 years ago, gradually dwindled and vanished. Over the course of three to four millennia, that vast and majestic landscape shed its mythological aura and evolved into a deeply rooted martial arts world.

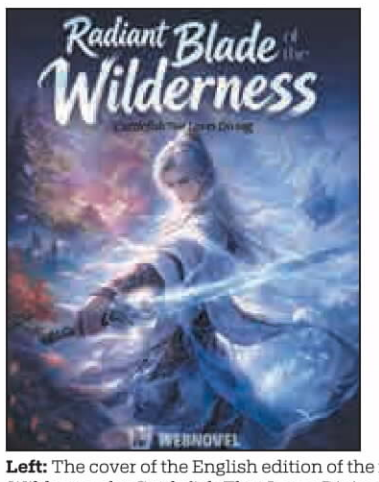
This is the setting of *Radiant Blade of the Wilderness*, the latest novel by popular web novelist, Cuttlefish That Loves Diving. He draws on the ancient myth of Zhuanxu (an ancient saint and grandson of the Yellow Emperor) and his act of "severing the connection between heaven and earth" from the Chinese ancient mythological book *The Classic of Mountains and Seas* to create a "post-classic of mountains and seas" martial arts universe.

Since serializing the novel on WebNovel on May 30, the book has quickly become the most "collected" title of the week and topped the weekly list for new translated books on the platform. It also ranked as the second most-read book of the week on WebNovel, just behind *Lord of Mysteries*, another work by the 41-year-old Cuttlefish That Loves Diving.

WebNovel, the international platform of Chinese online literature provider Yuewen Group, reaches readers in more than 200 countries and regions.

The novel was launched simultaneously on Qidian, WebNovel's Chinese counterpart. Within 24 hours of release, it topped the platform's best-seller chart, becoming one of the most talked-about titles in China's online literature market this year.

Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, whose real name is Yuan Ye, is known for his imaginative world-building and genre-blending narratives. His works span Western fantasy, Eastern Xianxia (Chinese fantasy literature), and steampunk.





Left: The cover of the English edition of the new online novel *Radiant Blade of the Wilderness* by Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, released simultaneously on Yuewen Group's domestic and international platforms. **Right:** Web novel writer Cuttlefish That Loves Diving, whose real name is Yuan Ye.

As one of the most prominent online literature writers in China, he has won multiple awards, including the Mao Dun New Talent Award, which is the online literature category of China's top literary award, the Mao Dun Literature Prize. His notable works include *Lord of Mysteries*, *Lord of Mysteries 2: Circle of Inevitability*, *Extinction Record* (originally titled Path to Immortality), and *Throne of Magical Arcana*.

Lord of Mysteries blends European and American steampunk elements with Eastern philosophical thought, exploring humanity's place in the vast and unknowable universe. The novel has been praised for transcending cultural boundaries and delivering stories with broad global appeal. On WebNovel, the English edition holds a rating of 4.85 out of 5, while its sequel is rated 4.81.

In 2024, *Lord of Mysteries* and its sequel were added to the collection of the British Library. The series has been published in nine languages, including English, French, and German, with over 1 million copies sold globally.

In the latest *Radiant Blade of the Wilderness*, the author weaves together three core threads — ancient imperial legacies, the bloodlines of mythical beasts, and shamanistic mysticism — to construct a richly layered and expansive new martial arts world.

The novel also departs from familiar online fiction conventions, particularly in its portrayal of the protagonist.

"In many web novels, characters who travel through time are usually young people. This time, the protagonist is middle-aged and has spent years working hard. After crossing over, he is no longer driven by fame or ambition. Instead, he longs for a more relaxed life of cultivation, adopting a more Zen-like and tranquil mindset," the author says.

According to him, the character reflects the outlook of many contemporary readers. After navigating life's ups and downs and the pressures of modern society, many people increasingly seek simplicity, hoping to step away from complexity and reconnect with their true selves.

"Even though it has just come out, the introduction of the main character and the first supporting character is very intriguing, and this story shows amazing promise," a reader named Wondering_pen said on WebNovel.

So far this year, Qidian has seen a wave of new releases from top authors. Paperboy, the author of *The Guardians of Dafeng*, has a new book *Lin Sheng*, which has already garnered over 500,000 pre-subscriptions. Other leading authors such as Wang Zijun, Tian Zi, and Nan Zhan Tai have also launched new projects. Additionally, I Eat Tomatoes has announced plans for a new martial arts book.

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Chinese genre fiction gains ground around the world

By YANG YANG

As overseas readers look beyond traditional images of China and seek stories that reflect its contemporary culture, history and imagination, Chinese genre fiction is finding growing opportunities on the international stage.

That trend was in focus at a literary promotion event held on May 28 at Beijing International Bookstore, where writers, publishers, translators, scholars and industry professionals from more than 20 countries and regions gathered in person or online to discuss the global prospects of Chinese historical fantasy, online literature, mystery and suspense fiction.

Coorganized by the China Writers Association and the China International Book Trading Corporation, the event featured themed discussions on "Historical Imagination and Eastern Fantasy" and "Mystery Narratives and the Enigma of Human Nature", highlighting the expanding international reach of Chinese genre literature.

In the historical fantasy and online literature session, writers including Ma Boyong, Tang Jia San Shao, I Eat Tomatoes, Cuttlefish That Loves Diving and Talking Elbow joined discussions on the growing influence of Chinese web novels abroad.

Chinese online literary works such as *Lord of the Mysteries* and *Joy of Life* have attracted significant international attention in recent years, demonstrating the appeal of Chinese storytelling and the cultural richness of genres that blend history, fantasy, and adventure.





Left: Social media blogger Olesia Ermakova shares her perspectives on contemporary Chinese culture, literature, film and social development during an international literary seminar in Beijing on May 28. **Right:** Participants attend an international literary seminar in Beijing focused on promoting Chinese genre fiction overseas, including mystery, thriller, suspense, historical fantasy and online literature.
PHOTOS BY XINHUA

Wang Zhixiang, deputy director of the China Writers Association's Online Literature Center, said traditional cultural resources are being revitalized through contemporary narratives, helping overseas readers gain a deeper understanding of Chinese culture.

Online literature has become not only a major literary form in the internet era but also an important vehicle for Chinese culture to cross borders, said Tao Yunfei, head of publishing operations at Yuewen Group.

He said the overseas dissemination of Chinese online literature has evolved into a complete ecosystem spanning literature, film, animation, games and multilingual publishing. Looking ahead, he said the industry hopes to further promote an international communication model based on "Chinese storytelling, global cocreation".

Charles-Emmanuel Dewees, cofounder of the French online literature platform Chireads, said in a video message that what most captivates international readers is the authenticity of the characters and the creativity of the authors.

"Online literature has become a universal language connecting readers from different countries and cultures," he said.

In a video address, US screenwriter, author and playwright Richard Krevolin said Chinese online literature's rich historical imagination and adventurous spirit provide abundant material for global publishing and screen adaptations.

"Literary works serve as an important bridge for cultural exchange between Eastern and Western civilizations," he said.

Mystery and suspense writers featured in the event included Lyu Zheng, Huyan Yun, Zhao Jingyi, A Yi, Cai Jun, Zijin Chen, Shi Chen and Guo Peiwen.

Xie Gang, founder of Midnight Library, China's first mystery-fiction imprint, traced the genre's evolution over the past two decades from a niche market to a mature literary category.

Scholar Zhang Yifei of Beijing Normal University said contemporary Chinese mystery fiction draws on both traditional *gong'an*, or legal case narratives, and modern international detective fiction. Through this blend, he said, the genre has developed a distinctive style that combines Chinese cultural characteristics with universal appeal.

International publishing professionals expressed optimism about the genre's overseas prospects.

In a video message, US best-selling author Douglas Preston said Chinese crime and suspense novels are attracting growing attention in Europe and North America by combining unique cultural elements with compelling storytelling. He believes the English-language market is eager to welcome more Chinese mystery writers.

Tom Chalmers, managing director of the British publishing group Legend Times, highlighted the strong global demand for thriller, mystery and suspense fiction. He said Chinese works are increasingly attracting the attention of international publishers and said stronger publishing partnerships could help bring more titles to readers worldwide.

The growing interest is also reflected in broader efforts to promote Chinese literature internationally. Zheng Lei, deputy director of the International Department of the China Writers Association, said genre fiction has become one of the brightest areas in the overseas promotion of contemporary Chinese literature.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

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SPORTS

SOCCER

Tiny Curacao is making huge history

Island country of about 156,000 residents is now the smallest, both in terms of population and land mass, to play at a World Cup



Top: Children train at the C-Stars United soccer academy in Willemstad, Curacao on May 15. **Right:** A Curacao supporter in the stands ahead of the start of the international friendly match between Scotland and Curacao on May 30. AP



Curacao players pose for a photo after an international friendly match against Scotland in Glasgow on May 30. AP

There won't be millions of people from Curacao cheering on their national team in the World Cup, because Curacao doesn't have millions of people.

Not even close.

Before the tournament even begins, Curacao has already crafted a story like none other in World Cup history. A tiny island country — autonomous territory, if you prefer — of about 156,000 residents in the Caribbean is now the smallest, both in terms of population and land mass, to make it to soccer's biggest stage. And if that wasn't enough, it's doing so under a coach in Dick Advocaat who, at 78, is about to become the oldest the tournament has ever seen.

They know what the world is probably thinking: Their country is too small, their coach is too old, they don't have a chance.

They heard all that through the qualifying process as well — and here they are.

"We have made history," Curacao defender Sherel Floranus said. "We are writing our own history, for this island."

The way they see it, they have already won.

Curacao rolled through qualifying, going 4-0-0 against Haiti, Saint Lucia, Aruba and Barbados in its opening round, then going 3-0-3 against Jamaica, Bermuda and Trinidad and Tobago in the next round to grab its spot — one of three that were available for teams from North America, Central America and the Caribbean.

Just how small is Curacao? Its first finals match on June 14 is against Germany in Houston — a city with 15 times as many people as the island. The stadium in Houston could hold about one-half of Curacao's entire population.

It has been a perfect storm to get there. First, the three host nations for this World Cup — the US, Mexico and Canada — were exempt from qualifying and were already in the tournament field. And this inaugural edition of an expanded 48-team tournament made it inevitable that there would be some surprise teams getting to the World Cup.

With odds of +250,000 against on some sportsbooks, Curacao was the longest of long shots in the field. And on the island, it does understand the reality of what that means.

"We know there is a big chance that we don't win the World Cup, but that we (made it) there ... for Curacao, a very, very, very good moment," said Remko Bicentini, a former pro player and Curacao's former national team head coach. "We are proud of that.

"It is a party for the whole of Curacao. It's a big level and all the players ... we worked years, for years, for years, very hard to get where we now are."

Curacao's sports history is sometimes masked by its Dutch ties.

The island was part of the Netherlands Antilles until October 2010, when it became a more autonomous "constituent country" of the Netherlands. The Dutch monarchy still reigns, the citizens remain Dutch nationals and the Netherlands government oversees defense and foreign affairs. And this week, Curacao's World Cup preparations are happening in the Netherlands — a nine-hour direct flight away, but a place where the team was greeted with "welcome home" signage.

The sense is clearly that the results at the tournament won't mean much. Winning a match would be magical. Tying one would be cause for celebration. Just being there, for those from Curacao, is a victory in itself.

"I always saw other countries play the World Cup," said Michael Stokkel, a policeman. "I was a fan of Brazil, but now I will be a fan of my own country. It's an incredible feeling."

He's going to the World Cup, but by himself. It's just too expensive to bring others, he said.

It's not unheard of for athletes from Curacao to compete on the international stage. The rare part here is that they're doing it actually as "Curacao". There have been unsuccessful attempts for the nation to be recognized as its own Olympic team; athletes compete in the Summer Games either for the Netherlands or as independent athletes. At the World Baseball Classic earlier this year, players played for the Netherlands.

Ozzie Albies of the Atlanta Braves, a native of Willemstad — the island's capital and biggest city — said his nation getting to the World Cup is "history for the guys and the accomplishment is super special for Curacao."

"Soccer has always been a sport we play but never made it to the World Cup," said Albies, one of three Curacao natives currently on a Major League Baseball roster. "So, to be able to do it is very, very, very special."

The Dutch are a World Cup contender with their own national team. Curacao, which will have its base camp at Florida Atlantic University in Boca Raton, Florida, when it shifts its full operation to the US in the coming days, is simply savoring its moment.

"I think it's been amazing for the whole island," said Tahith Chong, one of the national team's top players. "Just seeing how the island has lived with it and just knowing, I think that a lot of people don't know about Curacao. It loves soccer and it's quite big here. So, to be present this year at the World Cup is obviously something amazing for the island."

Blue Wave: unifying force

The hope, politically, is that the team will be a unifying force.

At 171 square miles (443 square kilometers), Curacao has roughly as much land mass as New Orleans. There are at least 125 US cities with larger populations than the entire island. Its population is about the same as Hollywood — no, not the one in California, but the city in Florida that sits between Miami and Fort Lauderdale.

Curacao's Prime Minister, Gilmar Pisas, sees this World Cup as an opportunity. The team is known as the Blue Wave — a nod to the shimmering turquoise water that surrounds the island — and blue is a theme for everything in the country, right down to the Blue Curacao liquor that is popular around the world (even though it has an orange flavor).

For the next few weeks, Pisas wants the nation to be the Blue Nation as well.

"We will become part of something larger than ourselves, something that, despite our differences, brings us together," Pisas said. "We share a single anthem and a single flag ... rather than being divided into separate camps. We are, finally, truly united. It is a project dedicated to the construction of a nation. It acknowledges that your people, and you yourself, are an integral part of this collective mission — the 'Blue Nation'."

This will not require Brenton Balentien to change much about his regular day-to-day routine.

If you see a bald, bearded, muscular man with his head and face painted blue for Curacao games, you've likely found Balentien — simply known around the island as "Blue Face". He's a longtime soccer fan who took notice of how fans in Brazil, Colombia and other places would show up at matches in wigs and elaborate costumes.

"I said, 'Curacao needs that,'" Balentien said. "Curacao is a very passive island. We watch the games and clap, sure, but we're not the kind of fans who go out there and scream for the full 90 minutes. And I said, 'No, we have to change that.'"

So, in 2015, Blue Face — someone who began chanting in largely empty stadiums and now has a huge following — was born.





Above: Curacao coach Dick Advocaat reacts during the international friendly match against Scotland on May 30. **Right:** Curacao's Juninho Bacuna poses for a selfie with fans after the Scotland match. REUTERS

He applies the paint himself before every match. He's basically a national mascot; a bartender, influencer and event organizer in real life, a soccer superfan when the paint comes out. He's become a motivational speaker, someone whose home overlooking Willemstad has Curacao's flag waving in the wind and whose car has two more flags attached to that.

"We do this for this island," Balentien said, "so the world knows who we are."

Underdog hopes to be giant

If the world doesn't know yet, they'll see soon enough.

Curacao, currently ranked No 82 in FIFA's global rankings, opens World Cup play against global power and 10th-ranked Germany. It then plays No 23 Ecuador in Kansas City on June 20 and finishes group stage play against No 34 Cote d'Ivoire on June 25 in Philadelphia.

It will be the underdog in all three matches, barring something very unusual.

No problem. The Blue Wave is coming, the pressure is off and confidence is high.

"For us, this is the biggest World Cup because our flag will be there in America," said Ricardo Martinez, a radio broadcaster who calls the matches. "Germany, watch out. Curacao is coming. We are small — but giants in the World Cup."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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CHINA DAILY

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LETTERS FROM AFAR

Young voyagers encouraged to continue quest

In reply to students, Xi urges more youths in China, US to take up baton of friendship

By **MO JINGXI** and **ZOU SHUO**

Twelve days of living and learning together in China added a new item to the bucket lists of Sun Linlin and Adrian Castillo — to explore more of each other's home country.

The journey, called "A Shared Voyage: China-US Youth Friendship Program", began in late March, when Sun and Castillo, with 18 other students, set sail from the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region aboard a research vessel and traveled via Ningbo, Zhejiang province, to Shanghai.

The 10 US students, the majority of whom had never been to China before, came to the country under the initiative proposed by President Xi Jinping in November 2023 to invite 50,000 young people from the US to visit China for exchange and study programs over the following five years.

In a reply letter dated May 23 to students participating in the program, Xi encouraged them to make new contributions to the stable, healthy and sustainable development of China-US relations.

"I am delighted to know that the students from both countries had embarked on an unforgettable friendship voyage aboard the China-US Youth Friendship vessel," Xi said in the letter, which was published on Thursday.

Xi noted that the story of China-US friendship is written by the people, and the future of China-US relations will be shaped by youths.

More than 50,000 young people from the US have visited China since the launch of the "50,000 in Five Years" initiative, achieving the target two-and-a-half years ahead of schedule, he said.

Through these interactions, young people from both countries have reached out to each other, deepened mutual understanding, forged profound friendships and opened a new chapter in friendly exchanges between the two peoples, Xi said.

Noting that young people, who are full of vitality and dreams, represent the future and hope of China-US relations and of the world, Xi called on more Chinese and US youths to take up the baton of friendship, learn from each other, progress together and become "envoys of friendship".

Sun, a master's student majoring in ocean engineering and technology at Zhejiang University, said the students came up with the idea of writing a letter to the Chinese president on the second day of the trip.

As the program was drawing to a close, the Chinese and US students finished the letter together at their hotel, thanking Xi for the "50,000 in Five Years" initiative, which provided a valuable opportunity for young people from the two nations to learn from and interact with each other.

For Sun, the initiative had been an abstract concept. It was not until she took part in the exchange program that she realized she, too, had the ability — and responsibility — to serve as a bridge of friendship between China and the US.

She said she strongly identified with Xi's message in the reply letter, in which he expressed the hope that more young people from China and the US would learn from each other and make progress together.

Castillo, a doctoral student majoring in aquatics and fisheries science at State University of New York, said that the reply letter "really is so surprising and makes our program feel very important in the greater global stage. Of course, reflecting back on our time on board, I feel as though it was the simple personal connections that made it so important to me."

Sun said that Castillo taught her the phrase "bucket list". He told her that returning to China had been added to his bucket list — whether to go hiking, try rock climbing or simply reunite with friends.

Xu Jingtong, majoring in marine science at Tongji University in Shanghai, said the reply letter brought back memories of the voyage.

Xu recalled a moment on the ship when the wind was strong and the waves high, yet the students danced on deck, exchanged gifts, waved their national flags, sang songs and shared stories about their hometowns and campus life.

"That was when I realized that although we live on opposite sides of the Pacific, we have so much in common," Xu said.

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A full-size model of an aerial vehicle is displayed on Thursday during the 2026 World Intelligence Expo at Tianjin's National Convention and Exhibition Center. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

Business leaders hail nation's intelligent manufacturing

By **ZHANG CHENXU** and **ZHOU LANXU** in Tianjin and **WANG KEJU** in Beijing

China's stepped-up push to advance intelligent manufacturing is reinforcing corporate confidence and opening broader opportunities for enterprises at home and abroad to innovate, expand and share in the growth of the world's second-largest economy, economists and business executives said on the sidelines of the 2026 World Intelligence Expo in Tianjin, which opened on Thursday and runs through Sunday.

The rise of intelligent manufacturing in China is expected to accelerate global industrial upgrading and inject fresh impetus into world economic growth, they said.

This optimistic outlook was reflected at the "CEO: Grow with China" roundtable, which was held on Thursday as part of the expo, with participation of executives from sectors ranging from green development to smart manufacturing and consumer technology.

The roundtable was jointly organized by the Publicity Department of the Tianjin Municipal Committee of the Communist Party of China and China Daily.

"China is not just a huge market — it is a global engine for innovation and manufacturing," said Rainer Kern, CFO of Karcher Greater China.

The Germany-based cleaning solutions provider sees China's complete industrial supply chain, rapid adoption of new technologies, and vast market as key strengths in the large-scale deployment of artificial intelligence across manufacturing and the real economy, Kern said.

The positive sentiment is showing as China moves quickly to create new forms of a smart economy, with this year's Government Work Report calling for advancing and expanding the "AI Plus" initiative, promoting faster application of new-generation intelligent terminals and AI agents, and encouraging large-scale commercial application of AI in key sectors and fields.

Sun Xuegong, director-general of the department of policy study and consultation at the Chinese Academy of Macroeconomic Research, said the policy push is aimed at building a broader ecosystem to support the smart economy.

"AI is rapidly expanding the production frontier and has great potential to improve efficiency," he said, adding that the initiative is expected to remain an important part of China's economic policy.

*See **Innovation,** page 3*

Australia should foster greater trust to improve ties

WORLD WATCH
By Colin Mackerras

Australia-China relations reached a low point during COVID-19, when the Liberal Party's Scott Morrison was prime minister (2018-2022). But Anthony Albanese, the Labor Party prime minister who defeated Morrison in 2022, has been much more positive in promoting good relations between the two countries.

Albanese, who visited China in July last year and had a successful meeting with President Xi Jinping, has encouraged trade, educational and cultural relations and overall people-to-people relations. The atmosphere is certainly much brighter and more optimistic than it was.

However, the role of national security is too strong in the relationship and has long diminished mutual trust.

There is a school of thought that believes mutual trust doesn't matter in a bilateral relationship. Nevertheless, a relationship with mutual trust is stronger, better and more durable than one without, and I would like to see such a relationship between Australia and China.

The fact is that many in Australia still regard China as a threat to their country's security. Under the AUKUS (Australia-United Kingdom-United States) security partnership agreement, signed in 2021, Australia agreed to buy high-class nuclear-powered submarines at the cost of up to A$368 billion ($263.6 billion) over the next three decades or so. And it is not even certain that they will be built. In my view, Australia mistakenly chooses to overrely on the UK and the US, unwisely prioritizing trust in the US to the point of sacrificing its own national sovereignty.

In May, Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi visited Australia, and extensive trade, energy and defense agreements were reached. Of course, good relations between Japan and Australia are desirable, but I am very nervous about buying military hardware from a Japan that has eroded the spirit of its postwar pacifist Constitution and constantly and unfairly criticizes China.

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JINGDEZHEN DISHES UP UNFORGETTABLE MEMORIES

Experiential and cultural tourism offerings are tempting greater numbers of visitors to China's porcelain capital

By **ZHAO RUINAN**
in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi
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For centuries, Jingdezhen in Jiangxi province has provided some of the world's finest porcelain. Today, it is drawing the world back to its kilns.

Adhamjonov Ayubkhon, a 20-year-old from Uzbekistan, arrived expecting a museum. What he found was living, breathing history and craftsmanship, baked into the rhythm of everyday life — not locked behind glass, but resting on dining tables, glinting in shop windows, lining old stone streets and spinning in the hands of young potters, shaping clay into everyday art.

"The city was amazing. Porcelain is everywhere," he said.

Now living in Nanchang, the capital of Jiangxi, Ayubkhon has visited Jingdezhen three times. During those visits, he has shaped his own cup and plate from raw clay, wandered through Jingdezhen Ceramic University and stood speechless before the treasures at Jingdezhen China Ceramics Museum.

"When I visited the university in November, I saw many students learning how to make porcelain by hand. I also tried it myself, and I liked it," he said.

At the ceramics museum, the weight of centuries settled around him. "I saw many beautiful pieces there — vases, ancient works and blue-and-white porcelain from the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). The exhibits were breathtakingly beautiful."



Canadian artist Prashant Miranda paints on clay at a studio in Jingdezhen, Jiangxi province, on April 7, 2025. SHI WEIMING / FOR CHINA DAILY

By January, the pull of the porcelain capital brought him back a third time — this time as a collector, filling his bags with souvenirs for his family and friends.

In today's Jingdezhen, faces like Ayubkhon's are no longer a rare sight.

The ancient ceramic production center is transforming into a destination where overseas visitors don't just come to admire porcelain — they touch it, shape it, paint it and carry home their own piece of the story.

Last year alone, Jingdezhen welcomed 150,800 inbound visits, a leap of roughly 40 percent from the year before. Spending by inbound tourists reached 89.96 million yuan ($13.27 million), up about 45 percent.

For many, the magic lies in moving beyond mere sightseeing and stepping into the craft.

*See **Jingdezhen,** page 3*

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INDEPTH





Left: Primary school students use foldable desks and chairs for a nap in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, on Sept 5. TAN YUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** A senior high school student takes a break in Shenyang, Liaoning province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Insomnia mirrors youth mental health struggles

Rise in sleeplessness reveals underlying anxiety, depression of younger generation, experts say

By **WEI WANGYU**
weiwangyu@chinadaily.com.cn

Cheng Jingyang sets his phone aside at midnight, closes his eyes, and waits to fall asleep. Nothing happens.

The 23-year-old student of Hangzhou Dianzi University who is finishing fieldwork in Beijing for his thesis, recently spent more than 1,000 yuan ($146) on a memory-foam "deep sleep pillow" recommended on social media. He had already cut out caffeine and set a screen curfew. None of it had worked.

"I know it probably won't fix anything," he said. "But I wanted to try at least."

His mind endlessly drifts, he said — first to his thesis, then to the job market, then to a comment a professor made weeks ago that he cannot stop replaying in his head.

"It's not that I'm not tired. My body is exhausted, but my brain won't stop. It's like a browser with 30 tabs open and you can't find which one is playing the sound," he said.

Cheng's restless nights are part of a national pattern that researchers say is slowly worsening. A new study by the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention, drawing on a nationwide survey of more than 100,000 residents conducted in 2024, found that people age 15 and above now sleep an average of just 7.24 hours a night.

Two decades ago, similar surveys put that figure closer to 7.5 hours. The drop of roughly 15 minutes sounds small, but spread across a population of 1.4 billion, the researchers warn, it adds up to a substantial public health concern.

A closer look at the numbers tells a sharper story. On average, Chinese adults now lie awake for approximately half an hour before falling asleep — a figure that climbs further among younger respondents, who tend to go to bed later, take longer to drift off, and increasingly reach for products or pills to try and fall asleep.

For many young Chinese, the findings only confirm what they already know from their own bedtime restlessness. Sleep has become a struggle — and for a growing number, a medical condition.

A 2024 white paper published by the China Sleep Research Society, which surveyed more than 10,000 people, found that college students born after 2000 spent an average of eight hours a day on screens, with many not putting their phones down until well past midnight.





Left: A physician from the sleep disorder department at Qinhuangdao Haigang Hospital, guides primary school students through sleep apnea monitoring in Hebei province on March 19. **Left below:** A college student experiences pulse magnetic sleep treatment in the sleep health management laboratory of Northeastern University at Qinhuangdao, on June 12, 2024. PHOTOS BY CAO JIANXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

> "They understand that the daytime belongs to their parents — to school, to tutoring, to adult supervision. But the night is theirs. Staying up late is the one act of self-governance they have left. It is the only territory in which they feel free. And so they expand it, night after night, at the expense of sleep."
>
> **Shi Yu,** founder of Beijing's Mentaverse Psychological Service Studio

Turning to pills

When all else fails, some of the sleep-deprived turn to stronger measures.

A 28-year-old office worker in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, who asked to be identified as Li, has been struggling with chronic insomnia for more than two years. After special pillows and supplements made no difference, he began seeking pharmaceutical help — cycling between zopiclone and zolpidem, two prescription sleep medications, and trying to find a balance between effectiveness and side effects.

"Zopiclone knocks me out, but I wake up with a metallic taste in my mouth and feel groggy the whole next day," he said.

"Zolpidem works faster, but I have read about people doing things in their sleep without remembering. That scares me," he added.

Li said he also tried traditional Chinese medicine, including herbal formulas prescribed by a TCM practitioner and a course of acupuncture sessions targeting what his doctor described as liver *qi* stagnation. The results, he said, were negligible. "I went for six weeks, but was still staring at the ceiling at 2 am."

He now takes zolpidem two or three nights a week, a pattern he knows is unsustainable but feels unable to break. "I'm not sleeping well with the pills. But I'm not sleeping at all without them," he said.

Pan Jiyang, director of the Sleep Medicine Center at the First Affiliated Hospital of Jinan University in Guangdong, said the demographic shift in sleep problems is visible at his own clinic. Sleep medicine departments, which a decade ago treated mostly middle-aged and elderly patients, are now seeing a surge of people in their 20s and early 30s. Appointments that were once easy to book are now difficult to secure, with waiting times stretching to weeks at major hospitals.

"Our department used to be one of the quieter corners of the hospital," he said. "Now it is fully booked. The age of our patients has dropped, and their conditions are often tied not to physiological decline, but to anxiety, career pressure, and emotional exhaustion."

'Constant craving'

For clinicians working with adolescents and young adults, insomnia is rarely the illness itself — it is the most visible trace of something deeper happening.

Ni Zhe, an associate chief physician at the Social Psychological Service Department of the Mental Health Center affiliated with Zhejiang University School of Medicine, also known as Hangzhou Seventh People's Hospital, said the rising visibility of sleep complaints among young patients reflects a broader deterioration in adolescent mental health. Rates of school refusal and medical leave from school have climbed sharply, he said, and both typically indicate underlying anxiety and depression.

"In our clinical work, we see three phenomena that almost always appear together," Ni said.

"Disturbed sleep, overuse of the internet, and social disconnection. They form a vicious cycle. The patient falls out of the ordinary rhythm of life — they stop eating to a schedule, they barely exercise, and then of course they cannot sleep normally either."

Ni explained that the prefrontal cortex in adolescents is still developing, and its job is to "inhibit, control, coordinate, and organize".

"When young people are exposed to high-intensity stimulation — short videos, mobile games — over long periods, the stimulation threshold rises significantly," he said. "They live in a state of constant craving, and that craving does not dissipate on its own. Daily self-regulation fails. And at night, when the body is supposed to lower that threshold in order to sleep, it resists."

Double stigma

Shi Yu, founder of Beijing's Mentaverse Psychological Service Studio, said that among the adolescents she treats, sleep disorders are almost always a surface expression of conditions that deserve direct psychiatric attention — depression, anxiety, and bipolar disorder. But many of these patients never reach the psychiatric clinic in the first place.

"A lot of children end up at sleep clinics because their parents refuse to take them to the psychiatric department where they actually belong," Shi said. "For many parents, a psychiatric visit is a double stigma — evidence of the child's illness, and evidence of their own failure as educators. They cannot accept it. So the family settles on insomnia as the acceptable diagnosis."

Shi described a second layer of the problem that she said is routinely underestimated: a generation of Chinese adolescents who have grown up chronically short of sleep, never meeting the hours recommended for their age.

"Their bodies and minds are in a prolonged state of fatigue. Insomnia is just one of many symptoms."

A third factor, she said, is how sleep has become entangled with adolescents' search for autonomy. With weekends consumed by tutoring and extracurricular activities, real social life has shrunk, and phones have filled the gap.

"They understand that the daytime belongs to their parents — to school, to tutoring, to adult supervision. But the night is theirs. Staying up late is the one act of self-governance they have left. It is the only territory in which they feel free. And so they expand it, night after night, at the expense of sleep."

The fourth factor is the atmosphere inside the contemporary Chinese household, Shi said. "There is a lot of insecurity. Repetitive drills, crowded schedules, parents who do not trust their children, children who cannot see a clear future. Internal conflict grows. Over years, this produces a subclinical mental state — not quite illness, but nowhere near health. Sleep problems settle into that space and cycle on their own."

Setting targets

Policymakers have begun to respond, and largely through the school system rather than the mental health system.

In 2021, the Ministry of Education issued a sleep management directive setting targets of 10 hours of sleep for primary school students, 9 hours for middle school students, and 8 hours for high school students, and requiring that middle schools begin classes no earlier than 8 am and primary schools no earlier than 8:20 am.

The policy was tightened in October 2025, when the Ministry of Education tied academic stress, internet overuse, and sleep deprivation to adolescent mental health outcomes. The ministry called for a national student mental health monitoring and early-warning system, "exam-free weeks" at schools, a ban on ranking students by test scores, and a requirement that all students engage in at least two hours of daily physical activity.

The effects have begun to reach classrooms. In the spring 2026 semester, a wave of schools across Chengdu, Ningbo, Nanjing, Nantong, Huizhou, and Dongguan canceled mandatory morning reading sessions and pushed arrival times later.

But researchers and clinicians caution that school-hour adjustments, while welcome, cannot resolve a crisis whose roots lie elsewhere.

Yin Fei, deputy director of the Family Education Research Institute at Nanjing Normal University, has argued that delaying school start times without meaningfully reducing academic load risks producing a generation that arrives at school later and still goes to bed just as late.

She called for a more systemic approach, including greater investment in campus mental health services, stronger regulation of work hours for young professionals, and better screening for sleep disorders — and for the psychiatric conditions behind them — in primary care settings.

For young adults like Cheng, the pillow arrived a few weeks ago. Some nights are slightly better, he said, but most are about the same.

"I think what I really need is less stress," he said. "But that's not something you can buy."

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TOP NEWS

Meeting that matters



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi meets with representatives of US strategic and business circles in New York on Wednesday, a day after he presided over a high-level meeting of the United Nations Security Council. Wang expressed hope that the participants will make more efforts to help build a constructive China-United States relationship of strategic stability and foster broader public consensus. LI RUI / XINHUA

Shenzhou XXI crew completes space mission

Astronauts hand over charge of Tiangong to Shenzhou XXIII team and prepare for return

By ZHAO LEI
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Crew members of the Shenzhou XXI mission, who have spent nearly seven months on board the Tiangong space station, will return to Earth very soon, according to a statement released on Thursday by the China Manned Space Agency.

The three Shenzhou XXI astronauts — mission commander Senior Colonel Zhang Lu, spaceflight engineer Major Wu Fei and payload specialist Zhang Hongzhang — have completed all their assigned tasks and will fly back aboard the Shenzhou XXII crew ship, the statement said.

Ground recovery personnel at the Dongfeng landing site in the Inner Mongolia autonomous region, along with other relevant systems, are preparing for their return, it added.

On Thursday, the Shenzhou XXI astronauts handed over control of the space station to their successors from the Shenzhou XXIII mission — commander and spaceflight engineer Colonel Zhu Yangzhu, spacecraft pilot Colonel Zhang Zhiyuan and science payload specialist Lai Ka-ying — who arrived at Tiangong on Monday.

A video clip published by the agency showed the two groups holding a simple handover ceremony on board the space station.

Zhang Lu said that he and his crew have been impressed by the teamwork and skills displayed by Zhu's team over the past three days, and he wished them great achievements. "We will wait for your triumphant return, and see you in Beijing," the Shenzhou XXI commander said.

In response, Zhu said that he and his crew are grateful to the outgoing astronauts for sharing every detail of their experience.

"We also appreciate your professionalism and dedication very much. You guys did your jobs very well. We will learn from your hard-working spirit and valuable experience, and will faithfully carry out our duties," he added.

The Shenzhou XXI team arrived at the space station on Nov 1 as part of China's 16th manned spaceflight and the 10th crewed mission aboard Tiangong.

Zhang Jingbo, a spokesman for the China Manned Space Agency, said the Shenzhou XXI astronauts have achieved good results in several fields, including space life science, materials science, microgravity physics, space medicine and new spacecraft technologies, with cooperation and support from scientists and engineers.

The Shenzhou XXII mission was originally designated to be a manned flight, but was changed into an unmanned emergency response mission in late November after space debris damaged the Shenzhou XX crew ship.

Jingdezhen: Ceramics center now a cultural attraction

From page 1

"Nepal also has ceramics, but the porcelain here is much richer and more colorful," said Arjun Gurung, a tourist from Nepal, who was standing inside the Ancient Kiln and Folk Customs Museum.

Under the guidance of local artisans, Gurung and fellow travelers from a Nepali tour group sat at the potter's wheel, their hands learning the quiet patience required for a lump of clay to gradually take shape.

"It was only after experiencing the process of making porcelain myself that I truly understood more about Chinese culture and history," he said.

At major scenic spots and studios across Jingdezhen, visitors are not just watching artisans paint delicate patterns on porcelain. Some are also invited to add elements from their own cultures to the craft.

A Turkish visitor, who asked to be identified only as Nikos, spent an entire afternoon in a studio learning to paint blue-and-white porcelain under the guidance of a local master.

"I tried to include an olive branch pattern in the design," Nikos said. "For me, it felt like bringing a little bit of the Aegean Sea into Jingdezhen's porcelain tradition."

Clear trends

According to the Jingdezhen Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism Bureau, inbound tourism is seeing two clear trends: Visitors are staying longer, and they are seeking deeper cultural encounters.

The city's appeal is shifting from quick photo stops to hands-on, experience-based travel.

Major inbound markets now include Malaysia, the United States, Singapore, South Korea and Japan, with independent travelers making up roughly 30 to 40 percent of overseas arrivals.

For those who return again and again, porcelain shopping has become something of a ritual.

"This is my third time in Jingdezhen, and every time I bring back dozens of porcelain items," said a tourist from Malaysia, as she carefully selected blue-and-white plates at Taoxichuan Ceramic Art Avenue. In her basket, tiny porcelain fridge magnets sat beside collectible ceramic pieces — a small portrait of how Jingdezhen's porcelain industry is touching visitors at every level, from everyday keepsakes to objects of art.

US, Iran reach deal to extend ceasefire by 60 days, but need final approval

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

The United States and Iranian negotiators have reached an agreement on a memorandum of understanding to extend the ceasefire by 60 days, but US President Donald Trump has yet to give his final approval, Axios reported citing officials.

Earlier on Wednesday, Trump threatened to "blow up" Oman, a long-term ally in the Persian Gulf, complicating delicate diplomacy in the Middle East amid fresh strikes in the region.

Trump's threat followed reports that Oman was discussing joint control of the Strait of Hormuz with Iran despite an existing US blockade of the critical maritime corridor.

Omani Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Albusaidi met with Kazem Gharibabadi, Iranian deputy foreign minister for legal and international affairs, who visited Oman this week.

Oman's Muscat Daily reported that a significant part of the dialogue was dedicated to the critical need to ensure safe and sustainable freedom of navigation through the Strait of Hormuz.

In a social media post on Monday, Albusaidi said that his discussions with Gharibabadi were good, and that they reflect the constructive nature of the Oman-Iran dialogue.

"We reaffirmed the importance of diplomatic engagement on all fronts. Oman will continue supporting efforts to reduce tension, advance peaceful regional coexistence, security and freedom of navigation," Albusaidi said in the post.

On Wednesday, the US Department of State posted a video on social media of Trump fielding questions from reporters during a Cabinet meeting in the White House.

Trump said that the Strait of Hormuz "is going to be open to everybody", emphasizing that it is part of international waters. "We'll watch over it, but nobody's going to control it. ... Oman will behave just like everybody else, or we'll have to blow them up," he added.

Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Esmaeil Baghaei slammed repeated US violations of the ceasefire, its military aggression against regions near the southern Iranian port city of Bandar Abbas, and its threatening rhetoric against Iran and other countries in the region, including Oman, Iran's semiofficial Mehr News Agency reported on Thursday.

While condemning the threatening rhetoric of US officials, Baghaei also expressed Iran's solidarity with Oman. He said that Trump's threat to destroy a United Nations member state, which "has always played a constructive, effective and responsible role in regional peace and security" and used its "noble service" as a mediator in diplomatic processes for many years, was a violation of a fundamental principle of the UN Charter, which imposes an absolute prohibition on the threat or use of force in international relations.

Baghaei said it was "also another dangerous sign of the normalization of lawlessness and bullying in international relations".

Meanwhile, the US military carried out fresh strikes overnight in Iran, targeting a military site and shooting down four Iranian one-way attack drones that posed a threat around the Strait of Hormuz, Reuters reported on Wednesday, citing a US official who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

The official said the military site that was struck was an Iranian ground control station in Bandar Abbas, which he alleged was about to launch a fifth drone.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps issued a stark warning that this US aggression against Iran would not go unanswered, Mehr News Agency reported.

The Revolutionary Guard said that it carried out strikes targeting the US air base from which the attack originated in the early hours of Thursday, and warned of a "more decisive" response to repeated acts of aggression. It added that the aggressor bears the responsibility of the consequences of its response.

The statement was issued after the IRGC Navy forced a US tanker to turn back on Thursday. The tanker was trying to "illegally cross the Strait of Hormuz after it had switched off its tracking system, despite Iran's restrictions", the news report said.

"Following a swift and decisive response by the IRGC Navy, including warning fire directed toward the vessel, the tanker was forced to stop and retreat," it added, citing another report from Iran's semiofficial Tasnim News Agency.

Mehran Kamrava, a professor of government at Georgetown University in Qatar, noted that Trump's statements do not always reflect the official US policy. "His shocking threat to bomb Oman does not appear to represent the US' formal position on the matter," Kamrava said. "Clearly, the US is getting a lot of pressure from the Arab states to ensure that there is free navigation through the Hormuz Strait."

Contact the writers at jan@chinadailyapac.com

Relations: Future of bilateral ties optimistic

From page 1

During the Sino-US summit in May in Beijing, China put forward the vision of "constructive strategic stability". That suits Australia fine. The positive stability that should emerge in China-US relations can only benefit Australia's relations with China.

Of course, there are many other positives. China remains by far Australia's largest trade partner. China's exports to Australia include electric vehicles, and this brings the potential to save a lot in fuel costs, not to mention benefiting the environment. Australia in turn sells iron ore and agricultural products to China.

But investment is not doing so well. Although China buys 30 percent of Australia's exports, it now accounts for less than 3 percent of Australia's total foreign direct investment stock, according to a report by the Australia-China Relations Institute at the University of Technology, Sydney.

Japan, on the other hand, provides 13 percent of Australia's foreign direct investment but buys only 10 percent of Australia's exports. Why the difference? Why is Chinese investment in Australia so low? One major answer is lack of trust. In other words, many consider Chinese investment a national security threat. This is ridiculous.

Fortunately, the business community in Australia is realizing how much it is missing out on by the lack of investment from China. Whether there will be an increase is uncertain, so we'll have to wait and see. I certainly hope there will be.

According to Australia's Department of Education, there were 192,225 international students from China in Australia in October last year, which was about 23 percent of the total of 833,041 international students. Of course, there is recovery from the COVID-19 days, but it could be faster. It seems that many Chinese students are choosing to stay at home and not come to Australia, because of the rising international status of Chinese universities and the greater expense of going to Australia.

On the other hand, there are some very active programs, at Australian National University and elsewhere, for Australian students to study in China. The government-funded National Foundation for Australia-China Relations is sponsoring projects to increase the knowledge that Australians, especially young Australians, gain about China. This can only be a good thing and, together with Chinese students going to Australia, can only increase people-to-people relationships between the two countries.

There are still many problems, and I am worried by the lack of trust. But the direction is definitely upward, so we should still be optimistic about the future of Australia-China relations.

The author is an Australian Sinologist and professor emeritus at Griffith University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Innovation: Application of AI in key sectors encouraged

From page 1

Dr Christoph Schrempp, vice-chair of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China's Tianjin chapter, said that China's shift toward intelligent manufacturing will reshape the business environment, as its AI capabilities are expected to mature further over the next five to 10 years.

"The speed of China's transition toward highly automated production is impressive," he said, adding that emerging technologies will create fresh room for European and Chinese collaborations.

His remarks were echoed by a survey released on Wednesday by the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China and consultancy firm Roland Berger, which showed "signs of an uptick" in confidence among European businesses operating in China.

China remains "the heavyweight champion of efficient and cost-effective supply chains", the survey said, with 75 percent of respondents saying their China-based production is more efficient than operations elsewhere.

"If you want to learn how to manage your business in a dynamic and fast-developing environment, come to China and learn from the fastest," Schrempp said.

John Markmann, president of Grundfos China, said that China serves as both a vital testing ground and a launchpad for cutting-edge industrial innovations that can benefit global markets.

Markmann, also vice-chair of the Danish Chamber of Commerce in China, North Board, said Grundfos, the Danish pump and water solutions provider, is proud to "ride this wave" by leveraging local AI talent and smart technologies to optimize manufacturing.

Chinese manufacturers are also putting these advantages into practice. Jamie Erin Wood, head of investor relations at home-robotics and smart-appliance maker Dreame Technology, said that China's long-established industrial strengths are being amplified by AI-enabled production.

Buoyed by the optimism shared by domestic and global businesses, Tianjin is also strengthening its role in advanced manufacturing, innovation and intelligent industries, supported by its industrial base and growing AI ecosystem.

Schrempp of the European Union chamber said Tianjin's AI-related industries generated more than 300 billion yuan ($44.2 billion) in operating revenue.

Li Xiang, Zheng Yiran and Li Jing in Tianjin contributed to this story.

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AMERICAFOCUS





Left: Pablo Neruda during a reading of his poems in Italy in 1963. PHOTO CREDIT: CREATIVE COMMONS. **Right:** Pablo Neruda (right) and former Chilean President Salvador Allende in an undated photo. PHOTO CREDIT: BIBLIOTECA DEL CONGRESO NACIONAL DE CHILE / CREATIVE COMMONS.

Neruda's China ties echo in a precious seashell

A special gift from Peking Museum to the famous poet points to a forgotten chapter in Sino-Chile relations.

By **JIMENA ESTEBAN**
in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Inside a main building at the University of Chile, visitors can see a seashell that carries a story far bigger than its size.

It is displayed among marine specimens linked to Pablo Neruda (1904-1973), the Nobel Prize-winning Chilean poet who famously loved seashells, describing them as "small countries of mother-of-pearl". In 1954, he donated his private collection of thousands of shells to the university.

The shell stands out for what it reveals about a time when culture often moved ahead of diplomacy.

In his memoir, Neruda describes receiving a rare shell during a visit to China: "I remember that in the Peking Museum the most sacred box of mollusks from the China Sea was opened to give me ... the *Thatcheria mirabilis*." He said it was one of only two known specimens of that particular mollusk.

Long before Chile and China established formal diplomatic relations in 1970, Chilean writers and artists were already making their own routes across the Pacific. They traveled, wrote and helped build institutions that turned curiosity into exchange. Their encounters helped shape a relationship that now runs through trade, education and tourism.

"The Chinese are among the people in the world who smile the most," Neruda, who may be Chile's most famous poet, wrote in his memoir, *I Confess I Have Lived*, published in 1974, a year after his death.

The gift of the seashell in the early 1950s tied the visiting Latin American poet to a newly founded country.

Renzo Soto, a historian and former professor who retired from the University of Chile, told China Daily in an exclusive interview that Neruda was part of a small but active group of Chilean writers and artists drawn to China well before embassies and official visits became routine.

"I don't know how widely his visits to China are discussed. There are several Chilean authors and artists who visited China before the formal establishment of diplomatic relations in 1970," Soto said.

"In the 1950s it was Neruda, Pablo de Rokha, Jose Venturelli, Gonzalo Rojas," Soto said.

The list spans different art forms and temperaments. De Rokha was a major poet with fierce politics of his own. Venturelli was a painter and activist with long ties to China. Rojas became one of Chile's leading poets. Each, in different ways, helped build early cultural contact.

Their visits came at a particular moment. The People's Republic of China was still in its early years, and knowledge of it among foreigners remained limited. Soto said that made it even more compelling for Chileans looking for new ideas in a postwar world.

"There was a genuine curiosity to learn about an ancient society that was relatively isolated and very difficult for foreigners to access," Soto said.

In 1954, Neruda published *The Grapes and the Wind*, a long work that moves through places and political causes with the voice of a committed poet. Editors and translators have noted that the poem ranges from Chile's coast to New China, using geography to imagine new nations and new futures.



A contestant makes a speech during the "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition in Santiago, Chile, on Tuesday. The Chilean final of the 25th "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign College Students and the 19th "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition for Foreign Secondary School Students were held in Santiago on Tuesday. ZHOU JIAYI / XINHUA

Before long, the exchange was working both ways. China also embraced Neruda as a major literary figure.

During his visits, he met poets such as Ai Qing (1910-1996), and the two formed a friendship. Ai later traveled to Chile and joined the writers who gathered in Chile for Neruda's 50th birthday in 1954. Their exchanges show the relationship was more than political.

Li Zhen, a poetry critic and professor at Shaanxi Normal University, said that Neruda liked Ai Qing a lot and described him as "charming" and a "prince of Chinese poets".



A contestant performs during the "Chinese Bridge" Chinese Proficiency Competition in Santiago, Chile, on Tuesday. JORGE VILLEGAS / XINHUA

"His trips to China, especially the deep friendship he formed with the poet Ai Qing, are evidence that this rapprochement was not simply a matter of political convenience but rather a genuine human bond," said Barbara Fernandez Melleda, an assistant professor at the University of Hong Kong.

Those ties soon took institutional form. In 1952, Chileans formed a Chile-China cultural association in Santiago, one of the earliest organized efforts in Latin America to build cultural links with the People's Republic. The Chilean-Chinese Institute of Culture was a prime "example of what we call 'cultural diplomacy'," Melleda told China Daily.

The institute brought together figures from across Chile's intellectual and political life, including Neruda, Venturelli, and the future president of Chile, Salvador Allende. For nearly two decades, it served as a steady meeting point for discussion, exchange and learning about China within Chile's academic and cultural circles.

"The (institute) was the concrete platform that channeled all the interest and affinity that already existed," said Melleda. "They created a legitimate space for encounter."

Neruda travelled to China in 1951 and 1957, extending his own links and those of the institute, and shaping his world view. During his last visit to China in 1957, Neruda celebrated his birthday on a cruise along the Yangtze River. Ai Qing, the head of the Chinese delegation, accompanied him on this journey.

"Neruda was never a mere repeater of slogans," Hernan Loyola, the poet's former personal secretary and a friend who edited his *Complete Works* and currently edits the Nerudiana magazine, told China Daily.

"The Neruda of the 1960s was no longer the poet who simply praised. He was a man who had learned to look with different eyes," Loyola said.

If he was able to build a bridge with China, Loyola said, "it was because his interest was genuine".

"He was not a career diplomat but a poet who had written verses dedicated to the country and had forged personal ties," Loyola said.

Neruda's legacy remains alive today.

His cultural diplomacy led to closer links between Chile and China. Those links expanded through the 1950s and 1960s. When Allende became president in 1970, he took office "with 18 years of accumulated knowledge, personal contacts and trust forged through the (institute)", said Maria Montt Strabucchi, an associate professor at the Pontifical Catholic University of Chile.

"That's why, when he took office, one of his first foreign policy decisions was to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China on December 15, 1970," Strabucchi said. "It was not an improvised or purely ideological decision: it was the culmination of a process of rapprochement that the institute had sustained for nearly two decades."

Since 1970, the economic relationship between the two countries has expanded into one of Chile's most important bilateral trade ties. Chile's trade with China had grown to about $8 billion in 2005 and exploded to almost $59 billion by 2024, according to the Chilean government. China is now firmly established as Chile's largest trading partner.

The relationship deepened further through the free trade agreement framework, under which 98.7 percent of Chilean exports now enter China with zero tariffs.

But even though trade and investment may define Chile-China ties today, it was writers and artists that laid the groundwork for the relationship long before that.

The seashell at the museum is a timely reminder that diplomacy is shaped not only in ministries, but also in poems, journeys and the stories people bring home.



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WORLD

California panelists emphasize resilience, reliability



Panelists discuss global trade, supply chain resilience and international cooperation during the centennial celebration of World Trade Week hosted by the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce in Los Angeles on Wednesday. RENA LI/ CHINA DAILY

By RENA LI in Los Angeles
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Trade and transportation leaders in Southern California said the region's ports, airports and logistics infrastructure continue to play a critical role in global commerce despite mounting geopolitical tensions, shifting trade patterns and economic uncertainty.

The remarks came during the centennial celebration of World Trade Week held in Los Angeles on Wednesday, where officials and business leaders reflected on the region's century-long role as a gateway for international trade and discussed challenges facing global supply chains.

This year's theme, "Celebrating a Century of Global Partnership, Innovation and Prosperity", highlighted the importance of trade in economic growth and international cooperation, according to Maria Salinas, president and chief executive officer of the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Panel discussions focused on how Southern California can maintain its position as a global trade and innovation hub amid disruptions ranging from geopolitical conflicts to shifting tariff policies and supply chain restructuring.

Noel Hacegaba, chief executive officer of the Port of Long Beach, said continuing instability in global trade and energy markets has added new pressures on logistics and transportation systems.

"There hasn't been a normal year in our industry for quite a while," Hacegaba said. "Every year seems to introduce a new layer of complexity."

He pointed to conflicts in the Middle East, rising fuel prices and evolving US trade policies as major factors reshaping shipping and manufacturing costs. According to Hacegaba, the ports of Long Beach and Los Angeles have worked to remain a "safe harbor" amid uncertainty by investing in infrastructure and maintaining operational flexibility.

Hacegaba said China continues to remain a major trading partner for Southern California ports even as regional supply chains across Asia become increasingly diversified.

Gene Seroka, executive director of the Port of Los Angeles, also emphasized the importance of maintaining stable international relationships and adapting to rapidly changing trade conditions.

"It's been a roller coaster, and even for the most seasoned professional, it's a lot to keep up with," Seroka said, referring to policy changes, tariffs and global market shifts.

Seroka said businesses are shortening planning horizons because of economic uncertainty, while inflation and weaker capital investment continue to affect both companies and consumers.

At the same time, he noted that long-established international relationships have helped Southern California adapt to changing trade patterns more smoothly.

Referring to recent visits to Hong Kong and cities in the Chinese mainland, Seroka said long-term international partnerships remain essential for sustaining trade cooperation and adapting to shifting global trade flows.

"The ability to really put this into another gear and get those relationships going in places where we haven't had normal trade flows has been almost seamless," Seroka said.

John Ackerman, chief executive officer of Los Angeles World Airports, said geopolitical conflicts are increasingly affecting aviation routes and transportation costs.

"The war in Iran is adding hours and hours to the journeys of the airplanes that come in and out of the airport and go to the Gulf region," Ackerman said. "That changes the economics for goods."

Ackerman emphasized the importance of maintaining resilient transportation systems and stable international connectivity.

Dilpreet Sidhu, deputy mayor of international affairs for the City of Los Angeles, said Los Angeles intends to remain a stable and reliable global trade partner despite continuing geopolitical and economic uncertainty.

"LA is going to continue to be a stable and reliable partner," Sidhu said. "We're open for business, and we will welcome the world."

Sidhu also emphasized the importance of maintaining ties with China and other international partners.

Reforms urged to AI, global governance

Foreign minister calls for enhancing voices of developing countries at United Nations

By MINLU ZHANG
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Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Thursday called for stronger multilateral cooperation on issues including United Nations reform, artificial intelligence regulation and global development.

Wang, also a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, made the remarks during a meeting of the Group of Friends on Global Governance while in New York to preside over a UN Security Council high-level meeting.

Speaking at United Nations headquarters, Wang said reforming and improving global governance is a historic mission for this generation. Such a task demands strong conviction and unremitting efforts, he said.

China's proposals for reforming and improving global governance include promoting reform and greater efficiency at the United Nations, enhancing the authority and capacity of the Security Council, advancing peacekeeping operations, and strengthening global consensus on development.

"The purpose of UN reform is to enhance the world body, not weaken it. UN reform should be led by member states and carried out in a fair, inclusive and transparent manner," Wang said.

He stressed the importance of enhancing the voice of developing countries, and small and medium-sized countries, particularly by addressing the historical injustice faced by Africa.

Wang also called for improving international human rights governance, reforming the international economic and financial system, and establishing rules for artificial intelligence governance.

"China supports the United Nations playing a central role" in preventing the widening of the digital divide and establishment of safeguards for the military application of artificial intelligence, he said.

Wang said China has proposed establishing a World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization and will host the World Artificial Intelligence Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai in July.

He also called for strengthening governance in emerging areas such as cyberspace, outer space and artificial intelligence.

The GGI is another major initiative proposed by China in September last year, following the Global Development Initiative (GDI), the Global Security Initiative (GSI) and the Global Civilization Initiative (GCI).

Wang added that Groups of Friends on Global Governance have been established in New York, Geneva and Vienna, with membership expanding to more than 60 countries.

Representatives from more than 60 countries attended Thursday's meeting, including the foreign ministers of Pakistan, Turkmenistan, Kyrgyzstan, Cuba and Zimbabwe. UN Deputy Secretary-General Amina Mohammed briefed the participants.

Wang said China will host a forum on global governance in the Xiong'an New Area in North China's Hebei province this autumn. He called Xiong'an a "city of the future" and said China hopes countries can work together there to advance global governance reform and improvement.

The meeting issued a joint communique of the Group of Friends on Global Governance calling for safeguarding the authority of the United Nations, upholding international law, strengthening solidarity and cooperation, and improving global governance.

The Group also reached consensus on five key points regarding global governance, said Wang.

He said members of the group support democratizing international relations and giving all countries equal rights to participate in and benefit from global governance, regardless of their size or level of development.

Wang said the group also supports upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, safeguarding the central role of the United Nations, practicing multilateralism, and opposing unilateralism and power politics.

Wang said all members support "reforming and improving global governance and narrowing the North-South divide to ensure that all countries share the benefits of development and that no country is left behind".

He said members also called for addressing the most pressing challenges facing the international community through concrete actions and practical results to "ensure global governance meets the needs of the times and the people".

Xinhua contributed to the story.

Egypt Special





From left: The grand opening ceremony of Red Sea Container Terminals is attended by Egyptian Prime Minister Mostafa Madbouly (ninth from left in the first row) and Egyptian Minister of Transport Kamel Al-Wazir (eighth from left in the first row). Hutchison Ports Abu Qir is built to handle the mega-vessels of the future. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Hutchison Ports boosts Egypt's development

By YUAN SHENGGAO

In line with the Belt and Road Initiative, Hutchison Ports, one of the world's leading port investors and operators, is enhancing Egypt's position as a strategic trade hub, according to the company. By operating technologically advanced terminals in the country, the company is not only advancing Egypt's Vision 2030 but also fortifying the historic 70-year diplomatic relationship between China and Egypt.

Enduring partnership

Inspired by the historical exchanges linked by the Silk Roads, China and Egypt have built a strong modern partnership. This partnership is marked by significant commercial collaboration, with bilateral trade reaching $20.79 billion in 2025. Established in 2008, the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone has become a prominent industrial hub in Egypt, hosting 185 companies with $3 billion in foreign investment and total sales of over $5.3 billion by June 2025.

Egypt's strategic location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and Red Seas, with the Suez Canal serving as a vital artery for global shipping, makes it a critical partner for supply chain reliability across Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. This, combined with a young and dynamic workforce, positions the nation as an attractive destination for investment and growth.

Terminals' modernization

With two decades of experience in Egypt, Hutchison Ports is keen to prioritize the market for further development and investment, reinforcing its support for the BRI and regional connectivity. Hutchison Ports currently manages several key terminals in Egypt, including Hutchison Ports Alexandria, Hutchison Ports El Dekheila, Hutchison Ports Abu Qir, or AQCT, Red Sea Container Terminals, or RSCT, as well as the El Dekheila Container Terminals, or EDCT.

On the Mediterranean, AQCT, developed in partnership with the Egyptian Navy, is the first terminal in Egypt to deploy a mixed-traffic fleet of autonomous trucks and electric trucks, significantly boosting operational efficiency. AQCT is built to handle the mega-vessels of the future and is well connected to major industrial zones, with 100 hectares reserved for future expansion.

At the southern entrance of the Suez Canal, the new RSCT in Ain Sokhna announced its official opening as Egypt's first semi-automated container terminal in January. This new facility marks a significant milestone in Egypt's maritime development, backed by a 30-year concession agreement with the Egyptian government, reinforcing Egypt's attractiveness for international trade and investment, according to Hutchison Ports.

RSCT is equipped with advanced remote-controlled cranes, electric internal terminal tractors and electric reach stackers to deliver faster, smarter and more environmentally friendly container services.

As part of Hutchison Ports' integrated Egypt network, the soon-to-open EDCT will enhance national container throughput, improve reliability of goods movement, and tap into smoother, lower-cost trade flows driven by improved connectivity to logistics corridors and industrial zones. In addition to remote-controlled technology and electric vehicles, EDCT will incorporate renewable energy bunkering, aiming to become a smart and green port.

Advancing the BRI

As Egypt pursues its Vision 2030 initiative, Hutchison Ports' investment portfolio of over $1.5 billion in the country is playing an important role in economic development, job creation and modernization of maritime infrastructure. These efforts align with broader national strategic interests in diversifying trade routes and strengthening global economic partnerships.

Positioned as a leading operator in Egypt's evolving logistics landscape, Hutchison Ports is committed to supporting Egypt's rapid growth and enhancing economic ties along BRI trade routes. As these investments come online, the outlook for Egypt's maritime trade remains positive with smoother trade flows and reduced operational costs, bringing greater attractiveness for Chinese businesses looking to expand their footprint across Africa and beyond.

China tariff initiative fuels export growth

By HAO NAN
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China rolled out a comprehensive zero-tariff initiative for 53 African diplomatic partners on May 1 while accelerating negotiations on economic partnership agreements to promote shared development.

The initiative makes China the first major global economy to offer unilateral, comprehensive zero-tariff treatment to all African nations with diplomatic ties to China, as well as to all least developed countries with diplomatic relations worldwide.

Egypt, the first Arab and African nation to establish diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China in 1956, has seen overwhelmingly positive responses to China's landmark zero-tariff policy.

Experts from the Political Academy Research Institute under Egypt's State Information Service said the policy transforms close political ties into institutionalized economic gains, forging an even stronger bond between China and Egypt. Amid rising global trade protectionism, China's initiative also carries significant political implications.

Egyptian officials said the policy provides a unique opportunity to boost Egypt's exports to China. It also aligns closely with Egypt's Vision 2030, the country's national development strategy, which identifies export expansion and the development of Egypt as a regional trade hub among its core goals.

The zero-tariff policy is widely viewed in Egypt as a major advantage and an institutional upgrade for future China-Egypt economic and trade relations.

Chinese economic experts said the policy not only helps African nations expand export capacity but also supports China's imports of agricultural products, mineral resources and manufactured goods from Africa. It strengthens supply chain resilience and supports China's food security and industrial productivity growth.

Statistics showed China remained Egypt's largest trading partner for a 14th consecutive year, serving as Egypt's largest source of imports and a major source of investment.

Saturday marks the 70th anniversary of China-Egypt diplomatic relations. The two countries established a comprehensive strategic partnership in December 2014 and have maintained strong bilateral relations since then.

Against a backdrop of deepening political trust and booming trade ties, industrial park cooperation has emerged as a key pillar and vivid example of practical bilateral engagement.

Located on Egypt's Red Sea coast, Ain Sokhna is home to the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone, which was approved by the Chinese government in 2008. Factory buildings line the zone while container trucks move constantly along its roads.



A view of the China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone in Egypt, 2025. YAO BING / XINHUA

Since the inauguration of its expansion area in January 2016, the zone has recorded steady growth. It hosted more than 300 domestic and international business delegations in 2024. That number rose to more than 500 in 2025, including delegations from Arab countries, Russia and Uzbekistan.

As a flagship Belt and Road Initiative cooperation project between China and Egypt, the zone has attracted a cluster of world-class companies. Jushi Egypt has helped the country become a global leader in fiberglass production, while XD-EGEMAC, a Chinese-Egyptian joint venture, has localized the manufacturing of high-voltage electrical equipment.

Those investments have helped fill Egypt's technological gaps in key industries. Their products are sold worldwide and have significantly increased Egypt's export revenue.

The zone now hosts industrial clusters in bonded logistics, new building materials, petroleum equipment, high- and low-voltage electrical appliances, machinery manufacturing, textiles, chemicals, renewable energy and household appliances.

"From just two or three initial enterprises to today's industrial agglomeration, I am filled with pride," said Nahla Emad, CEO of Egyptian TEDA Special Zone Development Company.

She said the thriving China-Egypt TEDA Suez Economic and Trade Cooperation Zone demonstrates the deepening relationship between China and Egypt, as well as the high level of trust and cooperation between the two governments.

By the end of 2025, the zone had attracted nearly 200 companies, with actual investment exceeding $3.8 billion and creating around 10,000 local jobs.

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COMMENT

Editorials

South China Sea not the arena for extra-regional actors to flex muscles

The recent incursion by the Dutch frigate HNLMS *De Ruyter* into waters around China's Xisha Islands, compounded by the violation of China's airspace by a helicopter, necessitated a firm response from the Chinese People's Liberation Army Southern Theater Command. Through verbal warnings and electronic jamming, the Chinese side effectively expelled the vessel, demonstrating its resolve to defend its sovereignty and territorial integrity.

As a spokesman for China's Ministry of National Defense said, the blatant provocation and meddling by the extra-regional country in the South China Sea deserve serious condemnation. The Dutch side's behavior infringed on China's territorial sovereignty and sea and air security, violated international law and the basic norms of international relations, undermined the peace and stability of the South China Sea, and could have caused a serious misunderstanding and misjudgment.

Yet, the latest incident was merely the tip of the iceberg. The Report on the Military Activities of Non-US Extra-Regional Countries in the Western Pacific in 2025, released on Tuesday by the South China Sea Strategic Situation Probing Initiative, paints a troubling picture. Extra-regional countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Canada and Australia, increased the frequency of their military activities in the Western Pacific last year.

The report said about 200 warships from 18 external countries operated in the region last year under the excuse of exercising "freedom of navigation" or safeguarding a "free and open Indo-Pacific", with their military aircraft flying over 20,000 sorties. One does not have to be a military expert to recognize that such a high frequency raises the risk of escalation.

The South China Sea is increasingly used as a venue for geopolitical posturing, where countries from outside the region present a show of force to align with the "Indo-Pacific" strategy of the United States with the aim of containing China.

The involvement of countries from outside the region, such as the Netherlands, is not a demonstration of naval prowess; it is a provocative act aimed at undermining the trust and cooperation that regional countries are painstakingly trying to maintain.

Extra-regional countries may not fully grasp the risks of their aggressive behavior, but their actions have the potential to set off a chain of events that escalate into conflict, which no party desires.

There is a glaring hypocrisy in the actions of these countries. While they claim their missions are about promoting "freedom of navigation" and "maritime security", their intrusion into China's territorial waters is intended to weaken international maritime cooperation. Instead of fostering a collaborative environment to maintain peace, these extra-regional actors are creating divisions and mistrust among regional countries. This divisive approach seeks to hamper efforts to build a cohesive regional framework for addressing the myriad challenges facing the South China Sea.

China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations member countries are accelerating their steps in negotiating a Code of Conduct in the South China Sea, aiming to usher in lasting peace and stability in the waters. On May 21, they convened the 26th ASEAN-China Senior Officials' Meeting on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia.

The parties attending the meeting affirmed the positive progress made in the consultations on the COC and agreed to work toward its early conclusion. To continue advancing the COC consultations, China and ASEAN countries also held the 55th meeting of the Joint Working Group on the Implementation of the Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea last week.

The provocative actions of non-regional countries in the South China Sea will only consolidate China's resolve to defend its rights and interests. If they continue the dangerous moves, the cost will be borne not only by themselves but also by regional countries.

Peace and stability in the South China Sea can only come from dialogue and cooperation, not from reckless showboating that risks tripping the wire of confrontation.

Secessionists' 'word game' belies their anxiety

Recent remarks and actions by the secessionist-minded Democratic Progressive Party authorities of China's Taiwan region once again reveal their persistent attempts to distort history, confuse public understanding and advance their separatist agenda under various guises.

From the repeated claim that "Taiwan has never been ruled by the People's Republic of China" to renewed rhetoric advocating "Taiwan independence", the essence of these moves remains unchanged: seeking to undermine the one-China principle and obstruct the historical trend toward China's national reunification.

At a recent news conference, Chen Binhua, spokesman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, reiterated the unequivocal truth that Taiwan has been an inseparable part of China since ancient times. Although the two sides of the Strait have yet to achieve reunification, China's sovereignty and territorial integrity have never been divided. The two sides of the Taiwan Strait belong to one China with the Government of the People's Republic of China as the only legitimate representative of the whole of China.

Historical facts and international law provide no room for distortion. The Cairo Declaration, the Potsdam Proclamation and United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 all confirm China's sovereignty over the Taiwan region.

Any attempt by the DPP authorities to confuse the concepts of "jurisdiction" and "sovereignty" is merely a political trick designed to fabricate a false basis for separatist activities.

The recent separatist rhetoric by Lai Ching-te, head of the DPP authorities, as evidenced by his May 20 speech marking the second anniversary of his tenure, in which he falsely portrayed his authorities as the "protector of regional peace and stability", further exposes the dangerous nature of the DPP authorities' agenda. These remarks appear to be less an expression of confidence than an anxious attempt to test the boundaries of external support, particularly from the United States.

These performances by Lai — including his brazen denial that he is pursuing "Taiwan independence" — are all reactive responses to external shifts. US President Donald Trump's recent remarks concerning the Taiwan region might have shattered the fantasy of some "Taiwan independence" seekers, as some observers say. "We're not looking to have somebody say, 'Let's go independent because the United States is backing us'," Trump said in an interview following his state visit to China from May 13 to 15. After that, the US suspended certain arms-sale arrangements to the island, leading to a sense of strategic unease among the Lai authorities.

Against this backdrop, the so-called "Formosa Alliance", a political group long advocating "Taiwan independence" on the Chinese island, issued an open letter indicating its willingness to consider participation in cross-Strait negotiations under conditions such as "Taiwan people govern Taiwan" and "a high degree of autonomy".

Such rhetoric does not represent a genuine embrace of national reunification. Rather, it reflects the growing anxiety among some separatist groups, as they realize that the space previously granted to them by external forces is narrowing. Their proposal attempts to disguise separatist intentions with new packaging while continuing to challenge the one-China principle by imposing political preconditions.

As Chen emphasized, any proposition that seeks to pursue "Taiwan independence" under the banner of "autonomy", "two Chinas", or "one China, one Taiwan", fundamentally runs counter to the shared interests of the Chinese nation. No matter how such ideas are repackaged, they cannot alter the reality that "Taiwan independence" is a dead end.

Beneath the great lengths the separatist forces go to in a bid to disguise their agenda lies a recognition that, amid the overwhelming comparative strength and development momentum of the Chinese mainland, their secessionist fantasies lack both legitimacy and practical viability.

Under the political foundation of adhering to the one-China principle and upholding the 1992 Consensus, the Chinese mainland remains willing to strengthen cross-Strait economic and trade cooperation, expand people-to-people exchanges and deepen integrated development to benefit compatriots on both sides of the Strait.

The future of Taiwan lies in China's national reunification, and the well-being of Taiwan compatriots depends on the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. No external force can stop the historical trend toward China's reunification, and no separatist scheme can shake the common aspirations of the Chinese people on both sides of the Strait.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Takeaway from Sino-German economic relations for Brussels

When Germany's Economic Affairs and Energy Minister Katherina Reiche arrived in Beijing this week with a 40-member business delegation, she carried a message Brussels would do well to heed before its Friday debate on new trade restrictions targeting China's alleged "overcapacity".

Germany, Europe's largest economy and its industrial engine, understands something increasingly lost in Brussels' geopolitical rhetoric: Europe's prosperity is deeply intertwined with China's market, supply chains and innovation ecosystem.

The European Union cannot safeguard against what it deems "unfair practices" by damaging its own export industries or blocking channels of cooperation with the world's second-largest economy. It is arithmetic. China and Germany conducted roughly 250 billion euros ($290.20 billion) in goods trade in 2025 — accounting for about 33.2 percent of China-EU trade that year, with China remaining Germany's largest trading partner for several consecutive years. Around 5,000 German companies operate in China. German investment in China exceeded 7 billion euros in 2025, reportedly up nearly 50 percent from the previous year and the highest level in four years. At the same time, Chinese investment projects in Germany surpassed those from the United States. These are the numbers of two major economies adapting to a more competitive but still mutually beneficial relationship.

Chinese Vice-Premier He Lifeng and Commerce Minister Wang Wentao used their respective talks with Reiche on Wednesday as opportunities to deepen industrial integration. Both emphasized the compatibility between China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) priorities — digitalization, green development and industrial upgrading — and Germany's Industry 4.0 ambitions and low-carbon transition.

That convergence is real. Europe's green transition, from electric vehicles to renewable energy grids, depends heavily on access to competitively priced Chinese technologies and critical materials. Reiche acknowledged what many European politicians hesitate to say publicly: China has become one of the world's major industrial and innovation centers in robotics, artificial intelligence, batteries and renewable energy. Europe can either engage with that reality or try to fence it off. Some people in Brussels seem tempted to do the latter.

The European Commission's toolbox — from expanded safeguards to broader trade-defense mechanisms and restrictions on Chinese technology suppliers — risks confusing competitiveness with protectionism. Such measures may offer short-term political advantages, but they will inflict long-term economic costs on Europe itself, especially on export-oriented economies such as Germany.

European restrictions on high-tech exports to China artificially suppress European exports while inflating the "imbalance" Brussels now condemns.

Nor should China's manufacturing strength be reduced to "overcapacity" or "subsidies". Much of the cost-performance advantage of Chinese products comes from scale, relentless competition, infrastructure efficiency and rapid innovation cycles that benefit European consumers and industries enormously at a time of high energy costs and sluggish growth.

Europe did not become a technological powerhouse by shielding itself from competition. It succeeded by embracing openness, fostering industrial ecosystems and competing vigorously. If the EU hopes to remain relevant in the ongoing tech revolution, it must rediscover that confidence rather than retreat behind regulatory walls.

That requires reciprocity from both sides. China is committed to providing a fair and nondiscriminatory business environment for European companies operating in China, something the German business leaders accompanying Reiche acknowledged. Similarly, Chinese companies deserve nondiscriminatory treatment in Europe.

Reiche's visit, following German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's earlier trip to China, suggests that Berlin still sees dialogue as preferable to confrontation. The broader EU should resist allowing strategic anxieties to override economic self-interest.

Europe does not need to agree with China on everything to trade successfully with it. But it does need to remember that prosperity, especially in difficult economic times, is usually built through win-win cooperation and managed competition, not through fear of either.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

New rule to support settled migrant workers

Editor's note: *The State Council has issued a new guideline aimed at gradually increasing basic public services for residents without a local household registration. Shi Yulong, director of the Research Center on Xi Jinping's Economic Thought, and Gao Guoli, director of the China Center for Urban Development, explained why such measures are necessary. Below are excerpts of their comments as reported by the People's Daily. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

This guideline helps better align the allocation of public service resources with the scale, structure and needs of permanent residents. It will also help rural populations who migrated to cities integrate into the urban environment.

It outlines measures across key areas such as education, housing, social security, medical insurance, employment and social assistance, addressing the pressing concerns of permanent residents without a local *hukou*. This initiative is important for promoting these people's equal access to basic public services and advancing the people-centered new urbanization strategy.

By the end of 2025, some 130 million rural migrant workers were residing in urban areas. Some of them live with their children and elderly family members. Their primary concerns are stable employment, children's education, housing and social insurance.

A large number of such people live and work in cities for extended periods while their household registrations remain elsewhere. Ensuring that they have equal access to basic public services where they live is essential for improving the quality of urbanization.

The implementation of the guideline will help stabilize these people's expectations, allowing them to settle down and pursue a promising future, thus translating the vitality generated by population mobility into stronger domestic demand.

Cities and counties that see a net inflow of population generally have sound economic foundations and abundant job opportunities. They host a large number of rural migrant workers and people moving between cities, leading to a strong demand for public services, including basic education and housing. But the supply of these services often falls short.

These regions need to balance the fairness, accessibility and sustainability of public services that are short in supply, and work toward their tiered supply. The duration of a person's employment and residence in the area should be a main criterion for the provision of these public services.

On the other hand, cities and counties witnessing a decline in their population usually have weaker industrial bases and insufficient capacity to create jobs. In some of these regions, public service resources are at risk of underutilization.

These areas should focus on forecasting the total number of permanent residents, the demographic structure and mobility trends, and on continuously improving the construction, operation and management of service facilities to ensure that resources are efficiently allocated.

Given the varying fiscal capacity and the number of migrants across regions, authorities should take proactive but measured steps when expanding basic public services to residents without local household registration. This approach will help them maximize their efforts without overstretching their resources.

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VIEWS

Hun Kim

Mobilizing private capital to scale digital infrastructure

Digital infrastructure is the backbone of economic growth, but investment in this space has been uneven.

Many developing economies are struggling to expand basic digital connectivity while preparing for the artificial intelligence era, resulting in a double digital divide: inadequate basic access for hundreds of millions, compounded by growing gaps in AI readiness.

Limited affordable broadband connectivity, unreliable digital services, insufficient access to essential devices, and unstable electricity supply are long-standing challenges faced by developing economies.

Despite increasing investment in AI infrastructure worldwide, the foundational connectivity network needed for AI readiness remains underfunded.

Internet access directly correlates with national development levels.

High-income economies have achieved near-universal internet access, at around 94 percent, but low-income countries have reached only about 23 percent. This disparity not only slows AI adoption but also exacerbates inequity by denying AI's benefits to those without basic connectivity.

Investment tends to focus on capital-intensive, top-tier digital assets such as data centers, cloud and AI infrastructure while foundational connectivity remains underfunded. This gap risks widening rather than narrowing societal and economic inequality.

Multilateral development banks should view digital infrastructure not as a discrete asset class but as an interconnected ecosystem with multiple layers: the foundational layer, the enabling layer, the cloud layer, and the application layer.

Private capital naturally gravitates toward segments with predictable demand, scalable operations and bankable returns, such as the cloud layer.

However, in rural and low-income areas, there is not enough commercial incentive for network expansion, a problem exacerbated by fragmented regulation, uncertain licensing and limited institutional capacity.

Thus, digital inclusion becomes more of a financing and coordination challenge.

Development stakeholders must structure risk frameworks that enable private capital to scale while strategically and efficiently deploying public resources to support segments currently unviable for market investment.

A credible enabling environment requires stable and transparent rules, predictable licensing and reliable legal protection.

Multilateral development banks, or MDBs, help borrowing members build this credibility by standardizing fragmented regulations, strengthening local institutional capacity and reducing political and regulatory risks.

When the enabling environment is credible and sustainable digital service demand is secured, the private sector can deliver impact at a scale far exceeding investments traditionally led by the public sector.

Without these conditions, even well-designed projects may remain unbankable, leading to underinvestment in regions with the greatest development needs.

India and Indonesia illustrate how infrastructure sequencing and capital structure design can drive inclusive digital expansion. India prioritized foundational connectivity, leveraging state-directed and quasi-public models to build nationwide infrastructure, including rural broadband access.

As market scale deepened and digital adoption accelerated, the government rolled out incentives, including long-term central tax exemptions, state electricity duty exemptions, concessional power tariffs, and single-window fast-track regulatory clearances to mobilize private investment.

This created a virtuous cycle: broad connectivity fueled adoption, adoption strengthened demand, and demand directed private capital to higher-return digital assets.

In Indonesia, where terrestrial networks incur high marginal costs to reach remote communities and project economics deteriorate rapidly beyond major urban corridors, catalytic development finance played a pivotal role in early connectivity expansion.

A notable example is the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank's non-sovereign support for Indonesia's Multifunctional Satellite Public-Private Partnership project, which connected underserved regions overlooked by commercial financiers.

As Indonesia's digital market matured, data-center expansion shifted toward more bankable sites and structured partnerships that derisked investments.

These instances show that success depends less on choosing a "one-size-fits-all" technology and more on aligning infrastructure sequencing, incentive frameworks and risk allocation across the entire digital ecosystem.

Three dimensions will shape the future of digital infrastructure scaling in Asia: expanding beyond bankable segments to close the access gap, building enabling ecosystems and enhancing collaboration between MDBs.

Robust regulatory frameworks are essential for scaling digital public infrastructure.

MDBs should align efforts to catalyze private investment, not compete with it. By pooling expertise, resources and risk appetite, MDBs can accelerate the development of bankable projects and expand access to digital infrastructure for the next billion users.

The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank adopts a layered, ecosystem-driven approach that prioritizes technology-enabled infrastructure for the AI era while advancing inclusive growth.

It supports commercially viable backbone networks, broadband expansion and data centers and attracts private investment to underserved communities.

It also partners with governments to build digital public infrastructure through policy modules and implementation templates.

Asia's digital infrastructure gap should be seen as an investable opportunity, not a cost burden.

The central problem is not a lack of investor interest in digital infrastructure but a concentration of capital in the compute layer that overshadows foundational connectivity.

To bridge this gap, it is essential to align the roles of different stakeholders.

Governments should establish credible, inclusive regulatory frameworks and strategically invest in segments unviable for market delivery.

The private sector needs to innovate and scale investments where demand exists and risks are priced transparently. MDBs have to convene stakeholders, derisk projects, and reduce transaction costs to accelerate the development of bankable projects.

With coordinated action, Asia can narrow the double digital divide and expand digital opportunities to the next billion users, unlocking inclusive and sustainable growth for decades to come.

The author is the chief partnerships officer of the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Chen Xiancai

DPP disguising separatist agenda as democracy

Taiwan leader Lai Ching-te has recently been peddling his so-called "green democracy" rhetoric.

By placing "democracy" at the center of his narrative, he is trying to inject an ideology-driven binary framework of confrontation into cross-Strait relations and the geopolitical situation in the Taiwan Strait.

This exposes his intention to involve external forces in manipulating the Taiwan question on the international stage.

A closer look at Lai's rhetoric shows that the Democratic Progressive Party's "green democracy" is essentially "Taiwan independence" in disguise.

In a recent speech, he repeatedly claimed that Taiwan stands at the "frontline of democracy", thus creating an atmosphere of confrontation across the Taiwan Strait.

By bypassing the core legal issue of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, and drawing ideological lines in the name of "democratic values", the DPP authorities are once again using their familiar tactic of attempting to "internationalize" the Taiwan question.

Lai's actions are nothing but an attempt to pursue separatism under the banner of democracy. In doing so, he hollows out the true meaning of democracy itself.

His "green democracy" rhetoric, a political trick long used by the DPP, is riddled with double standards.

The DPP authorities present Taiwan as a vulnerable party in order to win international sympathy.

For example, in his speech, Lai mentioned the so-called flight obstruction incident during his recent visit to Eswatini, using it to portray himself as a "victim" of "rule-breaking", while accusing the Chinese mainland of "interfering with civil aviation order".

But the DPP authorities ignore the fact that the international community widely upholds the one-China principle. Their attempt to create "two Chinas" or "one China, one Taiwan" is itself a challenge to the existing international order.

Lai not only unilaterally tests the red line broadly recognized by the international community, but when his attempts meet resistance, he turns around and accuses others of breaking the rules.

In other words, when rules serve its political interests, the DPP loudly calls for respect for order.

But when those same rules stand in the way of its separatist schemes, it labels them political pressure. If this is not double standards, what is?

"Green democracy" is harmful to Taiwan. In his speech, Lai dragged the semiconductor and artificial intelligence industries into political confrontation and called for the building of so-called "democratic supply chains". Technological development and global trade have always depended on market rules and comparative advantage. Yet Taiwan's core industrial strengths are now being forcibly tied to specific political camps in an attempt to build exclusive technology barriers.

This move not only violates the principles of free trade, but also drags the global semiconductor supply chain into geopolitical rivalry.

The DPP authorities claim they are contributing to global economic prosperity, but in reality they are making the global technology industry bear the cost of tensions in the Taiwan Strait.

Worse still, they are turning the economic lifeline on which Taiwan residents depend into a bargaining chip against reunification.

Using bloc confrontation to interfere with market operations will inevitably weaken Taiwan's long-term industrial competitiveness. In the end, it is the Taiwan economy and residents of the island who will pay the price.

"Green democracy" is also deeply hypocritical. Lai loudly promotes Taiwan as a "beacon of democracy" and talks about "freedom", but since taking office, the DPP authorities have deliberately stirred up social conflict and division on the island.

They have even imposed "green terror" on groups and individuals who support cross-Strait exchanges, dialogue and peaceful development.

By creating social division and targeting political opponents, the DPP is seeking to consolidate its power base.

The outside world can see the true nature of its so-called "green democracy". Once the rhetorical disguise of Lai's "green democracy" is stripped away, the historical context of cross-Strait relations is clear, and the direction of development is beyond doubt.

The one-China principle is the political foundation for peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. Once this foundation is removed, no amount of military equipment or "democracy" rhetoric can bring lasting security to Taiwan.

People on both sides of the Taiwan Strait are bound by blood. Only by promoting the peaceful development of cross-Strait relations and deepening integrated development in various fields can the real interests of Taiwan residents be served.

Separatist schemes that go against the trend of history have no realistic support. Blind faith in external promises and polished rhetoric will ultimately collapse before the tide of history.

It is time for the DPP's "green democracy" farce to end.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

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China-Serbia ties a good example for the world

The five-day state visit to China by Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic from May 24 to 28 was the best reflection of China's diplomatic principles, including the long-standing Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence — mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity, mutual non-aggression, non-interference in internal affairs, equality and mutual benefit, and peaceful coexistence.

The grand reception Vucic received in Beijing shows that China is committed to treating all countries, regardless of size, with equal respect.

This was further highlighted when President Xi Jinping awarded Vucic the Friendship Medal at the Great Hall of the People, the highest honor bestowed on foreign nationals by China.

Vucic is a deserving recipient of the medal for his significant contributions to promoting China-Serbia friendship and advancing bilateral ties.

The medal is also an appreciation for Serbia's independent foreign policy as a sovereign nation in international affairs.

Having spent nearly seven years in Brussels covering the European Union, I understand the pressure Serbia faces from the EU.

Maintaining an independent foreign policy that does not fully align with Brussels is challenging for any national leader, especially for Serbia, an EU candidate country since 2012.

Unlike some other major powers, China has never interfered in the internal affairs of Serbia or any other country, always treating them with full respect and equality.

Unlike many EU leaders, Vucic has consistently urged diplomatic solutions to end the Russia-Ukraine conflict. He has also advocated closer cooperation with China.

He used Serbia's positive experience to illustrate how the partnership with China has brought concrete benefits to ordinary people, workers and families.

It sends a clear message to other European countries that de-risking or protectionist strategies do not serve anyone's interests.

During my visits to Serbia, I witnessed the active participation of Chinese companies in the construction of the Belgrade-Budapest railway and various other infrastructure projects.

The more than 20 cooperation documents signed this week between the two governments will take bilateral cooperation to a higher level.

The two countries aim to tap the huge potential by aligning China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) and the Serbia 2030 national development agenda.

Unlike some other major powers, China has never interfered in the internal affairs of Serbia or any other country, always treating them with full respect and equality.

The same principle is reflected in China's decision to grant zero-tariff treatment from May 1 to exports from 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

It is worth noting that the agreement signed between China and Serbia to promote the implementation of China's four global initiatives — on global development, global security, global civilization and global governance — is extremely significant not just for the two countries but also for the entire world.

These initiatives aim to rally the international community to address many acute challenges facing the world today and make it a better place for every country.

That is also why Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi, in his address at a meeting of the United Nations Security Council in New York on Wednesday, emphasized the need to reinvigorate global development cooperation to strengthen mobilization, and revitalize global governance platforms to enhance their capacity for effective execution.

It's no secret that China and Serbia are quite different in culture, history, religion, political systems, and the size of their territory, population and economy.

They are also more than 7,000 kilometers apart. But that does not prevent the two countries from developing a strong mutually beneficial relationship based on equality and mutual respect.

It's a partnership that serves as an exemplary model of international relations.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

Editor's note: *The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategic Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.*

GAO HAIHONG

Transition of finance

Cooperative efforts are required to build a diverse and stable international monetary system

In 1971, former US president Richard Nixon closed the gold window, effectively ending the Bretton Woods system and absolving the United States of its obligation to convert dollars into gold at a fixed rate. This marked a pivotal shift in the global monetary landscape. That same year, former US treasury secretary John Connally's famous remark, "The dollar is our currency, but your problem", reflected Washington's confidence in the dollar's dominant position, despite long-standing criticisms from Europeans.



The early 1970s saw the first major test of the dollar's dominance with the onset of floating exchange rates, which introduced significant uncertainties. However, the dollar retained its supremacy, bolstered by strong network externalities and the US military and political influence.

Today, the dollar accounts for 57 percent of official foreign exchange reserves, down from 70 percent more than two decades ago, albeit at a gradual pace. The dollar still dominates the global foreign exchange market, as it is involved in 89 percent of transactions (on "net-net" basis) and holds a 51 percent share of the global payment system. It also remains preeminent in international banking loans and debt securities markets.

However, the dollar system faces mounting challenges. The US debt crisis undermines the dollar's status as a safe asset, and policies such as the US administration's "America First" have further shaken its credibility. The "triple whammy" of falling US Treasury bonds, stock markets and the dollar index in early April 2025 highlighted the vulnerabilities of the dollar's safe asset status. Increasing geopolitical risks and trade fragmentation further signal the unsustainability of the dollar's dominance, prompting a shift toward diversification.

First, non-dollar currencies are gaining significance in the international reserve system. The euro, as the second-largest international currency, is seeing increased calls for developing euro-denominated sovereign bonds, especially as rising defense expenditures boost the euro financing market. This could challenge the long-standing inertia that there is "no alternative to the dollar".

Non-traditional reserve currencies such as the Australian dollar and the Canadian dollar are also rising, while the renminbi is gaining ground, particularly in trade finance. The recent preference for gold underscores the confidence crisis facing the dollar system.

Second, geoeconomic factors are influencing currency networks. The fragmentation and restructuring of trade relations are creating new opportunities for currency choice, potentially shifting third-party currency pricing to local-currency settlement.

Third, in the payment system, low-cost transactions will no longer be the dollar's exclusive domain. New payment platforms and regional payment systems are increasing network choices, and the rapid development of digital currencies is transforming the payment ecosystem.

The transition period for the international monetary system is fraught with potential crises and disruptive currency competition, threatening global economic and financial stability. As the US retreats from multilateral systems, a leadership vacuum is emerging in the international monetary system, raising the specter of the Kindleberger Trap — the risk that the existing world power lacks the ability, while the ascendant power lacks the will, to provide the world with vital public goods, such as a stable anchor for the international monetary system.

In the 1930s, the collapse of the gold standard and power transitions between the United Kingdom and the US led to monetary chaos, attributed by Charles Kindleberger to a lack of international leadership. Joseph Nye later used the Kindleberger Trap in 2017 to discuss US-China power dynamics.

Currently, the Federal Reserve acts as the global lender of last resort. Despite its policies being US-centric, the Fed plays a crucial stabilizing role during crises. Its actions in providing liquidity and initiating dollar swap lines are vital tools for mitigating liquidity crunches and stabilizing markets.

Today's international monetary system shows similar danger signs. While the Fed maintains its leadership in providing global financial stability, its future willingness is uncertain. In January 2026, 10 national monetary authorities, including the European Central Bank, and the Bank for International Settlements issued a statement supporting the Fed, emphasizing central bank independence as a cornerstone of price, financial and economic stability. This reflects global concerns about financial stability. The Fed's absence would destabilize the dollar system.

Avoiding international monetary chaos requires enhanced cooperation and more countries providing global financial stability as a public good. Central banks need to take joint action, which remains a viable option for maintaining financial stability despite its challenges. Since 2008, the People's Bank of China has signed over 40 bilateral currency swap agreements, which enable it to play a larger role in supporting global financial stability.

Moreover, international financial cooperation should strengthen the Global Financial Safety Net, a multi-layered network of international financial institutions, regional financial arrangements and central bank currency swaps, so as to maintain global financial stability during turbulent times.

In conclusion, the international monetary system is at a crossroads, with opportunities and risks unfolding at the same time. Embracing change and fostering cooperation to build a diverse and stable international monetary system is the direction for the years ahead.

The author is the director of the Research Center for International Finance at the Institute of World Economics and Politics, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY



ZHANG YUJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

LIU YUANLING

A global strategic awakening

The transition to green energy must be understood not as a cost but as an investment in stability, independence and long-term prosperity

The global energy crisis is driven not by a scarcity of resources but by a dangerous reliance on a geopolitically volatile fossil fuel system. Europe's vulnerability — a result of passive dependence on imported hydrocarbons — has turned energy insecurity into a recurring crisis, with households and industries bearing the brunt of price volatility and supply chain disruptions. This is not merely a market inefficiency; it is a structural flaw in the architecture of modern economies. The transition to new energy is, therefore, no longer only a climate policy option, but a strategic imperative for national and economic security.



Through platforms such as the Belt and Road Energy Ministerial Conference and the International Forum on Energy Transition, China has released initiatives such as the Suzhou Vision 2030 for Global Energy Low-Carbon Transition and Development, promoting an open and inclusive international energy market order.

Unlike fossil fuels, whose supply chains are hostage to choke points and political instability, as can be seen in the Strait of Hormuz, renewable energy offers a paradigm of inherent resilience. Sunlight requires no naval escorts; wind power is not subject to embargoes. By investing in and scaling these technologies, nations can reclaim energy sovereignty, insulating themselves from the zero-sum geopolitical contests that have long defined resource competition. The shift is already underway: Every installed solar panel and every commissioned wind farm reduces exposure to external volatility and strengthens domestic industrial foundations.

The evidence is clear. Countries that have moved decisively to deploy renewables are not only cutting emissions — they are building more resilient, self-reliant and economically competitive societies. The green transition, therefore, must be understood not as a cost but as an investment in stability, independence and long-term prosperity. In a world of mounting uncertainty, new energy is the only credible answer to the oldest question of how to secure a nation's future.

Amid this global strategic awakening, China's choices and actions stand out. China's energy endowment — "rich in coal, poor in oil, and short on gas" — is both an objective reality and a constraint it must face. As a country where oil dependence on imports has long exceeded 70 percent, China's sensitivity to energy security is self-evident. However, instead of pinning its hopes on geopolitical gambles, China has pursued its own path of green transformation with unwavering strategic resolve. As a result, China's energy mix can now be updated to "rich in coal, poor in oil, short on gas, but abundant in green power".

China has become a leading force in the global energy transition, boasting comprehensive advantages in installed capacity, technological sophistication, industry chain control and market application. Led by wind and solar photovoltaic, China's new energy installed capacity and power generation rank first in the world, placing it in an absolute top tier all by itself. Since the beginning of the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, China has built the world's largest and fastest-growing renewable energy system. By the end of 2025, China's total installed capacity of wind and solar power reached 1.84 billion kilowatts, 3.4 times that of 2020, surpassing thermal power for the first time in history. The share of wind and solar power in total electricity consumption reached 22.2 percent, providing strong support for the green and low-carbon transition of China's energy structure.

What is even more commendable is that China is not only expanding its volume but also strengthening its quality. China's new energy industry has achieved a historic leap from running alongside global leaders to taking the lead, building the world's largest and most complete new energy industry chain. Offshore wind turbines and blade lengths are the largest in the world, and photovoltaic conversion efficiency has repeatedly broken world records. Over the past decade, the global average cost per kilowatt-hour for wind and solar PV projects has fallen by over 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively — a feat made possible in no small part by China's new energy industry. From PV modules to electric vehicles, China's products have been exported to more than 200 countries and regions, offering affordable solutions for the world's energy transition.

Looking ahead, China will continue advancing along the path of its green transformation drive. The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) states that during this period, China will continue to increase the share of its new energy supply, promote a safe, reliable and orderly substitution of fossil fuels, focus on building a new-type power system and develop a strong energy nation. It aims to establish green and low-carbon production and lifestyles, achieve its carbon peak goal on schedule, and build a clean, low-carbon, safe and efficient new energy system.

Energy security is a vital component of national security. The strategic thinking underpinning China's energy strategy is to hold the "rice bowl" of energy firmly in its own hands. On this basis, China has actively advanced its green transition and achieved remarkable accomplishments, reflecting a profound strategic philosophy with Chinese characteristics.

First, leveraging its socialist market economy, mega-scale market, complete industrial system and its ability to "pool resources to accomplish major tasks", China has achieved coordinated green transitions across energy, industry, transportation, urban and rural areas.

Second, by focusing on breakthroughs in key technologies such as new energy development, energy storage and carbon capture, utilization and storage, China is fostering a green and low-carbon industry as a new engine of economic growth. This has nurtured the "new trio" of exports — new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products — as new growth poles.

Third, China emphasizes that the green transition must simultaneously advance carbon reduction, pollution control, green expansion, and economic growth, while coordinating ecological protection, livelihood improvement, job creation and common prosperity. It avoids a one-size-fits-all approach or sacrificing development.

Fourth, as the world's largest developing country, China has built the world's largest and most complete new energy industry chain. It supplies 80 percent of the world's PV modules and 70 percent of its wind power equipment, and through South-South cooperation, it supports other developing countries in enhancing their climate resilience.

The green transition is not a zero-sum game but a new opportunity for global cooperation. Through platforms such as the Belt and Road Energy Ministerial Conference and the International Forum on Energy Transition, China has released initiatives such as the Suzhou Vision 2030 for Global Energy Low-Carbon Transition and Development, promoting an open and inclusive international energy market order.

The author is an assistant researcher at the Institute of American Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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BUSINESS

Chinese firms in Gulf focus of new biz ties

Ewpartners, Sohar International Bank team up with $1b deal signed in Oman

By **REN QI**
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Enhanced financial connectivity and localized support are becoming increasingly vital for Chinese enterprises deepening their presence in the Gulf region, a trend expected to unlock massive cross-border market opportunities, experts said.

As cross-border businesses transition from early-stage market expansion to a new phase of supply chain localization, project construction, local operations and long-term financing, the financial support required by these enterprises has become more diversified. It extends beyond basic account opening or settlement to comprehensive scenarios such as cross-border supply chain finance, project financing and multicurrency capital management.

> "Our partnership with Sohar International Bank strengthens Ewpartners' local financial cooperation platform in Oman."
>
> **Jerry Li,** founder and managing partner of Ewpartners

Highlighting this shift, Sohar International Bank and Ewpartners — formerly known as eWTP Arabia Capital — recently signed a strategic partnership agreement in Oman. The collaboration, expected to generate over $1 billion in financial cooperation, aims to fill this market gap by combining Ewpartners' Asia-Gulf cross-border investment network with Sohar International Bank's local banking capabilities to facilitate cross-border business flows.

"Our partnership with Sohar International Bank strengthens Ewpartners' local financial cooperation platform in Oman," said Jerry Li, founder and managing partner of Ewpartners.

"By combining Sohar International Bank's banking capabilities with Ewpartners' Asia-Gulf investment network, we can better support our portfolio companies, ecological partners and industrial projects, while helping Oman's financial ecosystem participate more deeply in the commercial flows of the Asia-Gulf region."

Li said the decision to launch this partnership in Oman is consequential. Facing the Arabian Sea and connecting to Indian Ocean shipping routes, Oman's ports — including Sohar, Duqm and Salalah — are located outside the Strait of Hormuz, offering a natural logistical alternative when regional transit risks rise. Meanwhile, Oman has long maintained political stability and neutral diplomacy, providing an open trade environment for cross-border enterprises through the US-Oman Free Trade Agreement, the Pan-Arab Free Trade Area and connections to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) market.

As Oman attracts foreign investment and builds industrial clusters relying on its ports, free trade zones and industrial parks, its value as a stable node and regional platform for Chinese enterprises entering the Middle East market is further highlighted.

The collaboration will initially prioritize Ewpartners' portfolio companies and partners. Ewpartners will be responsible for connecting enterprise needs and providing industry localization experience, while Sohar International Bank will offer financial services such as trade settlement, project financing and local capital management. The two parties said they will bridge the gap through corporate financing, project financing, trade financing, private credit and structured financing, while exploring sectors including logistics, industrial assets and income-generating real estate.

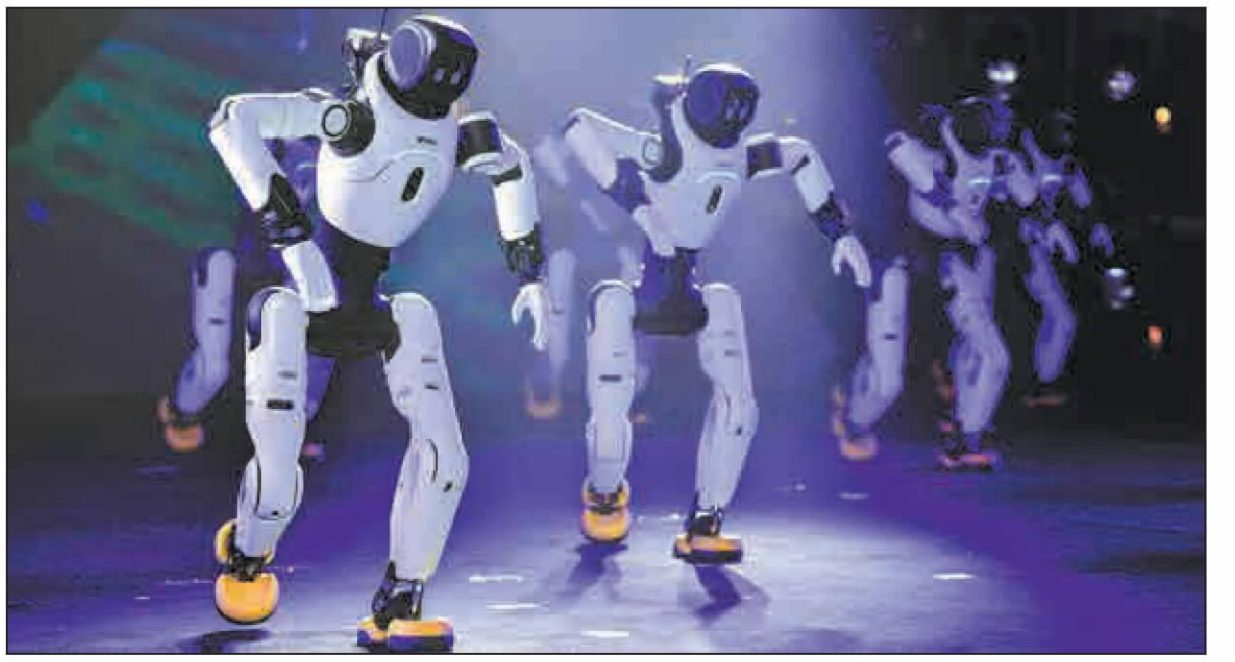
Abdul Wahid Mohamed al Murshidi, CEO of Sohar International Bank, said the partnership reflects a shared vision to enhance financial connectivity between Oman, the broader Gulf region and the rest of Asia. The joint effort will support enterprises, industrial projects and trade flows, reinforcing Oman's role as a regional platform for commercial connectivity, he said.

In April, Sohar International Bank received approval from the Hong Kong Monetary Authority to establish its first overseas representative office, while Ewpartners opened its Hong Kong office in May 2024. In the future, the cooperation between the two parties will extend from Oman to Hong Kong, further connecting with the Chinese market.

Ewpartners has been proactively establishing its presence in Oman since 2023. In 2024, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), together with the Future Fund Oman, committed $150 million as cornerstone investors in Ewpartners' US dollar fund, focusing on advanced manufacturing, renewable energy and the biomedical industry.

By the end of the same year, Ewpartners invested in the United Solar Polysilicon project in Sohar, Oman, with a total investment of $1.6 billion. In November, Ewpartners established its second Middle East office in Muscat, adjacent to the OIA and other core institutions.

Popping routine



Humanoid robots perform a synchronized routine at the Intelligent Robot Carnival, which kicked off Thursday evening at the Tianjin Cultural Center in Tianjin's Hexi district. Held on the sidelines of the 2026 World Intelligence Expo, the four-day carnival, running through Sunday, features cutting-edge humanoid robots from leading Chinese manufacturers such as Unitree Robotics and Galileo. As a core component of the 2026 WIE, the carnival is designed to bring cutting-edge robotic technologies to the general public, integrating exhibition zones, robot sports competitions and immersive interactive experiences for visitors of all ages. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Weixin Pay, PayPal tie up on payments

By **CHENG YU**
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Tencent said on Wednesday that United States users of PayPal will be able to pay at tens of millions of Weixin Pay merchants across China by scanning QR codes, marking one of the most extensive integrations yet between China's mobile payment ecosystem and foreign digital wallets.

The integration between Tencent's cross-border platform TenPay and US fintech firm PayPal marks one of the first large-scale international applications of China's unified cross-border QR code gateway system.

Under the partnership, US PayPal users visiting China will be able to pay directly at Weixin Pay merchants nationwide using familiar PayPal wallet accounts, without opening Chinese bank accounts. The service will initially launch for US PayPal users before expanding to other markets in phases, Tencent said.

The partnership will run through China's unified cross-border QR code gateway — a payment infrastructure system designed to standardize links between domestic and overseas wallets.

Otto Williams, senior vice-president of PayPal and regional head for PayPal World's Middle East and Africa, said: "China is home to one of the world's most sophisticated digital payment ecosystems, and for international travelers, the ability to pay seamlessly is integral to the experience of being here. Through PayPal World's partnership with TenPay Global, we are committed to ensuring international visitors can enjoy seamless payments using a wallet they already know and trust."

Tencent said the launch is part of a broader inbound payment service enhancement initiative built around product upgrades, overseas wallet integration and multilingual services ahead of the upcoming APEC.

Daniel Hong, vice-president of Tencent's fintech group, announced a series of measures including a 90-day waiver of the 3 percent international card transaction fee for first-time users linking overseas bank cards, covering daily spending of up to 1,000 yuan ($139).

Tencent also said Weixin Pay's in-app payment guidance has been expanded into 16 languages including English, Korean, Thai, Russian, Spanish and Arabic, while multilingual offline service desks have been established at Shenzhen, Guangdong province, airports, border checkpoints, hotels and major commercial districts.

Tencent said overseas transactions through Weixin Pay rose nearly 80 percent year-on-year between January and April.

Dong Ximiao, chief economist at Merchants Union Consumer Finance and deputy director of the Shanghai Institution for Finance and Development, described the coordination of the two major payment platforms' services as a landmark moment for China's cross-border payments infrastructure.

"The launch of Weixin Pay support for PayPal users in China, beginning with US users, is a symbolic event in the interconnection of China's cross-border payment systems," Dong said.

He said the unified cross-border QR code gateway, which launched trial operations in July 2025 under guidance from China's central bank and other authorities, solved a long-standing fragmentation problem in China's digital payments sector.

Previously, overseas wallets and Chinese payment systems had to negotiate and connect individually, resulting in high technical costs and inconsistent standards, Dong said.

"The PayPal integration marks a substantive shift from simple interconnection toward actual interoperability in China's cross-border payment infrastructure," he added.

Rockit apples to blossom in nation

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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China has become Rockit's largest global market, accounting for more than half of the brand's total revenue, Grant McBeath, global CEO of New Zealand's miniature apple brand Rockit, told China Daily in an exclusive interview.

McBeath added that the company will continue to channel its core resources and highest-quality produce to the Chinese market going forward.

"China is the key pillar in our global growth strategy," said McBeath, noting that it is the world's largest and most dynamic apple market with consumers who have an exceptional eye for quality and taste. "We focus our energy, innovation and resources to provide our best-quality apples to the China market."

Rockit now operates eight growing regions worldwide, ensuring year-round fresh supply to over 30 countries and regions.

Industry data underscore the high-stakes strategic opportunity. According to Beedata, an agriculture data provider, China accounts for over 50 percent of global apple consumption. New Zealand Trade and Enterprise (NZTE) 2025 annual data show China's apple imports surged 24 percent year-on-year to 1.84 billion yuan ($271 million) last year, with New Zealand dominating about 81 percent of the market.

Rockit alone accounts for about one-third of New Zealand's apple exports to China, leading the imported apple segment. To deepen the brand's presence in China, Rockit has launched its largest-ever brand upgrade.

From May 21 to Sunday, the brand opened its limited-time immersive pop-up "Rockit Every Moment" at Yuyuan Road in Shanghai, and officially announced popular idol Wang Yibo as its global brand ambassador.

"Rockit is a consumer brand, not a commodity apple brand. We take inspiration from other consumer categories, inject creativity into every link, and break through category limits to amaze people," said Julian Smith, Rockit's global marketing general manager.

He further proposed the core "Consumer Art" strategy to address the homogenization pain point in the agricultural industry. According to Smith, Chinese consumers are highly digitally savvy, more sensitive to brand authenticity and content innovation than most markets, and have a growing demand for healthy eating and quality consumption.

"This positioning helps us reach younger consumers and redefine choices for health-conscious Chinese consumers," he added.

As Zhang Chitao, general manager for Rockit Greater China, explained, Wang Yibo was chosen for his healthy, athletic image that aligns with the Rockit brand, as well as his cross-industry influence that will significantly boost brand awareness.

The online conversion data following Wang's appointment has validated Rockit's localized digital marketing strategy, while the offline pop-up combined with online social sharing has effectively amplified the brand story.

"We always align with local cultures and lifestyles, becoming an approachable brand that understands consumers. This is the core of Rockit's 'Consumer Art' strategy," Smith added.

Zhang further detailed Rockit's on-the-ground layout and future plans in China. On the channel front, the brand has established deep strategic partnerships with leading domestic fruit retailers including Pagoda, Goodfarmer and Fruitday, with over 20,000 local distribution stores nationwide.

While consolidating its core position in first- and second-tier cities, Rockit is accelerating its expansion into smaller cities through wholesale channels, Zhang said.

Over the next three to five years, the brand will roll out nationwide roadshows and in-store tasting events, paired with omnichannel exposure on platforms such as Douyin and Xiaohongshu to enhance brand awareness and household penetration, Zhang added.

McBeath also outlined that the brand might launch new products in the future, but for now, they would focus on expanding the miniature apple's market presence by increasing consumer trial rates, boosting household penetration, expanding store coverage across China, and launching new packaging formats and innovative marketing campaigns.

"Once consumers taste our apples, they will make repeat purchases," McBeath said.

Beverage companies thirsty for expansion

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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Chi Forest, one of the fastest-growing beverage companies in the country, has started construction on its seventh wholly owned production facility, a move aimed at bolstering its supply chain nationwide and boosting delivery to central and western regions of the country.

The plant, based in Xuchang, Henan province, was launched with an agreement signed on Wednesday. Covering 223 *mu* (14.9 hectares), the project represents a total investment of over 1 billion yuan ($147.5 million).

The facility is expected to enhance the company's logistics response in Henan and neighboring regions, expand the logistics radius to within 300 kilometers, and reduce the reliance on deliveries from production units in other regions, Chi Forest said.

The expansion comes two months after the company opened in Xianning, Hubei province, a 200 million yuan "one-stop R&D innovation test base" — a 20,000-square-meter facility dedicated to research, pilot production and product incubation.

The center integrates laboratories, mini-factories and pilot lines, allowing the company to validate innovations such as liquid nitrogen fresh-lock processing and non-artificial coloring before scaling them across production.

The Xianning base serves as Chi Forest's innovation center. Its pilot lines can switch among 11 major beverage categories and 49 subcategories, enabling rapid validation of new products and technologies.

Since the launch of its factory program in 2019, Chi Forest has opened six smart manufacturing plants across China. The addition of the Xuchang plant completes the company's supply chain footprint nationwide.

Chi Forest's product portfolio spans sparkling water, electrolyte water, traditional Chinese medicine-inspired herbal tea, iced tea and vitamin water, with sales extending across China and exports to more than 40 countries and regions in Europe, North America and Southeast Asia.

So far, the company has invested nearly 8 billion yuan in infrastructure projects to bolster its manufacturing and research and development.

"The new facility allows Chi Forest to consolidate its competitive advantage in high-quality beverage production and rapid regional response," said Wang Pu, co-founder of Chi Forest.

Beating the heat



Medical workers from a Shanxi provincial hospital provide free health screenings for frontline railway employees at Taiyuan North Railway Station on Wednesday. As a key freight hub handling over 150 daily trains and critical summer thermal coal shipments, the station launched the initiative to enhance workers' health awareness and ensure safe operations amid rising temperatures that can push rail surfaces to nearly 50 C.
GAO LI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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BUSINESS



People visit an exhibition of innovative achievements during the 2025 World Computing Conference in Changsha, Central China's Hunan province, on Nov 20. DING CHUNYU / XINHUA

China monetizes computing power via tokens

Wuxi building 'token factory', taking lead to accelerate AI services into market

BEIJING — Behind every artificial intelligence breakthrough lies raw computing power. China, staying true to its characteristically pragmatic approach, is now racing to industrialize it.

Recent developments offer a striking glimpse of this trend. In Jiangsu province's Wuxi — a manufacturing powerhouse near Shanghai — electronics firm HON-Flex signed an agreement with the local government to build what they call a "token factory". Days later, China Telecom and China Mobile, the country's two telecom giants, began selling "token packages" directly to consumers, with entry-level plans starting at just 9.9 yuan ($1.46) a month.

The ambition runs deeper than merely expanding data centers and stockpiling AI accelerators. China is methodically converting computing power into measurable and priceable commodities — much like water, electricity or bandwidth. By leveraging the vast subscriber networks of traditional telecom operators that already reach billions of users, this push is poised to accelerate AI services into the marketplace.

Wuxi is helping serve as the physical anchor for this shift. HON-Flex has declared it will build a large-scale, high-performance supernode computing cluster in the city, powered by domestic chips and models.

This industrial-scale facility, which is built on AI accelerator clusters and combines power supply, liquid cooling systems, high-speed networks and large model inference optimization technologies, is intended to mass-produce AI tokens, the fundamental units of large language model output.

The "token factory" will initially deploy four Huawei Ascend 384 supernode servers, each packing the computing power of Ascend 384 AI accelerator cards.

The bureau of science, technology, industry and information technology of Wuxi National High-tech District said the new "token factory" will directly provide low-cost and high-efficiency intelligent computing power services to AI enterprises in Wuxi and the broader Yangtze River Delta region. Meanwhile, it will drive the agglomeration of chip adaptation businesses, model optimization industries and industrial application sectors in the city.



Visitors view supernode servers at the debut exhibition area for computing infrastructure and applications during an event in Tianjin on March 18. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

The project utilizes green power generated in Northwest China's Qinghai province, with an abundance of solar and wind power. Integrating basic clean energy-powered computing resources transmitted from the province to the supernode cluster in Wuxi, the project will convert raw "computing power" into standardized "tokens" that can be directly utilized by AI applications.

This approach makes full use of low-cost western green energy to reduce token production costs while ensuring consistent computing service provision.

The National Data Administration said China's average daily token calls had exceeded 140 trillion in March, which represented a surge of more than 1,000-fold compared with 100 billion at the beginning of 2024, and an increase of over 40 percent compared with 100 trillion at the end of 2025.

While the emergence of the "token factory" is reshaping the supply side of AI infrastructure, the distribution side is now moving just as quickly.

China Telecom on May 17 launched a series of trial commercial token packages, becoming the first Chinese telecom operator to announce such packages at the group level. Following the move, China Mobile on May 20 expanded the market with the launch of its own nationwide token packages.

The actions taken by China's leading telecom carriers point to a broader strategic shift — from selling connectivity to retailing access to foundational AI computing resources for consumers and businesses alike.

China Telecom's token package system mainly targets three groups — individual and household users and developers; micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and token ecosystem partners.

In addition to major telecom operators, companies such as Alibaba Cloud and Tencent Cloud have also launched token service products. The rollout of these new packages and services is expected to speed up the spread of AI applications among consumers and make token prices more affordable.

The move will not only open a new gateway to inclusive AI services for ordinary consumers, but also promote deeper integration among communications, computing power and AI, creating new opportunities and space for the digital economy, industry experts said.

Zhou Guijun, editor-in-chief of telecom industry news portal C114, told 21st Century Business Herald that such products are expected to have greater market potential on the enterprise side. In his view, the real logic behind the telecom operators' push into the token economy is not tokens themselves, but the value chain behind them.

According to Li Fei, vice-president of Guochuang Software, token packages will help remove the twin hurdles that have dogged smaller businesses — high computing costs and technical barriers.

Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises no longer need to invest in their own servers or build models from scratch. By buying tokens as needed, they can quickly roll out AI applications like digital workers and content-generation tools, which will facilitate AI-driven upgrading for industries across the board, Li said.

XINHUA

Lightweight entrepreneurship a window into nation's innovation vitality

TIANJIN — Early morning at a science park in Tianjin, groups of young people streamed into the shared office space, booted up their laptops and kicked off their workday. Among them is Wang Haoquan, an entrepreneur in his 20s and founder of a cultural technology company.

His company is a typical one-person company. Empowered by artificial intelligence tools, Wang handles the entire business chain from video creativity, editing and production to online promotion single-handedly, providing digital marketing services for local merchants.

"Not long after its establishment, the company had already secured clients and achieved preliminary profitability," he said.

In recent years, youth entrepreneurship in China has taken on the characteristics of "light asset and high intelligence". Represented by OPCs, the lightweight entrepreneurship model has emerged in large numbers, becoming a key window into China's innovation vitality.

Differing from the traditional solo startup model, OPC refers to a business form where individuals can complete the full closed commercial loop from product research and development to market launch with the support of AI tools. AI agents help individual entrepreneurs complete multiple work processes that previously required team collaboration. Their joint efforts greatly reduce the barriers to entrepreneurship, allowing more young people to participate.

Since the end of 2025, more than 20 new OPCs — covering fields such as cross-border e-commerce, software development and AI content production — have been registered in the Huayuan science park in Tianjin Binhai High-tech Industrial Development Area.

Though run by individual founders, these companies form a collaborative network in the shared space, where individuals from different backgrounds can exchange technologies and creative ideas in real time to complement each other's resources.



A drone photo taken on June 21 shows a camping base at a seaside park in Binhai New Area in Tianjin. ZHAO ZISHUO / XINHUA

"I majored in art and lack sufficient knowledge in programming and other technical fields, but the OPC founder at the desk opposite is a senior programming expert. When encountering tricky technical problems, we can just look up and communicate face to face," Wang said, noting the vibrant entrepreneurial atmosphere in the community.

"This model retains the flexibility of individual entrepreneurship while possessing certain collaborative advantages," said Sun Lei, head of the park's operator. The platform has formed a service system from initial incubation to enterprise acceleration, providing support for enterprises at different stages of development.

This new trend has caught the attention of local governments across China, with Shenzhen, Guangdong province, Shanghai, Nanjing, Jiangsu province and other cities rolling out supportive policies. Longgang district of Shenzhen has issued a policy consultation document for OPC development, with "zero-cost startup" as the core highlight, attracting global AI agent developers and OPC entrepreneurs.

Tianjin Binhai High-tech Industrial Development Area has introduced policies such as office space subsidies and computing power cost support, providing a maximum annual subsidy of 300,000 yuan ($44,250) for OPCs to offset certain costs.

"The development of AI is reshaping the entrepreneurial landscape and we must seize this new track," said Chang Xinyue, director of the new economy bureau of Tianjin Binhai High-tech Industrial Development Area.

The "high intelligence" feature of Chinese youth entrepreneurship is becoming more prominent as a result of technological advancements. In the industrial system of the Haihe laboratory of brain-computer interaction and human-machine integration at Tianjin University and Tianjin Huanhu Hospital, enterprises are developing cutting-edge technologies such as brain-computer interfaces, combining neuroscience and AI for applications in health and other fields.

Industry insiders point out that the new generation of entrepreneurs relies more on knowledge and technological innovation. The technical content and growth potential of the enterprises are substantial, despite their modest size. This innovation-centered entrepreneurship model is becoming a driving force in industrial upgrading.

XINHUA

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CHINA

SPP hikes protection for disabled minors

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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China's procuratorial authorities are strengthening legal protection for minors with disabilities by using case-based supervision and cross-departmental coordination to address difficulties in accessing education, medical assistance, compensation and long-term development.

The Supreme People's Procuratorate and the China Disabled Persons' Federation recently released seven typical cases related to protecting the rights and interests of minors with disabilities. The cases cover issues such as traffic accident compensation, access to education, abandonment and relief, and medical damage claims.

The SPP said the cases show how procuratorial organs can use legal supervision to protect vulnerable minors and respond to public concerns with stronger rule-of-law support.

One case highlighted cross-departmental coordination. In April 2024, a county procuratorate in Jiangxi province received a tip-off that the local education bureau had improperly distributed subsidies for students with disabilities.

After inspecting records with education authorities and the disabled persons' federation, prosecutors found that 52 eligible students had not received subsidies, while three ineligible students had received more than 10,000 yuan ($1,470) in subsidy funds.

Prosecutors filed an administrative public interest litigation case and issued a pre-litigation recommendation. The bureau soon recovered the improperly paid funds, and worked with the local disabled persons' federation to review the subsidy program.

The 52 eligible students later received 156,000 yuan in subsidies. A follow-up review in September found no further problems.

The cases also show that prosecutors are looking beyond immediate relief to the long-term development of minors with disabilities.

In one sexual assault case, a girl, who was 13 at the time and had an intellectual disability, was assaulted by a man surnamed Li in April 2023. A county procuratorate in Fujian province prosecuted Li in October that year, and the local court sentenced him to prison for rape the following month.

While handling the case, prosecutors visited the victim's family and learned that she had athletic talent. The local county's disabled persons' federation worked with her special education school to design a tailored training plan and arrange professional coaching. After two years of training, she won a silver medal at the National Games for Persons with Disabilities in 2025.

Marine pharma and bio products sector boosted

By **ZHAO LEI**
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The central government has rolled out a series of measures to boost China's marine-derived medicines and biological products industry, according to a document published on Thursday.

The document, jointly issued by eight central departments including the Ministry of Natural Resources, the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Science and Technology, outlines guidelines on accelerating the high-quality development of marine-derived medicines and biological products. It marks the first time China has issued specific measures to advance the industry.

According to the document, the guidelines cover all businesses engaged in developing medicines and biological products using marine organisms, including their metabolites, minerals and other substances as raw materials. They aim to promote technological and industrial innovation.

The document also sets multiple goals for the industry to achieve by 2030, such as the launch of several new marine drugs, an overall industrial added value of at least 130 billion yuan ($19 billion), major progress in innovation capacity and industrial clustering, and positioning China as a global leader in the field.

A total of 15 specific measures are listed in the guidelines, including consolidating resource supply, strengthening technological innovation, optimizing industrial development orientation, promoting consumption of marine medicines and biological products, and improving policy support.

Shen Jun, a senior official in charge of marine strategic planning and economy at the Ministry of Natural Resources, said marine biomass accounts for 87 percent of the total biomass on Earth, making the oceans a vast repository of medicinal resources.

She noted that the Chinese government attaches great importance to the development of the marine pharmaceutical and biological products industry.

"Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, our marine biomedicine industry has achieved substantial progress. Last year, the industrial added value in this country reached 99.6 billion yuan," the official said.

Shen said the guidelines emphasize coordinated planning and collaboration among government authorities, improved government services and supervision, besides encouragement for local governments to develop relevant industries based on local conditions.

Zhang Donghua, executive president of the Marine Biomedical Research Institute of Qingdao, said the marine environment is marked by extreme conditions including high pressure, high salinity, low light and oligotrophic, poor plant nutrients, surroundings. Such unique habitats drive marine organisms to produce secondary metabolites with novel structures and distinctive biological activities.

"Globally, marine biomedicine has become a strategic emerging industry prioritized by major maritime nations. The implementation of the new guidelines will help improve resource supply, optimize investment and planning, and advance research in core technologies, thus strengthening the overall competitiveness of China's marine biomedicine industry," he said.

Birthday for Maodou



Visitors celebrate the fifth birthday of Maodou, an orangutan, at Hangzhou Safari Park in Zhejiang province on Thursday. The park hosted a special birthday party and handed out souvenirs to guests joining the celebration. YUAN XIAOQIN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Market of childhood



Students run their own stalls during a campus market at an elementary school in Suining, Sichuan province, on Thursday. Through hands-on buying and selling activities ahead of International Children's Day, children learn teamwork, budgeting and the value of work. LIU CHANGSONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

BLUEPRINT INTO ACTION

Henan to strengthen role as strategic hub

Upgrading logistics key to province's goal of serving domestic, intl markets

By **SHI BAOYIN**
and **QI XIN** in Zhengzhou

Provincial leaders in Henan have outlined key plans for hub construction, industrial upgrading and high-level opening-up during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period at a news conference in Zhengzhou, the provincial capital, on Thursday, laying out clear paths to build an opening-up highland.

Governor Wang Kai said Henan aims to strengthen its role as a national strategic hub and develop a high-quality inland opening-up area.

In the coming years, Henan will seek to build a circulation hub for the national unified market and create a dual circulation hub serving both domestic and international markets, he said.

"The biggest characteristic and advantage of Henan is its ability to connect the East and West, the South and North. This unique geographical and transportation advantage makes Henan stand out in the construction of a unified national market," Wang said.

Wang emphasized that Henan would focus on upgrading transportation and logistics by promoting integrated, safe, digital and green transformation of its transportation system.

"Henan plans to enhance international connectivity, reduce logistics costs and expand network coverage, while strengthening modern logistics corridors and hubs," Wang said.

According to Wang, targeted efforts will include improving the Zhengzhou-Luxembourg Air Silk Road dual-hub model and upgrading the Zhengzhou-Europe Railway Express assembly center.

The province will also create a pivot for promoting foreign trade by upgrading the pilot free trade zone, expanding the functions of the comprehensive bonded zone, strengthening goods, service and digital trade, as well as enabling more goods and high-quality products from Henan to enter global markets, he said.

Zhang Min, executive vice-governor of Henan, said the province has achieved significant opening-up results in recent years, noting that Zhengzhou airport has achieved a 1-million-metric-ton air cargo throughput, ranking fifth nationwide in international air cargo.

Zhang emphasized that Henan will seize new opportunities in the second golden decade of the Belt and Road Initiative and advance efforts in several areas.

While strengthening the role of the Air Silk Road and building a dense intercontinental air route network, Henan plans to optimize land transportation channels, promote the expansion of China-Europe and Central Asia freight trains, develop multimodal transport, and achieve coordinated development of air, land, data and sea routes.

Zhang added that the province will further develop international markets, rely on industrial upgrading and technological innovation, enhance product competitiveness, and promote global sales of its brand products, including high-end equipment and characteristic light industry goods.

The province will also deepen two-way cooperation, optimize the business environment based on platforms such as the pilot free trade zone and Zhengzhou Airport Zone, actively attract foreign investment, and support local enterprises in expanding overseas markets to achieve win-win cooperation, according to Zhang.

"Henan aims to enhance the quality, innovation and green value of local products," she said.

While accelerating opening-up, Henan will further integrate its culture and tourism industries. "As an important birthplace of Chinese civilization, the province will strengthen the protection and innovative use of cultural heritage," Zhang added.

The province also seeks to advance the creative transformation and innovative development of its traditional culture, allowing cultural heritage to thrive in the new era.

Contact the writers at qixin@chinadaily.com.cn

Briefly

13 dead, 3 injured in traffic accident

Thirteen people have been confirmed dead and three others injured after an overloaded passenger van rear-ended a semi-trailer truck on an expressway section in Central China's Henan province early on Thursday morning, according to local authorities. The crash took place at around 2:40 am at a section in Nanyang city. The nine-seat passenger van was carrying 16 people at the time of the accident. The Ministry of Public Security has dispatched a work team to Nanyang to guide the investigation and response efforts.

Mainland, SARs legal seminar held

The 14th Mainland, Hong Kong and Macao Legal Seminar was held in Xiamen, Fujian province, on Thursday, with emphasis on strengthening talent education and promoting economic development. Jointly organized by the China Law Society, the Department of Justice of the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, and the Secretary for Administration and Justice of the Government of the Macao Special Administrative Region, the event aims to better leverage rule of law as a key safeguard for advancing various fields of cooperation between the mainland and the SARs, while also seeking to inject strong legal momentum into the high-quality growth of the Greater Bay Area and the promotion of high-level opening-up.

Fraud verdict against criminal gang upheld

The Chongqing Higher People's Court on Thursday rejected the appeal of members of a criminal gang led by Xu Faqi while upholding the first-instance verdict pronounced on Jan 30 this year. The court also approved Xu's death sentence with a two-year reprieve. The first-instance judgement for the syndicate members, delivered by the Fifth Intermediate People's Court of Chongqing Municipality, determined that the defendants' actions constituted six crimes, including fraud, intentional injury, and drug smuggling and trafficking. In addition to the verdict against Xu, defendants Zhang Longlong, Luo Yujun, Xi Kangqiang and Liu Shibing were sentenced to terms ranging from life imprisonment to up to 25 years, along with additional penalties like property confiscation and fines. Zhang, Xi and Liu appealed against the verdict, which was dismissed by the second-instance court. The court ruled that the first-instance verdict was based on sufficient, true evidence and legitimate procedures.

CHINA DAILY—XINHUA

Top court clarifies rules on estate administration

By **CAO YIN**
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China's top court has reaffirmed the importance of the proper handling of estates following a person's death, disclosing five landmark cases that clarify who can serve as an estate administrator and what duties the role entails.

The Supreme People's Court last week highlighted the importance of correctly applying the estate administrator system under the Civil Code, which took effect in January 2021, and instructed judges nationwide to strictly implement the law.

The estate administrator system is considered a major innovation under the code. It serves as a legal tool to balance the secure management of a decedent's assets, the protection of inheritance rights and the lawful settlement of creditors' claims, according to the top court.

The system also helps resolve disputes, limit conflicts, prevents the concealment or misappropriation of assets, and maintains family harmony and social stability, the court said, adding that "it should be used to address public concerns such as estates left unmanaged, assets being damaged or lost, and challenges posed by an aging population".

Under the code, if there is no heir or if all heirs renounce their inheritance, the civil affairs authority or the village committee where the deceased lived before death can serve as the estate administrator. Chen Yifang, chief judge of the top court's First Civil Division, highlighted the necessity of the arrangement, but described it as a form of public service and an alternative option.

"If an heir provides a written renunciation of inheritance — whether to avoid managing the estate or to evade the deceased's debts — but continues to possess or dispose of the estate's assets in practice, that renunciation is invalid," she said.

One of the disclosed cases illustrates the point. An individual surnamed Yang died in 2024, owing 100,000 yuan ($14,700) to two individuals surnamed Hua and Ma. The creditors sued Yang's father, mother and daughter.

During the trial, all three heirs submitted written renunciations of their inheritance, so the court did not support the creditors' claims.

However, after the ruling, the three heirs collected more than 200,000 yuan in funeral subsidies, pension benefits and social insurance payments belonging to the deceased. The creditors, meanwhile, asked the court whether it could appoint the local civil affairs bureau as the estate administrator, given that the heirs had renounced their inheritance rights.

"Although the heirs had formally renounced their inheritance, they had in fact taken control of the deceased's assets, making the renunciation invalid. The heirs therefore must repay the debt," the court said, adding that the civil affairs bureau could not step in as a fallback administrator.

Chen cited the case as an example of "fake renunciation to evade real debt". She emphasized that such behavior must not be tolerated and warned that the rule allowing civil affairs authorities or village committees to act as administrators should not be abused.

She also clarified how an estate administrator should be selected under the code. If the deceased had designated an executor in a will, the court can appoint that person or entity as the administrator in accordance with the deceased's wishes.

If no executor was named, the heirs should choose an administrator. If they cannot reach an agreement, all heirs must serve as joint administrators, according to Chen.

"Only when there is genuinely no heir or when all heirs have validly renounced their rights should civil authorities step in," she said.

Once a person or organization is named estate administrator, they must fulfill duties including taking inventory of the estate, listing all assets and debts, and providing a full and accurate accounting to heirs, banks, property registration authorities and creditors, Chen said.

She added that administrators must also take reasonable measures to protect the estate from damage or loss and must not abuse their authority.

The estate administration system has drawn greater attention following the death of a 46-year-old woman in Shanghai. The deceased, surnamed Jiang, lived alone, had no spouse or children, and had lost both parents. After suffering a cerebral hemorrhage in October, she was cared for by a distant relative before her death in December.

Her case sparked public concern after local authorities encountered difficulties locating her next of kin to make key medical decisions and handle funeral arrangements.

At the end of 2025, the Hongkou district civil affairs bureau was appointed Jiang's estate administrator by a local court after it determined that she had no legal heirs and had left neither a will nor a support agreement.

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CHINA

Towering Beijiang bridge takes shape

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The main section of the Beijiang Grand Bridge, a key project of the Qingxin-Huadu Expressway in Guangdong province, has been successfully linked, laying a solid foundation for its opening by the end of the year.

Construction of the 1,440-meter cross-river bridge, currently the largest four-tower, double-cable-stayed, two-way directional prestressed concrete girder bridge in China, began in October 2022.

Following 48 hours of continuous monitoring of elevation changes, tower cranes and mobile cranes extended their long arms as nearly 56 cubic meters of concrete were poured over a four-hour period in the early morning of May 20, culminating in the successful joining of the bridge.

After the operation, the bridge spanning the Beijiang River, a tributary of the Pearl River, began to take shape, showcasing its four cable towers shaped like phoenix tail feathers.

The project has faced an uphill battle due to complex geological conditions, according to Zhou Wei, director of the Qingxin-Huadu Expressway management office.

"The bridge site is characterized by extremely well-developed karst formations," Zhou said, adding that construction had to pass through multiple bead-like caverns. "Any slight misstep could lead to a cave-in or flooding."

The main piers consist of 120 piles with an average length exceeding 80 meters, with the longest reaching 102 meters, according to Zhou.

The project team implemented a one-plan-for-one-pile scheme for meticulous management, developing targeted pretreatment plans for the caverns.

"The scheme helped ensure a 100 percent success rate in achieving the required standards for the initial drilling of all 120 pile foundations for the main piers," Zhou said.

As all four main towers of the bridge are located in the water and are nearly 150 meters tall, alignment control has proved extremely difficult, with the structures affected by strong winds, floods and ship traffic, Zhou said.

"It's more like embroidering in mid-air at a height of 100 meters," he added.

High-tech platforms and intelligent systems were adopted during the bridge linking process, according to Xu Lu, project manager of the TJ3 section of the Qingxin–Huadu Expressway at China Railway Major Bridge Engineering Group.

"Linking the bridge was particularly challenging due to its considerable width of 37.6 meters," said Xu.

During the linking operation, a cable-stayed form traveler was used as a mobile working platform to pour concrete segment by segment. In addition, technologies including digital building information modeling, Beidou positioning, and comprehensive stress-strain monitoring systems were applied to continuously track bridge deck elevation and stay cable tension.

An intelligent closed-loop system integrating construction, monitoring, feedback and adjustment was also established, with more than 300 sensors embedded in the main beam to continuously monitor concrete stress, cable tension and temperature.

"We independently developed a universal tensioning and anchoring mechanism to fully adapt to the spatial position changes of the cable-stayed anchorage points," said Liu Wang, chief engineer of the expressway's TJ2 section project team at CCCC Road & Bridge International Co.

The expressway, approximately 54 kilometers long, starts in Qingxin district of Qingyuan, in the northern mountainous part of Guangdong, and ends in Tanbu township of Huadu district in Guangzhou, the provincial capital.

Welcome to ethnic art



A performance greets guests attending the exhibition of paintings and calligraphy in Huangshan, Anhui province, on Wednesday. The event showcases outstanding artworks created by ethnic Chinese artists within RCEP member nations, blending traditional Chinese artistry with diverse cultural elements.
HAN SUYUAN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Top nature conservation body lauds natl progress

Ecological civilization concept gains global recognition in Guangzhou

By **LI WENFANG** in Guangzhou
and **LI MENGHAN**

A senior official of the world's leading conservation body has praised China's progress in nature conservation and ecological restoration, saying the country is offering the world a new paradigm of coexistence between humanity and nature, underpinned by its concept of an ecological civilization.

"I believe that in the 21st century, we will see global conservation leadership coming more and more from East Asia, particularly from China," said Stewart Maginnis, deputy director-general of the International Union for Conservation of Nature.

He made the remarks on Wednesday in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, at the ongoing Nature-based Solutions Summer School — an event that brings together more than 40 experts from different countries and will later move to the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region.

First coined by the World Bank in 2008, the concept of nature-based solutions was formally defined and issued with a global standard by the IUCN in 2016, proposing the use of nature and healthy ecosystems to address societal challenges and benefit both people and nature.

Reflecting on his multiple trips to China since 1999, Maginnis pointed



Stewart Maginnis

to visible changes over the years, including cleaner water and bluer skies, and attributed his frequent visits to the country's role as a hub for developing and applying nature-based solutions.

"China has applied, walked the talk, and set a good example," Maginnis said, highlighting that the country has met its target of placing 15 percent of its terrestrial area under protection, with steady, continued growth, while taking a leadership role in marine and coastal conservation and spearheading the shift to renewable energy.

He mentioned the restoration of the Loess Plateau — some 50,000 square kilometers of severely degraded land that has been brought back to vibrant biodiversity and productivity — and the coastal wetland restoration in Yancheng, Jiangsu province, where the removal of the invasive alien species, smooth cordgrass, has revived a critical habitat for migratory birds.

Maginnis also cited the Haizhu National Wetland Park in Guangzhou, which, without visionary leadership, would have been turned into a commercial development that could have harmed biodiversity. He said the park is certified under the IUCN's Green List, the highest standard for effectively and equitably managed protected areas, noting that China now has the most Green List sites worldwide.

"It is not an accident that we are making so much collaboration and so much progress on nature-based solutions here in China," Maginnis said. "The framing and context, driven right from the top, create perfect conditions for each of these solutions."

China is bringing much-needed conceptual frameworks to the world — especially the idea of coexistence, which does not separate nature from society. This is reflected in the philosophy of ecological civilization and the concept that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, he added.

This conceptual leadership, Maginnis added, is complemented by a mutually beneficial partnership in which IUCN helps recognize and disseminate good practices, while China provides real-world, large-scale application of such cases. Some of China's practices have already been replicated in other countries.

"China becomes more and more prominent in extending technical assistance to other countries. I am very hopeful that we will start to see nature-based solutions as a key part of that technical assistance," he said.

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Fujian casts net deeper to bolster aquaculture

By **HU MEIDONG**
and **ZHANG YI** in Fuzhou

Construction of two massive intelligent deep-sea aquaculture platforms named *Yunhai*, or "farming the sea", will be completed by the end of this year in the waters of Fuzhou, adding to the city's existing fleet and bringing the total number of smart platforms in the marine-resource-rich capital of Fujian province to 15 units.

Data from the Fuzhou Ocean and Fisheries Bureau shows that the city's smart platforms encompass 270,000 cubic meters of water, yielding more than 2,200 metric tons of seafood annually with an output value of 300 million yuan ($44.25 million), placing Fuzhou among the national leaders in deep-sea aquaculture.

In recent years, a fleet of advanced deep-sea platforms, dubbed the "Iron Men of the Sea", has been intensively deployed across Fuzhou to cultivate high-quality seafood such as large yellow croakers and abalone. These platforms use automated feeding and monitoring systems, significantly reducing labor while supporting the development of modern marine ranches.

Among the deployed fleet, platforms named *Qiandong*, which hold nearly 50 patents and copyrights, are scaling up commercial large yellow croaker production in Dinghai Bay, Lianjiang county of Fuzhou.

Featuring 20,000 cu m of breeding water each, the zero-carbon system integrates four core subsystems, including an automatic rotating cage powered by complementary solar and wind energy, and operates nearly 20 smart sensors for digital management.

Li Xiaoping, assistant to the chairman of Qiandong Marine Granary, said the equipment features a 360-degree floating cage that can withstand super typhoons above wind scale 16+, requiring only one or two crew members for routine maintenance.

"The cage integrates automated rotating and lifting technologies, turning above the water level every three days for sun-drying to clear biofouling," Li said. "This effectively resolves historical harvesting and biofouling bottlenecks faced by earlier models, eliminating the need for frequent service vessels."

The upcoming *Yunhai* platforms represent a 130 million yuan investment with a combined capacity of 170,000 cu m, scheduled for completion by the end of this year.

Chen Jinwen, a technical employee of Marine Granary (Fujian) Technology Co, said the *Yunhai* platforms achieve an 80 percent digitization rate across the entire production life cycle, featuring 10 feed silos with a capacity of 10 tons each for smartphone-controlled feeding.

"Because open-ocean currents are rapid, the high activity level of the fish ensures superior meat quality that closely resembles wild-caught species," Chen said.

Chen added that local government support, including the provision of sea areas free of charge, has boosted industry confidence. "Moving forward, we will invite traditional local fish farmers to become shareholders to help manage the assets," he said.

"This initiative will help traditional fishermen transition into shore-based fishermen, managing advanced marine ranches directly from their smartphones," Chen said.

According to the Fujian provincial government work report, the province's deep-sea aquaculture scale ranks first in the country. Fujian is deepening its "Maritime Fujian" initiative to push aquaculture further into the deep sea.

Provincial leaders attended a meeting in Fuzhou on Thursday to discuss accelerating the development of distinctive rural and agricultural industries, transforming agriculture into a modernized sector, and further improving farmers' livelihoods.

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An aerial view captures an intelligent deep-sea aquaculture platform, *Qiandong 2*, in Dinghai Bay, Fuzhou, Fujian province.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China-Serbia bond forged in steel as 2 breakthroughs achieved

By **ZHANG YU** in Shijiazhuang
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China-Serbia cooperation in green steelmaking has achieved two major breakthroughs, with researchers successfully trial-producing a high-end automotive steel panel and confirming that Serbian iron ore can meet green steel standards through hydrogen metallurgy, HBIS Group, one of China's largest State-owned steelmakers, said.

During a meeting with HBIS Group Chairman Liu Jian in Beijing on Tuesday, Serbian President Aleksandar Vucic praised the Chinese steelmaker for revitalizing the Smederevo steel plant and benefiting the Serbian people over the past decade.

Vucic said the company's investment had strengthened the "iron-clad friendship" between China and Serbia.

The meeting, attended by Chinese Ambassador to Serbia Li Ming and Serbian ministers, came 10 years after the Hebei province-headquartered steelmaker acquired the struggling plant and transformed it into HBIS Group Serbia Iron & Steel.

> "I deeply realized that precision and efficiency are crucial to success. All innovations are planned in advance, with clear goals, step-by-step implementation, and strict attention to detail."
>
> **Dusan Kostic,** an employee at HBIS Serbia

The technological advances were achieved by a China-Serbia joint laboratory established by HBIS and the University of Belgrade. Approved by China's Ministry of Science and Technology in October 2024, it is the first national-level Belt and Road joint laboratory in China's steel sector.

In late April, researchers successfully trial-produced high-image-clarity dual-phase steel for outer automotive panels at a production line of HBIS in Hebei province. The breakthrough overcame a long-standing challenge in applying high-strength dual-phase steel to outer body panel forming, marking a step toward higher-end and lower-carbon steel production.

Separately, the laboratory verified that Serbian iron ore achieved a reduction degree of 99.74 percent through hydrogen metallurgy, meeting standards for green steel production, according to Hebei Daily.

Researchers said the result suggests that large quantities of Serbian iron ore could potentially be processed locally at the HBIS Serbia plant, supporting the production of green steel products compatible with the European Union's Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism.

Vladan Mihailovic, chief operating officer of HBIS Serbia, said the joint laboratory had become an important platform for optimizing production processes, improving steel quality and enhancing energy efficiency.

On environmental projects, Mihailovic said the company had made substantial progress in environmental monitoring and optimization, emission-reduction technologies and energy-efficiency improvements, with efforts focused on dust control, water treatment upgrades and reducing resource consumption.

"These results fully demonstrate the company's firm commitment to sustainable development," he said.

The laboratory is currently running eight joint research projects, including two at the national level. Since its establishment, it has organized 34 personnel exchanges and 53 person-times of training between the Chinese and Serbian sides, while providing 72 instances of research collaboration and technical guidance for Serbian partners.

Dusan Kostic, deputy head of the heating furnace and slab yard at the hot-rolling mill of HBIS Serbia, said training in China exposed him to a work culture that "never waits for tomorrow".

"I deeply realized that precision and efficiency are crucial to success. All innovations are planned in advance, with clear goals, step-by-step implementation, and strict attention to detail," Kostic said.

He said he plans to apply new organizational methods learned in China to improve operational efficiency, adding that the patience and dedication to quality shown by Chinese colleagues had left a deep impression on him.

Mihailovic said he hoped the joint laboratory would continue serving as both an engine for innovation and a bridge connecting different knowledge systems, cultures and working styles, helping HBIS Serbia remain a modern, responsible and competitive industrial enterprise.

During the meeting in Beijing, Vucic pledged the Serbian government's full support for HBIS Serbia's green energy projects, while Liu said the company would continue advancing technological upgrades and strive for more landmark achievements in green and high-end steelmaking.

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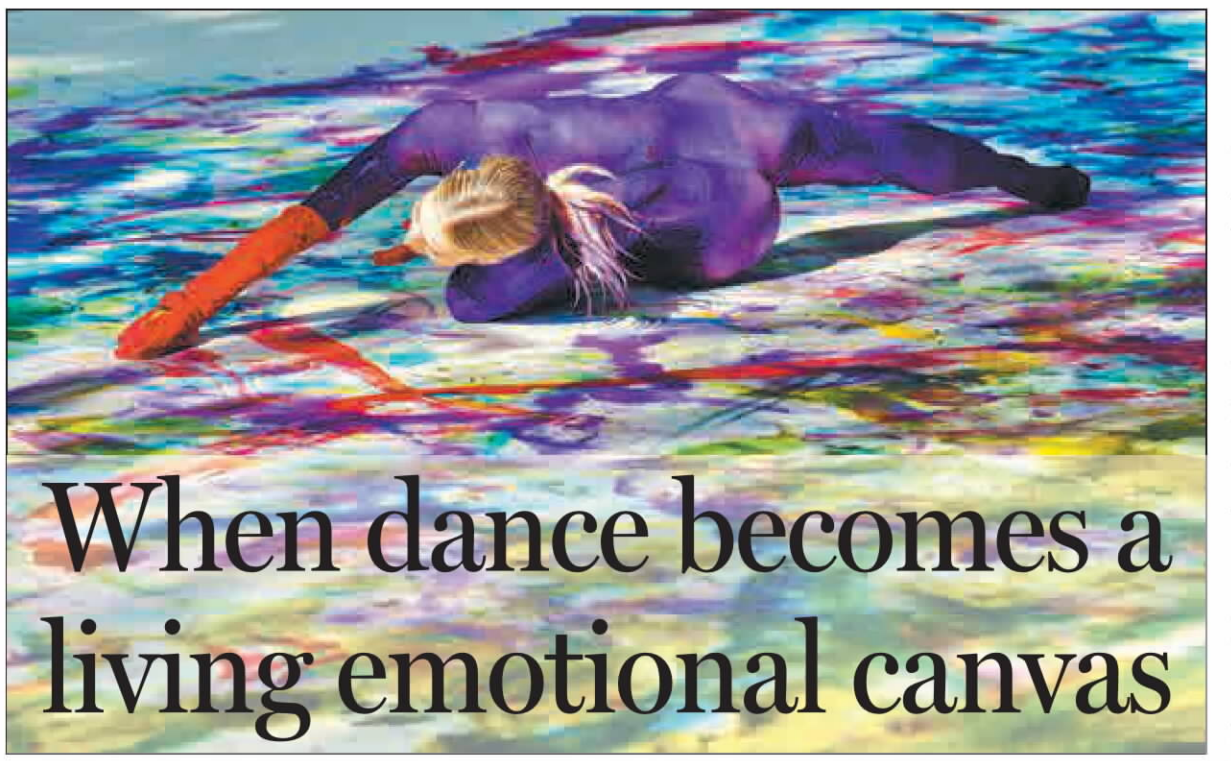
CULTURE



When dance becomes a living emotional canvas

Artists from two countries perform in a work that draws from ancient philosophy while embracing modern artistic expression, **Chen Nan** reports.

In the luminous spaces of the Guangzhou Grand Theatre, internationally acclaimed artist Shen Wei will unveil his latest work, *MindScape*, a collaboration between the Guangdong Modern Dance Company and Shen Wei Dance Arts. The work will premiere on June 5 and 6, before traveling to the American Dance Festival at Duke University in Durham, North Carolina, in July and later to Lincoln Center's Summer for the City in Dance Encounters, a new outdoor series, during Chinese Arts Week in New York from July 22-25.

MindScape is the latest chapter in Shen's decades-long artistic exploration, blending modern dance with poetry, painting, calligraphy, and live music.

But this work is perhaps one of his most introspective yet, drawing on the philosophical ideals of Chinese literati and the spiritual pursuit of harmony between humanity and nature.

"*MindScape* is about my inner landscape," says Shen, a choreographer, painter and visual artist. "It reflects how I face life — success, hardship, and the balance needed to keep moving forward. This series is about the power of thought and spirit over material concerns."

The production merges traditional Chinese music with contemporary soundscapes, featuring *guqin* (a seven-stringed Chinese zither) virtuoso Zhao Xiaoxia, *xiao* (Chinese vertical bamboo flute) player Liu Xiaogang, percussionist Chen Shijie, and electronic music.

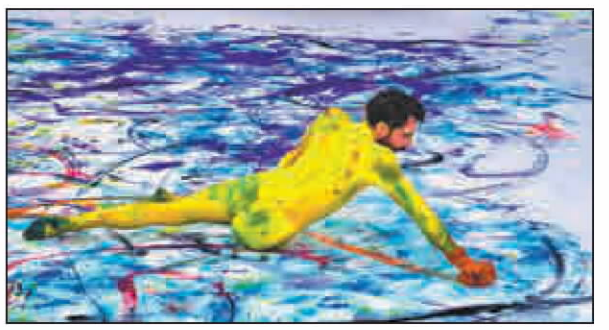
"I want people to feel happy, uplifted," Shen says. "This project is about making traditional instruments, like the *guqin* and *xiao*, feel contemporary, fresh and pleasurable."

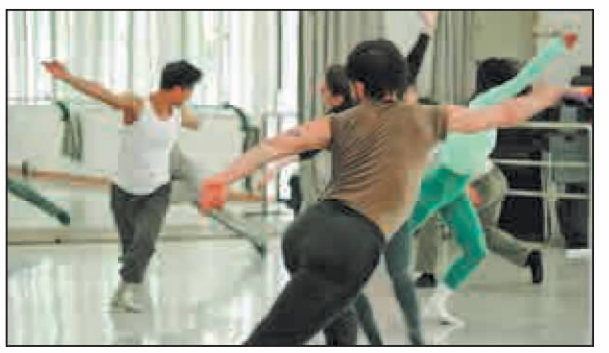
The genesis of the work spans two continents. Last year, Shen began experimental workshops in the United States, developing movement vocabularies with American dancers while collaborating with Chinese musicians on an original score.

This year, five dancers from the US joined seven from China and worked together in the studio in Guangzhou, while the traditional instruments were reimagined in a modern context. "I've long been exploring contemporary expression of ancient instruments," Shen notes. "This is an international project — artists from China and the US collaborating to create a shared vision."

The choreography reflects Shen's signature approach, encouraging movement to emerge organically from dancers' internal impulses. But this time, the work also incorporates live painting and calligraphy: the stage floor will be covered in canvas, allowing dancers to leave traces of color and ink through movement. "Every performance becomes a 'mindscape' painting," he says. "It's about life, joy, struggle, and the energy we create together."

Traveling around the world to work with international artists on diverse art projects, Shen, a New York and Paris-based artist, is known for his work at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing. He choreographed the breathtakingly beautiful dance piece, *Scroll Painting*, in which dancers performed on a constantly changing LED scroll of Chinese ink-and-wash paintings, depicting the evolution of China since ancient times.









Above: Artist Shen Wei.
From top: The latest dance production *MindScape*, a collaboration between the Guangdong Modern Dance Company and Shen Wei Dance Arts, will be staged in China and the United States in June and July. A dancer paints through movement during a performance in *MindScape*. Dancers rehearse in Guangzhou. Dancers from China and the US pose for a photo during rehearsals for the world premiere of *MindScape* in Guangzhou on June 5.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> *MindScape* is rooted in Eastern philosophy, expressed through an international dance language. Its essence is inward observation — moving with restraint, guided by breath and emotion."
>
> **Guo Fan,** Guangdong Modern Dance Company dancer

Shen's relationship with the Guangdong Modern Dance Company is deeply personal. "This is my mother troupe," he says. "I arrived here over 30 years ago, in 1989. Returning to create this work is both a homecoming and an opportunity to reconnect tradition with the present."

The costumes in *MindScape* reflect the same philosophy. Inspired by southern Chinese craftsmanship, the designs incorporate bamboo elements that merge heritage with contemporary aesthetics.

"I once received a gift from Yang Meiqi, a founding member of the Guangdong Modern Dance Company. It was a vest made from small bamboo pieces instead of fabric," recalls Shen.

Bamboo, naturally breathable and cooling, suits the humid climate of southern China such as Guangdong province. Symbolically, it also represents resilience, flexibility and the moral integrity of a scholar in Chinese culture — qualities central to the philosophy behind *MindScape*, Shen says.

The work is also accompanied by Shen's own writings and visual art. Eight texts written over decades in China, the US and Europe will be released alongside the premiere, reflecting on resilience, joy and observation.

Shen will also release a new book, *When the Rose Kisses the White Cloud*, named after a poem he wrote in Paris, which reflects his fascination with fleeting beauty and enduring optimism.

"Life contains both pain and joy," he says. "I want people to feel the energy of living fully, to be inspired by the spirit rather than material concerns."

Born in Xiangyin county, Yueyang, Hunan province, in 1968, Shen began training in local opera at age 9, studying singing, dancing, acting, and martial arts. He had already started traditional Chinese painting at 7. In 1989, he turned to modern dance at the Guangdong Dance Academy and became a founding member of the Guangdong Modern Dance Company in 1991. After winning a national choreography award in 1994, he moved to New York on a scholarship and founded Shen Wei Dance Arts in 2000, while continuing to innovate across dance, painting, and filmmaking.

American dancer Zak Ryan Schlegel, 36, who has worked with Shen for 11 years, reflects on the premiere of *MindScape*: "Bringing this work to the stage feels like opening a collective dream state — a common consciousness." The piece, described by Schlegel as a culmination of Shen's visual, physical, and spiritual vocabularies, expands the choreographer's legacy into a deeply human exploration of interconnectedness.

During rehearsals, dancers were encouraged to explore their inner worlds — memory, emotion, perception, and imagination — to build a shared dimension onstage.

"From feeling sunlight on our faces to recalling memory-triggered visions with closed eyes, the challenge was in meeting ourselves through new lenses and returning to our most intimate perceptions," Schlegel says. "This process shaped the work's living spaces, evolving with each performance."

One moment that resonates deeply with him came during a sextet set to a flute solo. "We become the wind. I feel transported to the New Mexican desert of my ancestors, moving in harmony with the other five. Though we are six onstage, we are one in landscapes of memory," he says.

Collaboration lies at the heart of *MindScape*. "Connection is the oxygen the dance must breathe. Shared breath and intuition allow us to harmonize emotionally and physically, meeting one another through all our different experiences," he explains. The work becomes not only a performance but also an act of humanity.

Guo Fan, 30, a Guangdong Modern Dance Company dancer since 2019, says: "*MindScape* is rooted in Eastern philosophy, expressed through an international dance language. Its essence is inward observation — moving with restraint, guided by breath and emotion. Eastern subtlety meets Western physicality; Chinese and international dancers inspire each other, letting philosophy flow beyond borders. For the audience, it's not spectacle — it's a space for reflection, resonance and the quiet power of shared humanity."

"After more than 30 years abroad, Shen Wei returns to the Guangdong Modern Dance Company to create *MindScape*," notes Xiong Jian, the troupe's director. "This is not only an emotional homecoming but also a reconnection with artistic spirit and history. The production blends movement with poetry, music and visual design into a 'total art' experience. Young dancers, aged 24 to 30, represent a new generation, building a uniquely Chinese contemporary dance language grounded in cultural experience and global awareness."

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Preserving Chinese Australian voices

SYDNEY — In Haymarket Chinatown, one of Sydney's best-known Chinese enclaves, the aroma of Chinese food, glowing shop signs marked with Chinese characters, and voices speaking dialects from across China fill the air.

Amid the busy crowds, the Museum of Chinese in Australia quietly watches people pass by.

Housed in the former Haymarket Library, the museum opened on Feb 22 during the celebrations for the Chinese New Year of the Horse, poised to tell the stories of Chinese Australians across more than 200 years of history.

"A lot of the stories out there used to be told from someone else's perspective," says Daphne Lowe Kelley, chair of MOCA. "It's really important that we — people of Chinese descent — start telling our own stories."

The theme of this year's International Museum Day on May 18 was "Museums Uniting a Divided World". The museum hopes to become a place for connection, reflection and celebration. As the first museum in New South Wales dedicated to Chinese Australian history, it focuses on preserving and presenting the community's heritage and contributions to Australian society.

The first recorded Chinese migrant to Australia was Mak Sai Ying from Guangdong province in South China, who arrived in Sydney in 1818. Today, that young man who stepped off the ship, the *Laurel*, has a lane named after him — Sai Ying Lane — near Circular Quay, about half an hour's walk from the museum.

Since his arrival, Chinese communities have spread across Australia for more than two centuries. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics' 2021 census, people of Chinese ancestry make up 5.5 percent of the population, making them the country's fifth-largest ancestry group.

The early Chinese in Australia are often remembered as gold miners, market gardeners, hawkers, cooks or cabinet-makers. But the inaugural exhibition at the MOCA goes beyond these familiar images to explore a lesser-known chapter of Haymarket Chinatown's history.

Using old objects, vintage photographs and historical stories, the exhibition traces the lives of early Chinese merchant families over the past century. One oil painting re-creates the tearoom of businessman Mei Quong Tart, who worked to bridge cultural divisions during a period of strong anti-Chinese sentiment. In the painting, he stands at the entrance surrounded by people from different backgrounds, smiling warmly.

Visitors can also see an abacus once used at Kwong War Chong & Co, a menu from the Modern China Cafe, stamps and letter sheets from Wing Sang & Co, and promotional materials from Simpson Lee & Co, offering glimpses into the lively commercial world of early Haymarket.

"There was discrimination against the Chinese under the White Australia policy," Lowe Kelley says. "But the Chinese community did not simply accept it quietly. Some people petitioned authorities and wrote to government officials. They pushed back." She hopes visitors will recognize not only the hardships faced by earlier generations, but also their resilience.

"The most important message I want to convey to Chinese Australians is that though we are roughly 1.5 million people of Chinese descent, I want them to realize that we are proud. We call this place our home, but also not to forget where we came from and our culture, to maintain that, and also to rise above the image that was projected in the past and the difficulties that one faced earlier," she says.

Lowe Kelley says the inaugural exhibition focuses on the local history of Haymarket, but the museum's vision extends far beyond. Future exhibitions will reach into other parts of Australia, telling Chinese Australian stories from across the country. The museum also plans to strengthen exchanges and cooperation with overseas Chinese museums and Chinese communities in other parts of the world.

"There's an old saying: you have to know the past to understand the present," she says. "For many of the early Chinese, life here was not easy. There were many restrictions. Understanding that, and yet seeing the fact that the Chinese community has now significantly grown — that makes it all the more meaningful."



Daphne Lowe Kelley, chair of the Museum of Chinese in Australia, introduces exhibits in Sydney, Australia, on May 4. XUE YANWEN / XINHUA

XINHUA

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LIFE



Making artifacts an easy, in-depth read

New book helps the layperson learn more about a milestone excavation site in Changsha and its contents through text, images, and interactive elements, **Yang Yang** reports.

The book *Archaeological Report for Everyone: The Mawangdui Han Tombs in Changsha* was launched on May 18, the 50th International Museum Day. Created by Hunan Museum in partnership with a cultural creative team from Beijing Muse Museum Education Technology, the book has been published by Yilin Press.

As the first official popular science version of the Mawangdui archaeological report, the book uses a reader-friendly combination of text and images to re-create the excavation site and explain the artifacts' historical context.

"This book, designed for readers of all backgrounds, transforms detailed archaeological reports into an engaging and easy-to-read narrative, taking readers directly to the excavation site to uncover the secrets of ancient artifacts," says Wang Lei, editor of the book.

It provides a comprehensive view of Western Han (206 BC-AD 24) nobility and their cosmological beliefs, featuring items such as a T-shaped silk painting, plain gauze gowns, lacquerware, wooden figurines, and silk maps.

Additionally, the book includes a puzzle game where readers can scan a code to embark on a historical journey across Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 220) Changsha and uncover long-hidden stories of love and conflict.

Half a century ago, in the eastern suburbs of Changsha, the capital of Central China's Hunan province, there were two large, saddle-shaped mounds known as Mawangdui.

On Jan 16, 1972, a significant archaeological dig began (till 1974), unearthing the incredibly well-preserved body of Lady Xin Zhui, buried in the tomb more than 2,000 years ago, a landmark discovery in the world of archaeology.

Mawangdui is the burial site of Li Cang, the chancellor of the Changsha Kingdom during the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), his wife Xin Zhui, and their son Li Xi.

According to Hunan Museum, they completed a systematic inventory in 2024, after decades of effort, of all the artifacts unearthed from the Mawangdui Han Tombs No 1, 2, and 3.

In total, 26,937 items have been cataloged, covering a wide range of artifacts, including clothing, food, housing, transportation, rituals, music, military affairs, astronomy, geography, medicine, health, and philosophical texts, effectively creating a complete underground world of the Western Han Dynasty.

"The artifacts unearthed from the Mawangdui Han Tombs are remarkably well-preserved and diverse, showcasing exquisite craftsmanship and rich cultural significance. Even today, they serve as a key benchmark for understanding the development of early Han society," said Yu Yanjiao, director and research curator at the Mawangdui Han Tombs and Collections Research and Exhibition Center, Hunan Museum, in a previous interview.

The *Changsha Mawangdui Han Tomb Exhibit* is a must-see for every visitor to Hunan Museum. The exhibit showcases the daily life of Lady Xin Zhui and her family, offering a complete picture of Western Han society.

According to Xinhua News Agency, by 2024, which marked the 50th anniversary of the excavation of the Mawangdui Han Tombs, the number of visits to view the tomb artifacts had exceeded 100 million.

The most common label associated with Lady Xin Zhui is "uncorrupted female corpse". However, in this newly released book, she is presented first and foremost as a real person.

According to the archaeological report, she stood 1.54 meters tall and weighed 34.3 kilograms. Her body was remarkably well-preserved, with light brown skin that remained moist and elastic. She had a square-round face with high cheekbones and clearly defined features. Her head, neck, torso, and limbs were all intact. The soft tissue in her upper arms and thighs was plump and retained some elasticity.

As for her cause of death, archaeologists believe she suffered a coronary heart attack triggered by biliary colic after eating a melon. The discovery of 138 melon seeds in her esophagus, stomach and intestines provided key evidence for this theory.

But what allowed her body to remain so well-preserved over more than 2,000 years? The book highlights three main factors: a deep burial, sealing, and preservation.

Her tomb was buried deep underground and tightly sealed. Multiple layers of coffins provided protection, while the use of charcoal and white clay for sealing, along with liquid preservatives, created an environment that was consistently cool, humid, sterile, and oxygen-free. This environment protected her body from physical, chemical, and biological damage. Additionally, the high levels of mercury found in her body helped delay decomposition.

In the book, readers can also learn about the T-shaped silk painting found in the tomb, depicting a journey from heaven to the underworld and featuring divine birds, mythical beasts, and celestial beings, offering a glimpse into the Han Dynasty's fascinating views on life and death.

Additionally, readers can explore over 130,000 words of silk manuscripts, including one of the world's earliest extant military maps, one of the first known comet charts, one of the oldest medical texts, *Recipes for 52 Ailments*, and one of the earliest copies of *Laozi* (Lao Tzu).

The book provides a detailed map of the burial artifacts, accurately re-creating how items were originally arranged in the four-sided tomb chambers.

Throughout the book, readers can also find interactive features, including fold-out pages, pop-ups, and folders, each offering opportunities to engage more deeply with the artifacts.

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Above: The book cover. **Bottom right:** Illustrations of the double-layer six-compartment lacquer cosmetic box (above) and the Six-Bo Gaming Set with Black Lacquer and Red Decoration (below), both unearthed in 1973. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From left down: The coffin chamber in the Mawangdui Han Tomb No 1, the layout of the four layers of coffins, and exquisite lacquer finish patterns on the body of the coffins. Pictures of costume types and styles. A line-drawn pattern of the T-shaped silk painting (*feiyi*, soul banner), which faithfully represents the core elements of the original painting and its three-tier cosmic structure: Heaven, Earth and the Underworld.

Finding fragile fragments of iron

By PENG CHAO in Chengdu
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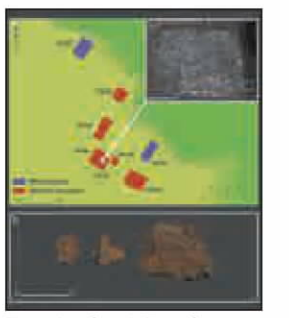
Archaeologists have confirmed that the iron fragments unearthed from Sanxingdui, a renowned archaeological site in Guanghan, Sichuan province, are made of pure meteoritic iron — the earliest such discovery in Southwest China.

The study, conducted by Sichuan University's School of Archaeology and Museology in collaboration with the Sichuan Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology, was recently published in the international academic journal Archaeological Research in Asia.

The three iron fragments, dating back to the late Shang Dynasty (c. 16th century-11th century BC), can be pieced together into a complete axe-shaped artifact measuring about 20 centimeters long and five to eight cm wide.

Li Haichao, a professor at Sichuan University's School of Archaeology and Museology, says these fragments were found in 2021 in Sanxingdui's No 7 sacrificial pit, but severe corrosion had left their shape unrecognizable.



From top inset: Top-down view of the artifact-bearing deposit in No 7 sacrificial pit at Sanxingdui archaeological site in Guanghan, Sichuan province. Relative location of the iron fragments within the pit. The three iron fragments unearthed from the pit. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Given their fragile condition, the excavation team block-lifted the fragments with the surrounding soil and transferred them to a lab for conservation, he says.

Metallographic and compositional analyses reveal that the fragments are high in nickel — approximately 20 percent — and have a uniform alloy composition, features that cannot be achieved by any known smelting technology from the late Shang period. These characteristics, however, align perfectly with meteoritic iron.

To date, 13 meteoritic iron artifacts have been identified in China, most of which were found in the Central Plains and northern regions, including Beijing, Hebei and Henan provinces. The meteoritic iron artifact excavated from Sanxingdui, the first in Southwest China, is also the largest of its kind in the country, according to the study.

Unlike the Central Plains, where meteoritic iron was commonly used only as inserts in bronze objects, Sanxingdui crafted an entire artifact from meteoritic iron, highlighting a distinctive metallurgical practice, Li says.

"The discovery not only fills a critical gap in the region's metallurgical records, but also provides new insights into early iron use both regionally and globally," he adds.

While the axe-shaped artifact's discovery in a ritual pit suggests cultural significance, its precise function remains uncertain, according to the researchers.

Cut marks on many Sanxingdui bronzes, including masks and vessels, indicate the use of high-hardness tools. This suggests that meteoritic iron objects were used to modify bronze items, though further evidence is needed.

"The specific type of meteorite the artifact came from is also unknown," Li says, adding that further study will focus on high-resolution characterization to determine its exact classification.

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CULTURE



The musician who preserved Muqam

A new biographical film revisits ethnomusicologist Wan Tongshu's extraordinary efforts to save a tradition and legacy from disappearing, **Xu Fan** reports.

In the spring of 1951, Wan Tongshu, a 28-year-old teacher at the Central Conservatory of Music, was entrusted with an urgent mission: to preserve the fading melodies of the Xinjiang Uygur Muqam, a centuries-old musical tradition then on the brink of disappearance.

Wan set off for Xinjiang with his wife and infant daughter, embarking on a grueling journey of nearly 3,000 kilometers by train, truck and military aircraft. After arriving in Urumqi — then known as Dihua — he met Turdi Ahun, a folk artist in his 70s believed to be the only person in Xinjiang capable of performing the complete Twelve Muqam, a major regional style among different schools of the Muqam tradition.

Hailed as the "mother of Uygur music", Muqam is a vast artistic system that blends singing, dance, folk music and classical composition. It has been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

But in the early 1950s, the tradition faced an uncertain future. Before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, many folk artists lived in poverty and occupied a low social status, leaving traditional art forms vulnerable to decline. Against that backdrop, Wan devoted himself to preserving what would later become one of the most treasured expressions of Uygur cultural heritage.

Recently, the biographical film *Wan Tongshu* was released nationwide, drawing renewed attention to the ethnomusicologist's decades-long dedication to safeguarding Muqam — a story that had long remained little known outside musical circles.

Structured through modern-day flashbacks, the film primarily unfolds between 1951 and 1960, chronicling how Wan, assisted by his wife and fellow experts, overcame obstacles to record and notate the music scores. One of the greatest challenges was securing one of only two wire recorders then available in China — a request that ultimately received special approval from Premier Zhou Enlai after appeals were made to the central government.

The hardships extended far beyond difficult living conditions. During his years in Xinjiang, Wan suffered the devastating loss of his three-month-old child to measles. Yet even after completing the notation of scores of the full set of the Twelve Muqam — which comprises around 300 melodies, 4,000 lines of lyrics and more than 20 hours of music — he chose not to leave.

Driven by his passion for the art form, Wan continued traveling across remote parts of Xinjiang, from Qira county to Kashgar and Hami, documenting melodies, lyrics and performance styles before they vanished.

Jiang Hong, the film's screenwriter, told China Daily that the project began in 2023, the year Wan died at the age of 99 in Xiamen, Fujian province, prompting widespread mourning within China's music community.





A Xinjiang native himself, Jiang said he had never heard Wan's name until then, despite being 49 years old — a realization that revealed how easily such stories can fade with time.

To reconstruct Wan's life, the creative team combed through archival documents, old photographs and interviews with people connected to that era. One of their most valuable sources was Wan's wife, Lian Xiaomei, who moved with him to Xiamen in 1999 to live closer to their children.

Lian, then 93, spent a week sharing memories with the production team in a hotel room in Xiamen. "Her memory was still remarkably sharp. She had a special charm that captivated listeners, even when recounting painful experiences from the past," Jiang recalls.

Many details in the film came directly from those conversations. Jiang recounts how the couple once used a hand-cranked generator to power a wire recorder because Xinjiang's electricity supply was unstable at the time. The machine relied on an extremely thin recording wire that frequently tangled, forcing the couple to untwist it by hand, sometimes cutting their fingers in the process.



From top: A scene from the biopic *Wan Tongshu* features the titular ethnomusicologist hugging Turdi Ahun, a folk artist who was then the only person in 1950s Xinjiang capable of performing the complete Twelve Muqam, one of the major regional styles of the Xinjiang Uygur Muqam. Wan and his wife Liang Xiaomei work on recording the melodies of the Twelve Muqam. A premiere of the film was held in Beijing with actor Li Jian (second left) and actress An Dong (left), who respectively portray Wan and his wife in the movie. A still from the film portrays the friendship between Wan and Ahun.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

To better re-create Wan's journey and the dissemination of Muqam across Xinjiang, the crew retraced the ethnomusicologist's footsteps, traveling more than 17,000 kilometers across 17 locations.

"When Wan first heard the Muqam, he was astonished," Jiang says. "He described it as a musical world he had never encountered before. He once said that piano keys only have black and white notes, but Muqam exists somewhere in between — making it difficult to record accurately at the time."

The film has since received a warm response in Xinjiang, with audiences from multiple ethnic groups, such as Han, Uygur and Kazakh viewers, expressing deep emotion after screenings.

"The friendship between Wan and Ahun transcended differences in age, ethnicity and lifestyle. That long-lasting bond — the way they cherished each other through their entire lives — is precisely the artistic value and emotional core of the film," shares Jiang.

Director Xirzat Yahup says many viewers have told him they were fascinated by the poetic singing style of Muqam, which explores various themes like love and life. "Some audience members said they wanted to hear more after the film ended. Fortunately, thanks to Wan's recordings and research, many Muqam troupes and institutions have been established across Xinjiang. Today, audiences can travel there and experience complete live performances," he adds.

Rao Shuguang, president of the China Film Critics Association, praises the production for naturally depicting the harmonious coexistence of different ethnic groups. "The movie serves not only as a cinematic tribute to Muqam, but also as a vivid reflection of Xinjiang's social and cultural history," comments Rao.

Contact the writer at xufan@chinadaily.com.cn

Veteran author's Xinjiang story set for the screen

By FANG AIQING and **MAO WEIHUA** in Urumqi

A film project adapting a short story by veteran writer Wang Meng was launched on May 18 at Tianshan Film Studio in Urumqi, the capital of Northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. The film, *In Ili*, draws on Wang's six-year experience in the region's Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture.

Born in October 1934, Wang is a recipient of the national honorary title "People's Artist" and a former minister of culture. From the ages of 29 to 45, he spent 16 years in Xinjiang, mostly in Urumqi and Ili. In 1965, he went to what is now the Bayandai town of Ili's Yining city, where he lived and worked with local farmers, learned the Uygur language and became drawn to the local culture. Those six years became the basis for his short story collection *In Ili*, written from 1983-84.

According to The Writers Publishing House, the work's publisher, it's set for global translation and publication. Projects for foreign-language editions, including English, Spanish and French, have already been approved.

The film will adapt one piece from it, titled *Pale Gray Eyes*. The story is told from the first-person perspective of a writer named Lao Wang — a surname he shares with the author himself. It follows his observations of and interactions with a young carpenter and his wife, as well as various villagers. In their shared life and emotions, the community supports one another.

At the launch ceremony, Wang expressed hope that the film would be grounded in life and would create rich, well-rounded personalities. "The people of Xinjiang's various ethnic groups are diverse, yet they share warmth, vitality, wisdom, optimism, romance and imagination," he said, adding that they have their own unique ways of understanding and solving problems.

Wang said his characters have distinct personalities and wisdom that fit their time. They're friendly, harmonious and tolerant. For him, the work vividly shows how different ethnic groups in Xinjiang share a common destiny, a common life and common emotions, as well as how their cultures exchange, integrate and interact.

According to Jing Luzhou, Party secretary of Tianshan Film Studio, the production team conducted field research in Ili in September 2025, and the script has been through several rounds of revisions. Shooting is scheduled to begin in the second half of this year, with release expected by the end of 2027.

Xirzat Yahup, the film's director, noted that the crew's goal is to capture the optimism and wisdom of the people who are deeply rooted in the land. "They are optimistic. They talk with pride. There's a lot of philosophy about life in Wang's writing, and I believe this will leave room for the audience to reflect on life's truths," he said.

"That requires careful thinking about how to translate these ideas onto the screen through cinematography."

While refining the script, he said, they are scouting various filming locations in Ili and considering re-creating village scenes of the 1960s, as decades of development have brought tremendous changes to Bayandai.



> "They are optimistic. They talk with pride. There's a lot of philosophy about life in Wang's writing, and I believe this will leave room for the audience to reflect on life's truths. That requires careful thinking about how to translate these ideas onto the screen through cinematography."
>
> **Xirzat Yahup,** film director

Xirzat Yahup's biographical film *Wan Tongshu* is currently in theaters. It tells how musicologist Wan Tongshu (1923-2023) and his wife Lian Xiaomei, both from the Central Conservatory of Music, dedicated their lives in Xinjiang to preserving Muqam, a traditional performing art form combining music, dance and poetry. The Uygur Muqam of Xinjiang was inscribed on UNESCO's intangible cultural heritage list in 2005.

From 1951 to 1960, Wan and his wife recorded, transcribed, collated and published the musical scores for Muqam, helping to pass down and promote the art form. Wang, a former colleague of Wan in Urumqi, has recently written a film review highlighting Muqam and reminiscing about his old friends.

Contact the writers at fangaiqing@chinadaily.com.cn



Top: The book cover of Wang Meng's short story collection *In Ili*.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Above:** Veteran writer Wang (second right) pens the calligraphic title for the film *In Ili*, which is an adaptation of his short story collection of the same name.
FANG AIQING / CHINA DAILY

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SPORTS

SOCCER

EAGLES SWOOP TO 1ST EURO TITLE

Crystal Palace wins cagey Conference League final, setting up a possible sweep for English clubs in Europe



Crystal Palace players lift the UEFA Conference League trophy after beating Rayo Vallecano at Red Bull Arena in Leipzig, Germany, on Wednesday. **Inset:** Jean-Philippe Mateta (left) celebrates scoring the winner. AGENCIES

Crystal Palace didn't want to be in the third-tier Conference League and Jean-Philippe Mateta nearly left the club. On Wednesday, it was Mateta's goal that won Palace the title.

A season that began with pleas to play in a higher competition ended with Palace's first-ever European trophy as Mateta's goal lifted his team to a 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano in the final.

The French forward, who was close to leaving in January before a transfer to AC Milan collapsed, scored on a rebound in the 51st minute after Rayo goalkeeper Augusto Batalla parried Adam Wharton's long-range shot.

"I feel fantastic! ... First time in Europe, we did it! Now I just want to celebrate, I just want to party," Mateta told TNT Sports.

"It's incredible. We did everything. I told you about the intensity we were going to bring. I'm tired right now. I gave everything."

As well as with providing outgoing coach Oliver Glasner with the perfect send-off, Palace's win keeps English teams on track for a sweep of the three main European men's club competitions.

Aston Villa lifted the Europa League trophy last week and Arsenal will face Paris Saint-Germain in the Champions League final on Saturday.

From appeals to celebrations

It was a triumphant end to a season that began with Palace in court, appealing in vain against being demoted from the second-tier Europa League, the competition it had originally qualified for by winning the FA Cup, in a dispute over ownership rules. Palace fans spent the season chanting against UEFA and getting fined for it.

Mateta said of the traveling Palace fans at Red Bull Arena: "I'm always with them. They support me as a player a lot, and the team. They're always behind us and we did that for them, too."

Palace's win lands it a Europa League spot for next season, much to the delight of Glasner, who said Wednesday he wanted to watch the team's progress on TV next season.

Palace fans set the tone before kickoff with a giant banner like an airport departures board. "Europa League: Boarding" it read.

Glasner announced in January he'd leave at the end of the season when his contract expires. The Austrian has been in charge since February 2024 and led Palace to its first major trophy last season in the FA Cup. It's not clear yet where he'll go next.

It was the third time in the Conference League's five-season history that an English team has lifted the trophy after West Ham in 2023 and Chelsea a year ago. Some Rayo fans were seen in tears at the final whistle. It was a first major final for a team so often in the shadow of its neighbors Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid.

A shot bouncing off both posts

Mateta's goal lit up the final after a cagey first half didn't produce a single shot on target.

He showed lightning-quick reactions to knock in the rebound after an initial long-range shot from Wharton, who was a commanding presence in midfield.

Yeremy Pino came within a whisker of making it 2-0 soon afterward when he hit a freekick that bounced off one goal post, along the goal line and away off the second post.

Rayo's best chance came early on, when Alexandre Alemao skewed a volley wide off a cross from Pep Chavarria. Tyrick Mitchell missed the target with a diving header for Palace at the end of the first half.

Fan clashes ahead of game

German police said earlier Wednesday that there had been clashes between Palace and Rayo fans. Two people were detained and two police officers sustained minor injuries, police added.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA



Crystal Palace's Evann Guessand (left) celebrates next to a distraught Pathe Ciss of Rayo Vallecano following the final whistle on Wednesday. AP

Team where it belongs after yearlong 'detour', says Glasner

Departing Crystal Palace manager Oliver Glasner toasted Wednesday's UEFA Conference League final victory by saying the club was back where it belongs after a "year's detour".

Jean-Philippe Mateta's second-half goal took Palace to a 1-0 win over Rayo Vallecano and a maiden European triumph. It also earned it a place in the Europa League.

Palace's FA Cup win last season qualified it for this season's Europa League, but UEFA revoked its place in the second-tier competition due to multi-club ownership rules.

"I said to the players, get now what you deserve after winning the FA Cup — the Europa League," Glasner said.

"Now, after a one-year delay, the club, the fans, the players get what they deserve.

"Sometimes you have to take a detour, and, now, we're there."

In January, Glasner announced he would leave the club in the summer. Palace had never won a trophy when he arrived, but he leaves having lifted the FA Cup, Community Shield and now a first European trophy.

"We hear a lot when the fans say thank you to us for giving them the best day of their lives and all these emotions. And I said thank you to the players, because it's the same for me," Glasner said.

"Because they gave me great, incredible days in my life, and that's what I really appreciate."

Glasner said his time at Palace was "a good chapter to read in the Crystal Palace book, but other chapters will follow".

He said he had made no plans for his future other than "flying back to London with a hangover" after taking charge of his last match with the club.

Speculation has swirled about the Austrian's future since he announced his departure in January, with reports of a move to another Premier League club or a potential return to Germany.

Glasner though said his only plan was to celebrate.

He said he does not have the "desire or the energy to speak with another club, because I felt duty bound to give 100 percent of Oliver Glasner (to Palace)."

"I haven't even thought about anything past tomorrow," he continued.

"Today's a day for celebrating, and anyone who knows me, knows I'm completely focused on this and haven't been able to do anything else except concentrate on the final.

"And, now, I can really let loose, and I'm going to do that with the players today. Then, tomorrow, I'll fly back to London with a bit of a hangover. And then it's time to get settled in and go back to my family."

Glasner added: "Everything I say today will be wrong tomorrow. That's why all I know for sure is that I'll be celebrating with the players today, drinking a few beers, and flying back to London tomorrow."

Defender Tyrick Mitchell said winning the Conference League felt like "pure delight" after a decade at the London club.

"It's amazing, it's the same feeling that we had when we won the FA Cup."



Oliver Glasner holds the trophy on Wednesday. REUTERS

AGENCIES

Top scorer Depay included in Netherlands World Cup squad despite injury worries

ZEIST, Netherlands — The Netherlands' top scorer Memphis Depay recovered from injury just in time for coach Ronald Koeman to include him in his 26-man squad for the World Cup next month.

Depay was one of three players who have recently returned from injury to be selected Wednesday by Koeman. That was despite his limited playing time leading into soccer's global showcase, being hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico.

Depay, the Netherlands' all-time leading scorer with 55 goals, on Sunday made his first appearance in several weeks for his Brazilian club Corinthians after recovering from a thigh injury.

"I'd have preferred ... it happened earlier," Koeman said, adding he'd have to "wait and see" just how fit Depay is.

If Depay struggles for fitness, Koeman also has in-form Roma forward Donyell Malen at his disposal.

Justin Kluivert, the son of Dutch great Patrick Kluivert, has also just returned to fitness after surgery to repair a knee injury and was picked along with defender Jurrien Timber, fresh from winning the Premier League with Arsenal, but also only recently returned to fitness. Timber's brother Quinten also was named in the squad.

Koeman called up one debutant — West Ham winger Crysencio Summerville — and surprisingly left out Liverpool wingback Jeremie Frimpong, saying he often struggles with injuries.

Asked about his qualities, Koeman hailed Summerville's "speed, action and his play without the ball in defense", adding: "(He's) very trustworthy."

Midfielder Xavi Simons was ruled out of the tournament in April after rupturing his anterior cruciate ligament in a match for Tottenham against Wolverhampton, and defensive stalwarts Stefan de Vrij and Matthijs de Ligt are also absent due to injury.



Memphis Depay made his return for Corinthians on May 24 after recovering from injury, just in time to make the Netherlands World Cup squad. AFP

In a bubble

The Netherlands is a three-time World Cup finalist, but has never won international soccer's greatest prize. It lost in 1974 to then West Germany, in 1978 to host Argentina and to Spain in 2010, when Andres Iniesta scored a goal late in extra time.

Koeman was realistic about his seventh-ranked team's chances in North America.

"Well, we're competing to win, but I'm well aware of the reality and what other countries can bring. So, yeah, nothing is impossible, and that's what we're going for," he said. "I'm convinced that we can go far, and that we have a team that is hard to beat. But, to win a few matches against big countries, that is still a long way off."

Koeman said he was going to avoid the news and social media during preparations and throughout the tournament.

"You are in a bubble, focused on performance ... everything else that comes from outside is a distraction," he said.

And Koeman doesn't want to get involved in activities outside his team's media commitments at the tournament — regardless of who is asking.

"Don't think that I'm going to a photo opportunity with the team because (US President Donald) Trump, (FIFA president Gianni) Infantino want us to stand in front of a church or some water for a picture," he said. "No, that's not going to happen."

Koeman captained the Netherlands when the US last hosted the World Cup in 1994, when the Dutch lost 3-2 to eventual champion Brazil in the quarterfinals. He also was in the team when the Netherlands won its only major international title, the 1988 European Championship.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Trade momentum
High-tech products to bolster export growth
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New experiential trends reshape retail market
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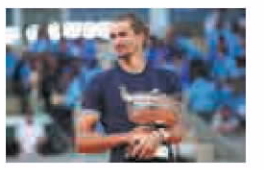

Victory at last
Zverev claims his 1st Grand Slam title after years of bitter setbacks
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 TUESDAY, JUNE 9, 2026



Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, inspects the honor guard of the three services of the Korean People's Army, accompanied by Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK, on Monday during a grand welcoming ceremony held by Kim for Xi. DING LIN / XINHUA

Xi calls for deeper China-DPRK ties

He says in meeting with Kim that the two sides should pool wisdom, strength for greater progress of relations

Inside

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Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, said on Monday that the firm stance of the CPC and the Chinese government on highly valuing the traditional friendship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will not change, and he pledged to work with DPRK top leader Kim Jong-un to keep bilateral relations advancing with the times and achieve greater progress in bilateral ties.

Xi made the remarks in Pyongyang, the capital of the DPRK, during his talks with Kim, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK.

Xi arrived in Pyongyang on Monday for a two-day state visit to the DPRK, his first to the neighboring country in seven years and his first overseas trip this year.

During talks with Kim, Xi said that after seven years, he was very pleased to once again visit the beautiful city of Pyongyang, and felt especially warm and familiar.

He expressed his readiness to work with Kim to take this visit as an opportunity to strengthen top-level planning and strategic guidance for China-DPRK relations in the new era, keep bilateral relations advancing with the times and achieve greater progress in bilateral ties, in order to better benefit the two countries and peoples, and make positive contributions to peace, stability, development and prosperity in the region and the world.

Stressing that China and the DPRK are both socialist countries led by communist parties, Xi said that the traditional friendship between the two countries is rooted in their shared ideals and beliefs as well as their common goals, and is backed by a profound historical foundation, a solid political basis and strong emotional bonds.

Xi noted that friendship passed down from generation to generation, a shared future and mutual support have always been the defining features of China-DPRK relations.

No matter how the international situation changes, the CPC and the Chinese government's firm stance on highly valuing China-DPRK traditional friendship will not change, the firm support for Kim in leading the DPRK's socialist cause will not change, and the firm commitment to safeguarding the shared interests of the two countries and preserving a favorable strategic environment will not change, Xi said.

He pointed out that, in the face of profound changes unseen in a century that are accelerating across the world, the two sides should take a broad and long-term view, build on past achievements and open up a new future, draw wisdom from the development process of the relations between the two parties and the two countries, seize opportunities in the prevailing trend of human history, inject new contemporary connotations and strong impetus into the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, and open up a brighter prospect for the socialist cause of the two countries as well as regional peace and development.

*See **Visit,** page 3*



President Xi Jinping meets with DPRK President Kim Jong-un before their talks at the Kumsusan State Guesthouse in Pyongyang, the DPRK, on Monday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

Mega dam expansion to boost Yangtze economic belt

By **ZHENG XIN**
zhengxin@chinadaily.com.cn

China launched a colossal infrastructure project on Monday to expand the Three Gorges Dam's navigation system in Yichang, Hubei province, marking another milestone effort designed to eliminate chronic shipping capacity bottlenecks and supercharge the industrial arteries of the nation's vast economy.

With a total investment of approximately 77.2 billion yuan ($11.39 billion), the mega project comprises two core components: a new channel at the Three Gorges Hub and a shipping capacity expansion at the downstream Gezhouba Dam.

At the Three Gorges Hub, two new ship locks will be built after excavating the mountain on the left bank, parallel to the existing dual-line locks. Once completed, the hub will boast a four-lane lock configuration, according to operator China Three Gorges Corp.

Combined with the existing ship lift, the hub's total annual throughput capacity will surge to 336 million metric tons, the operator said. In 2025, the total freight volume passing through the Three Gorges Hub stood at 173 million metric tons.

The concurrent Gezhouba expansion involves dismantling its No 3 lock to construct two new single-stage locks on the left side, thus expanding the approach channels. This will take Gezhouba's total capacity to 360 million tons annually, it said.

The Yangtze River Economic Belt, spanning 11 provinces and municipalities, accounts for over 40 percent of the nation's population and GDP. Its industries, ranging from metallurgy and automotives to high-tech manufacturing, rely heavily on the river for transportation of 85 percent of the region's iron ore and foreign trade goods, as well as 83 percent of its coal.

Su Fengming, a researcher at the National Development and Reform Commission's Institute of Comprehensive Transportation, highlighted the waterway's indispensable economic role.

"In 2025, the Yangtze River Economic Belt's GDP exceeded 65 trillion yuan, with mainline port cargo throughput hitting 4.2 billion tons — surpassing the national railway cargo throughput total by over 80 percent," Su said.

Su noted that water transportation costs a mere one-fifth of rail transit, solidifying the river's position as the economic "main artery" as manufacturing and industrial bases increasingly shift toward the inland geographic center.

According to Niu Xinqiang, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, mainline freight volume on the Yangtze River has grown continuously over the past two decades, rising from 650 million tons in 2005 to 4.2 billion tons by 2025 — ranking first among global inland rivers for 20 consecutive years.

This rapid growth has strained the existing infrastructure's ship handling capacity, he said.

Niu said he believes that the new channel will elevate the hub's one-way design capacity from roughly 50 million tons to 168 million tons by 2050. This will accelerate the flow of key production factors and help bridge the gap between the nation's eastern and western regions, he said.

Upgrading RCEP can help ASEAN partnership

WORLD WATCH
By Ong Tee Keat

Against a somber backdrop of global volatility — characterized by the resurgence of protectionist tariffs, fractured supply chains and persistent conflicts in the Middle East — the necessity for closer collaboration among Asian economies has never been more acute.

As the traditional pillars of global trade face unprecedented strain, the East Asian region is increasingly being looked upon as the world's primary engine of growth and stability.

In this context, China continues to serve as the regional economic stabilizer. Its performance in the first quarter of 2026 manifested remarkable resilience, defying the "decoupling" narratives that have dominated Western discourse. With solid year-on-year GDP growth of 5 percent in the first quarter, underpinned by a significant 15 percent surge in total exports and imports, China has injected much-needed momentum into the regional economy. This growth provides a vital anchor, offering a sense of predictability in a landscape otherwise rattled by geopolitical tensions and supply chain shifts.

From the Chinese perspective, Malaysia is always well remembered for its proactiveness in bridging China with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations by inviting China to the ASEAN Foreign Ministers' Meeting in 1991. This laid the foundation for the China-ASEAN dialogue partnership.

Continuing the legacy of inclusive multilateralism, Malaysia's rotational chairmanship of ASEAN last year saw the historic inauguration of the Gulf Cooperation Council-China-ASEAN tripartite summit. This milestone further corroborated Malaysia's role as a bridge builder, linking diverse economic groupings to promote a more integrated Global South.

As China has remained Malaysia's top trading partner since 2009, the bilateral relationship is poised to ascend to a "high-value and regional strategic phase". The catalyst for this elevation is the imminent fruition of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area (CAFTA) 3.0, ratified under the Malaysian chairmanship, thus making Malaysia a natural entry point for deeper regional integration.

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INSIDE
Classics keep enduring in modern times
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CityDance

YALU RIVER'S UNENDING FLOW

Decades after war scarred its banks, the waterway remains a living conduit of blood-forged camaraderie and the quiet, everyday friendships bridging China, DPRK



The Yalu River Broken Bridge (front) and the China-DPRK Friendship Bridge are seen from Dandong, Liaoning province, in February. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **LIU JIANQIAO** in Dandong, Liaoning, and **WU YONG** in Shenyang

Every morning, residents of Dandong, in Northeast China's Liaoning province, stroll along the banks of the Yalu River. Across the water is Sinuiju, a city in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, close enough to see apartment buildings and passing vehicles.

For generations, the river has served not only as a border, but as a witness to friendship, the resistance to war, and everyday exchanges between the two peoples.

More than 70 years ago, the Chinese People's Volunteers, or CPV, crossed the Yalu River into the Korean Peninsula, marching to fight alongside the Korean people against the United States' aggression.

At that time, Dandong, then named Andong, played a strategic role, with residents mobilizing every possible resource to support the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53). Their efforts gave rise to countless stories of sacrifice and solidarity that continue to resonate to this day.

Established in 1958, the Memorial Hall of the War to Resist US Aggression and Aid Korea in Dandong serves to safeguard a collective memory, housing more than 20,000 artifacts and over 30,000 documents and materials related to the war.

The artifacts preserve stories of soldiers, workers and residents whose efforts supported the war, inviting visitors to reflect on the enduring legacy of a time that shaped the course of nations.

During this intense conflict, Dandong emerged as a vital rear base, said Zhang Xiaoying, deputy director of the memorial hall.

"The city then became a crucial lifeline, offering unwavering support to the front lines. Residents and resources were mobilized to provide whatever was needed — be it manpower, supplies or even blood — demonstrating remarkable dedication and sacrifice," she said.

"This collective effort played a pivotal role in securing victory, marking the city's extraordinary contributions."

The Yalu River Bridge (China-DPRK Friendship Bridge) and the Yalu River Broken Bridge span the river, both of which served as crucial transport routes for supplies during wartime.

"The Broken Bridge, originally the first road bridge across the Yalu River, witnessed the ravages of conflict when the US Air Force destroyed the DPRK's side in the 1950s," Zhang said. "Meanwhile, the Yalu River Bridge, initially constructed as a railway bridge, was converted into a combined road-rail bridge to meet wartime demands."

Although the bridge was repeatedly bombed, the steadfast people of Dandong continuously repaired it, ensuring its role as a lifeline for the war effort, she said.

Zhang stressed that the spirit of sacrifice and dedication from those days continues to inspire generations.





Above: A martyrs' monument stands in Anju, DPRK. **Left:** An inscription by the late DPRK leader Kim Il-sung is displayed at the former Chinese People's Volunteers Headquarters in Hoechang, DPRK, honoring the CPV's wartime sacrifices.

"Even today, many people in Dandong contribute their efforts to the friendship between China and the DPRK," she said.

Zhao Fengqi, a faculty member at Liaodong University in Dandong, is a prime example of this spirit. He worked for a year at the Representative Office for the Commemoration of Martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteers in the DPRK, responsible for honoring the fallen Chinese soldiers.

"In 1950, my grandmother enlisted as a medic with the CPV, treating the wounded in the rear areas of Dandong," Zhao said. "Her spirit of dedication and the example she set have given me a deeper understanding of the history of the CPV."

Last year, after a rigorous selection process, Zhao was assigned to Pyongyang to undertake commemorative work for the martyrs of the CPV, an assignment he gladly accepted.

"In regular interactions with DPRK counterparts, we've found them to be extremely meticulous and friendly," he said. "They place great importance on our efforts to honor the martyrs of the CPV and have demonstrated a high degree of dedication and responsibility in the maintenance and management of the memorial parks."

He recalled his initial visit to the CPV Martyrs' Cemetery in Kangdong County, east of Pyongyang, during the Tomb Sweeping Day last year, which left a profound impression on him.

Inside the cemetery, four joint burial tombs hold the remains of 1,383 CPV martyrs who bravely laid down their lives in the war.

"It was only when I was there that I truly felt the indomitable fighting spirit of the CPV, who fought valiantly in the heat of battle," Zhao said. "It made me realize that the friendship between the Chinese and DPRK people is a bond forged in blood."

A native of Dandong, Zhao described life in the DPRK as very familiar and comforting to him, emphasizing the strong similarities between the two places in terms of cuisine and daily habits.

"Flowing between China and the DPRK, the Yalu River has long served as a shared lifeline for communities on both sides," he said. "Beyond its natural role, it has borne witness to pivotal moments in history while nurturing sustained cultural, economic and people-to-people exchanges between the two countries."

Spanning the river are not only physical bridges, but individuals like Zhao — living links who connect the two countries.

In September 2007, professors Huang Li and her husband Lei Huisheng, both from the College of International Education at Liaodong University, departed from Dandong by train, crossed the China-DPRK Friendship Bridge, and arrived in Pyongyang.

"We worked there for a year," Huang recalled. "We returned in 2010; Lei stayed for two years, and I stayed for three. Our third stint began in 2014 and lasted until January 2020. During that period, Lei worked there for over five years, while I was there from March 2017 to January 2020."

Huang, who is also director of the Chinese Language Center at Pyongyang University of Foreign Studies, said that in daily communications with DPRK students, the questions they ask most often center on contemporary China, reflecting their strong curiosity about the country's rapid development.

"Topics ranging from architecture, fashion and sports to music, internet slang and trending expressions frequently come up in class," Huang said. "What interests them most, however, is China's economy."

Over the years, their interactions with students and colleagues extended far beyond the classroom. Through daily work and ordinary moments of life, they developed deep and enduring friendships with their DPRK colleagues.

Lei recalled an experience that left a lasting impression on him and reflected the close relationships he developed with his DPRK colleagues.

One of his colleagues, surnamed Park, headed the foreign affairs department of the publishing house, which was responsible for international publications. He fractured the top of his femur bone in a serious car accident.

"At the time, he had already purchased an artificial femoral head, but he still lacked bone cement and other necessary medical and sterilization supplies," Lei said. "Since I was in China at the time, I offered to help him obtain what he needed."

Lei contacted a former classmate with a medical background, who helped procure the supplies that were later delivered to Park through the Chinese embassy.

"The surgery was a success," Lei said. "Park was extremely grateful afterward."

Looking back on their years in the DPRK, Huang and Lei said the friendships they formed remain among their most treasured memories.

The Yalu River has witnessed war and peace, tears and laughter, and generations of exchanges between neighboring peoples. Along its banks, countless ordinary individuals have played their own small but meaningful roles in bringing the two sides closer together.

Like the river itself, those bonds continue to flow across borders, connecting hearts and carrying forward a friendship forged over decades.

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Online
See more by scanning the code.



Tourists take pictures at the Yalu River Broken Bridge in Dandong on Oct 14. YU HAIYANG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE



A train from Dandong crosses the China-DPRK Friendship Bridge in March. PAN YULONG / XINHUA

DANDONG, A CITY MORE THAN A GATEWAY



Liu Jianqiao
Reporter's log

As dawn breaks over the Yalu River, the Weihao Farmers Market in Dandong, China's largest border city in Liaoning province, is already coming alive with the bustle of early-morning trade.

The air is filled with the salty smell of fresh seafood, the earthy aroma of just-harvested vegetables, and the constant hum of morning trade.

Alongside piles of bright red Dandong strawberries and baskets of fresh yellow clams are neatly packaged pollack and specialty foods imported from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea located across the river.

The scene offers a vivid glimpse into the close economic and cultural ties that continue to shape everyday life along the border.

"This is simply everyday life for us," said a resident while selecting fresh produce. "Dandong and Sinuiju (in the DPRK) face each other across the river. We share similar climates, so naturally our food, customs and ways of life also have much in common."

A nearby vendor, arranging goods at his stall, said the similarities on both sides of the river are a major draw for visitors.

"Many people come here because they are interested in the border culture," he said. "You can see those connections in the products people buy, the food they eat and the stories they share."

A tourist from Shanghai, browsing the market, highlighted "a unique atmosphere that you can't find anywhere else".

"You can see products from both sides of the river, and it gives you a better sense of how closely connected the communities are," he said.

Another visitor from Guangzhou said she had originally come to see the Yalu River Broken Bridge and learn more about the history of the area.

Beyond its commercial role, the market reflects the enduring people-to-people links that have developed over decades of interaction between communities along the Yalu River.

"The market was a pleasant surprise," said the visitor from Guangzhou. "You can experience the local culture firsthand, talk to people and see what daily life is like. It makes the city feel very vibrant."

The sense of familiarity that can be found in the market also extends into everyday life in Dandong.

A short walk from the market reveals storefronts where Chinese and Korean characters appear side by side.

Restaurants, grocery stores, trading companies and pharmacies alike often feature bilingual signs, reflecting the city's long-standing connections with the DPRK.

For professors Huang Li and Lei Huisheng from Liaodong University in Dandong, a couple who spent years teaching Chinese in Pyongyang, that connection often brings them to Songtaoyuan, a Korean-style restaurant in the city.

"When we miss our days there (in the DPRK), we come here for cold noodles and other traditional Korean dishes," Huang said. "The flavors are very authentic and remind us of our time there."

For the couple, the restaurant is more than a place to dine. It offers a familiar cultural experience and a chance to reconnect with memories of the years they spent working in the DPRK.

Such everyday experiences, they said, reflect the close cultural ties and people-to-people exchanges that have long linked communities on both sides of the river.

Dandong's significance extends far beyond trade and cuisine. It has long served as both a witness to and a participant in the evolving relationship between China and the DPRK.

The bustle of the Weihao Farmers Market, the familiar flavors of places like Songtaoyuan, and visitors' observations all offer glimpses into the close ties that connect communities on both sides of the Yalu River.

Drawing on its unique geographical location and deep historical ties, Dandong remains an important gateway for cross-border exchanges.

As the river flows quietly, it carries not only memories of a shared past but also the enduring connections among the two peoples that continue to bring the two neighboring countries closer together.

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XI'S VISIT

Xi says China-DPRK relations face new opportunities, missions

Strategic communication, mutual learning, practical cooperation, multilateral coordination highlighted

Relations between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea currently stand at a new historical starting point, facing new development opportunities and shouldering new missions of the times, Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, said on Monday.

Xi made the remarks in a signed article published in Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the DPRK, ahead of his state visit to the country on Monday and Tuesday, his first in seven years.

Xi said that he looks forward to meeting with Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, to discuss the traditional friendship between the two countries and exchange views on the overall development of bilateral relations.

Xi said that China and the DPRK are friendly socialist neighbors who stand by each other and share a common future.

No matter how times change or how the international landscape evolves, the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK remains unbreakable and enduring, constantly demonstrating vigorous vitality, Xi said.

Noting that top-level strategic guidance is the greatest strength of China-DPRK relations, Xi said that in recent years, he and Kim have held six meetings, maintaining close strategic communication and jointly drawing up a blueprint for the development of China-DPRK relations.

Xi also said that a shared socialist ideal is a defining feature of China-DPRK relations, and that the traditional friendship between the two countries, rooted in a shared future, forms the solid foundation of bilateral ties.

"High-level strategic coordination gives China-DPRK relations their contemporary significance," Xi said. "Promoting long-term peace and stability in the region, as well as world peace and stability, is a common pursuit of the two parties, the two countries and their peoples."



Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, and his wife, Peng Liyuan, pose for a photo with Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and his wife, Ri Sol-ju, at a welcoming banquet on Monday evening in Pyongyang, the DPRK. SHEN HONG / XINHUA

The two sides firmly support each other in safeguarding national sovereignty, security and development interests, and work together to uphold regional peace and tranquility, international fairness and justice, and the postwar international order, Xi said.

Noting that maintaining, consolidating and developing China-DPRK relations has always been an unwavering policy of the CPC and the Chinese government, Xi said that China stands ready to work with the DPRK to steer bilateral relations from a strategic perspective, keep China-DPRK relations abreast of the times and achieve greater development of the relationship.

The two sides should deepen strategic communication and firmly steer China-DPRK relations in the right direction, Xi said, calling for upholding the fine tradition of high-level exchanges between the two parties and the two countries, and maintaining close contacts like relatives.

The two sides should take the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance as an opportunity, strengthen exchanges at all levels and across party, government and military institutions, implement the important consensus reached by the two sides, and add fresh impetus to the development of bilateral relations.

Xi said the two countries should strengthen communication and mutual learning to jointly promote the steady development of the two countries' socialist cause.

China and the DPRK should support each other in pursuing socialist paths suited to their own national conditions, firmly safeguard the political security of both nations, continue to expand exchanges and cooperation between the two parties, and deepen exchanges of experience and mutual learning on party and state governance, Xi said.

The two countries should expand practical cooperation and continuously enhance the well-being and friendship of the two peoples, Xi said, adding that the two sides should enhance the alignment of development strategies, tap the potential for cooperation in various fields, share opportunities and promote development together, in order to better benefit the two peoples.

Xi also called for close multilateral coordination and firmly safeguarding international fairness and justice.

The two sides should strengthen strategic communication and coordination, and jointly uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law, Xi said, adding that the two sides should oppose hegemonism and power politics, and reject any scheme or action aimed at reviving militarism and undermining regional security and stability.

The two countries should jointly promote an equal and orderly multipolarization of the world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization, implement the four major global initiatives put forward by China, and work together to build a community with a shared future for humanity, he added.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

Visit: Further expansion of exchanges encouraged

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During the meeting, Xi put forward four proposals on developing China-DPRK relations.

The two sides should remain guided by the high-level exchanges and consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust, Xi said.

The strategic guidance by the top leaders of both nations is the greatest strength of China-DPRK relations, Xi added, noting that he stands ready to maintain close strategic communication with Kim and guide China-DPRK relations to continuously reach new heights.

Noting that this year marks the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, Xi said that both sides will hold grand commemorative events.

The relations between the two parties play an important guiding role in the development of China-DPRK relations, Xi said, calling for further expansion and invigoration of friendly exchanges at various levels and in various fields between the two parties, as well as the deepening of exchanges of experience and mutual learning on party and state governance.

Both sides should enhance exchanges in diplomacy, law enforcement, military affairs and other areas, implement the important consensus reached between the two leaders, and pool wisdom and strength for the development of China-DPRK relations, Xi said.

The two sides should stay committed to the goal of delivering benefits to the people and elevate the level of practical cooperation, Xi said.

China stands ready to work with the DPRK to strengthen the alignment of development strategies, and to expand practical cooperation in areas such as economy and trade, agriculture, construction, science and technology, and healthcare, to bring greater benefits to the two peoples, he added.





Left: President Xi Jinping and his wife, Peng Liyuan, are welcomed by Kim Jong-un, the top leader of the DPRK, and his wife, Ri Sol-ju, at the airport in Pyongyang, the DPRK, on Monday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA
Above: People from all walks of life in Pyongyang hold flags and flowers to welcome President Xi Jinping on Monday. SHEN HONG / XINHUA

Xi called on both sides to leverage the opportunity of the full reopening of border crossings and the resumption of civil aviation flights and international passenger trains to increase people-to-people exchanges and foster mutual interaction.

The two sides should uphold the inheritance of friendship as a driving force and strengthen the bonds between their peoples, Xi said, noting that the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, forged in blood, is a valuable shared asset of the two peoples.

China stands ready to work with the DPRK to preserve and properly manage the memorial facilities dedicated to the Chinese People's Volunteers martyrs in the DPRK, carry out distinctive programs on revolutionary traditions and youth education, and pass on the red legacy and traditional friendship between the two countries, Xi said.

China is also ready to work with the DPRK to make full use of each side's strengths and resources, enhance exchanges and cooperation in education, culture and the arts, tourism, sports, media, youth affairs, subnational engagement and sister-city relations, and ensure that the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK takes deeper root in the hearts of the two peoples, Xi said.

The Chinese president also called for upholding fairness and justice as a guiding principle to enrich the substance of strategic coordination. Xi said that, in response to the major question of where humanity is headed, he has proposed the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and the four global initiatives, which aim to steer global governance toward greater fairness and justice and have won broad support and positive responses from the international community, including the DPRK.

Noting that Asia is the common home where countries including China and the DPRK, thrive, Xi said that the two countries should strengthen strategic coordination, firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, and jointly uphold regional peace and development.

Calling Xi the most respected guest of the DPRK people, Kim said that his country extended the warmest and most cordial welcome to Xi, who is visiting the DPRK after a seven-year interval. Xi's choice of Pyongyang for his first overseas trip this year fully reflects the great importance he attaches to DPRK-China relations and the profound friendship between the two countries, which is a tremendous encouragement to the DPRK, Kim said.

The visit once again clearly demonstrates that the DPRK-China relationship is unbreakable, Kim said. Calling the bilateral ties time-tested, Kim said that the relations have always stood on the right side of history and championed autonomy and justice.

The special nature of the bilateral relations lies not only in the fact that the two countries are close neighbors, but also in the deep traditional friendship and shared ideals and convictions, which both sides cherish and are committed to carrying forward from generation to generation, Kim said.

He also recalled his meeting with Xi in Beijing last September, noting that since then, bilateral relations have achieved positive progress in various fields, bringing tangible benefits to the two peoples.

He voiced sincere appreciation for the important proposals put forward by Xi on advancing DPRK-China relations in the new era, adding that relevant departments of the DPRK will work closely with their Chinese counterparts and make every effort to fully implement the proposals, and promote new progress in bilateral exchanges and cooperation in areas such as economy and trade, infrastructure, science and technology, education, and people-to-people and cultural exchanges.

Kim noted that the concept of a community with a shared future for humanity and the four major global initiatives proposed by Xi carry profound significance for promoting world peace and development, and have won the support and appreciation of people around the world.

He also said that the international community has been undergoing unprecedented and profound changes in recent years, stating that the DPRK will unwaveringly uphold the one-China principle and firmly support China's policies and positions on safeguarding core interests.

On Monday evening, Xi and his wife, Peng Liyuan, attended a welcoming banquet hosted by Kim in Pyongyang. In his remarks at the banquet, Xi said that the relationship between China and the DPRK stands at a new historical starting point. He said that he reached an important consensus with Kim during the visit.

Following the banquet, Xi and Peng, along with Kim and his wife, Ri Sol-ju, watched an artistic performance at the Pyongyang Gymnasium.

Upon Xi's arrival earlier in the day, Kim and Ri welcomed Xi and Peng at the airport. After Xi walked down the stairs from the plane, Kim shook hands with him warmly.

Kim also held a grand welcoming ceremony for Xi at Kim Il-sung Square in Pyongyang. The top leaders of the two parties and the two countries jointly ascended the review stand. Amid a 21-gun salute, the military band played the national anthems of China and the DPRK.

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CHINA

Carrying on the legacy



The new *Dongpo* dragon boat cruises through a river channel in Chebei village, Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on Monday. To celebrate the upcoming Dragon Boat Festival, the village held a ceremony called *caiqing* to "awaken the spirit" of a dragon boat, allowing it to regain its "soul" and be ready for the upcoming races. Chebei boasts a rich dragon boat history, with its 158-year-old *Dongpo* being one of the city's oldest and best-kept boats. To preserve it, the original boat was sent for maintenance, with an identical replica, the new *Dongpo*, carrying on its legacy.

CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Classical studies can bridge civilizations, experts say

Second World Conference of Classics in Athens to enhance East-West dialogue

By **XU LIN**
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The world's talented minds gather again to seek inspiration from ancient wisdom.

The second World Conference of Classics will be held in Athens, Greece, on Tuesday and Wednesday as a landmark platform for dialogue between Eastern and Western scholars of classical studies.

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Experts believe Chinese classical studies embrace a vision of mutual learning among civilizations and the integration of Chinese and foreign perspectives.

On Nov 7, 2024, Chinese President Xi Jinping sent a congratulatory letter to the inaugural World Conference of Classics held in Beijing.

Xi expressed the hope that experts and scholars would embrace the responsibility of advancing classical studies, contribute to the preservation and development of civilizations, and enhance exchange and mutual learning among them.

Guided by the spirit of the congratulatory letter, classical studies in China have achieved remarkable progress in disciplinary development, talent cultivation, academic research and international exchange.

Over the past decade, institutions of higher learning like Peking University have launched experimental programs in classical studies. About a dozen universities have established research centers for classical studies. These efforts have laid the groundwork for the discipline's development in China.

In March 2025, Sichuan University established China's first fully independent Department of Classics with a complete institutional setup, offering a full training system covering bachelor's, master's and doctoral programs.

"Our department features an interdisciplinary framework that bridges Eastern and Western classical studies and integrates literature, history and philosophy," said Liu Juan, deputy director of the department.

Beyond courses in classical languages, the department offers Chinese classical studies focusing on classical texts of the pre-Qin period (before 221 BC) and the Qin (221-206 BC), as well as the Han (206 BC-AD 220) dynasties, Western classical studies rooted in Greek and Roman texts, and comparative classical studies centered on cross-civilization dialogue and mutual learning between China and the world.

"Establishing classical studies as an independent major helps train young scholars with solid professional grounding and a broad academic vision. It promotes interdisciplinary integration and innovative development, and is a forward-looking arrangement that meets the needs of the new era," said Li Changchun, an associate professor in the Department of Philosophy at Sun Yat-sen University in Guangzhou, Guangdong province.

In 2025, the National Social Science Fund of China listed classical studies as an independent first-level discipline. The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences also included classical studies in its funding program for endangered and less-studied disciplines.

Li noted that this is a crucial step in building the discipline of classical studies. Before that, classics researchers mainly relied on funding from other disciplines, and their research topics were often constrained by those fields. "Thanks to these policies, classics scholars are motivated to pursue more in-depth research and set research topics based on the needs of classical studies itself," Li added.

In his 2024 congratulatory letter, President Xi also emphasized China's commitment to the preservation and development of civilizations and said China is dedicated to enhancing international people-to-people exchanges and fostering global dialogue among civilizations.

He said China stands ready to work with other nations in implementing the Global Civilization Initiative, addressing shared challenges facing humanity and promoting the advancement of human civilization.

Such advocacy for cross-civilization communication and mutual learning is reflected in exchange programs for both academic scholars and young people.

The Center of Chinese and Greek Civilizations, or KELKIP, initiates an annual student exchange program under which Chinese students travel to various parts of Greece while Greek students visit different regions of China.

"Such exchanges enable classical civilizations to nourish and inspire future generations," said Wang Yong, secretary-general of the Chinese KELKIP, whose secretariat is based at Southwest University in Chongqing.

Wang further clarified the contemporary mission of Chinese scholars of classical studies, arguing that they should absorb and integrate the essence of human civilizations — including Chinese civilization — to foster dialogue between China and the world, deepen mutual understanding across civilizations and advance a community with a shared future for humanity.

Roger T. Ames, a humanities chair professor in the department of philosophy at Peking University, shares a similar perspective.

"In the plural, classical studies provide the opportunity for one culture to grow in its relationship to another — harmony in diversity," he said.

Ames said the classics move the international conversation from geopolitics to geocultural concerns, from an economic and political discourse to a dialogue on civilization. "Classics are quite simply the basis of human civilization, and areas of cooperation such as the Belt and Road Initiative are dependent upon respect for our different and yet complementary values."

He pointed out that Confucian values of inclusion, optimizing symbiosis, civility and interdependence, are needed to address human predicaments such as climate change and environmental degradation.

"Civilizational differences do not necessarily trigger conflicts. The key lies in continuous communication and mutual understanding, which transforms cultural divergences into starting points for cooperation and integrates others' experiences into elements that enrich one's own civilization," said Wang Huan, deputy director of the Institute for the Global History of Civilizations at Shanghai International Studies University.

Xing Yi in London and Tan Yingzi in Chongqing contributed to this story.

Growth: Success of any regional framework rests upon bedrock of trust

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From a macro-regional perspective, ASEAN serves as the central platform for East Asian economic integration. However, the region currently navigates a complex web of overlapping trade agreements — often referred to as the "spaghetti bowl" effect. While the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership — an ASEAN-led initiative — is the world's largest free trade group, it has yet to unleash its full potential.

The primary hurdle lies in the discrepancy between declaratory rhetoric and pragmatic utilization. Despite steady progress in tariff reductions and the harmonization of "rules of origin", the RCEP's utilization rates remain surprisingly low. For instance, in 2024, when China-Malaysia bilateral trade hit a record $212.4 billion, the utilization rate of RCEP rules was a mere 0.7 percent. Similarly, Vietnam's utilization rate stood at 1.8 percent, dwarfed by the 40.5 percent average for its various ASEAN+1 free trade agreements.

This disparity stems from the fact that entrepreneurs, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, favor the familiar and simpler procedures of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area over the more complex RCEP framework.

To make the RCEP relevant, there is an urgent need to review and upgrade its rules to ensure that they are complementary to, rather than at odds with, CAFTA 3.0.

The upcoming RCEP general review presents a critical window for its 15 signatories to "upgrade" the framework. The goal should be to match or exceed the standards set by CAFTA 3.0, specifically by tightening rules on digital data transfers and streamlining administrative hurdles.

In reality, the two core challenges confronting regional economic cooperation will always lie in the conundrums of translating macro-level visions into deliverable actions, in addition to rendering rules that truly serve the needs of businesses.

The RCEP framework includes a chapter on "Standards, Technical Regulations and Conformity Assessment Procedures" that seeks to reduce "technical barriers to trade" by enhancing transparency, encouraging international standards and promoting mutual recognition of conformity assessments.

This regulatory cooperation, intended to lower compliance costs and technical bottlenecks for businesses across the RCEP, provides an opportune dimension for Sino-Malaysian collaboration. By synchronizing standards in sectors such as electronics, automobiles, pharmaceuticals and halal food products across the RCEP, such cooperation helps reduce the non-tariff costs that often negate the benefits of free trade for smaller businesses.

However, a sobering reality check reveals that efforts to establish mutual recognition agreements for conformity assessment results and reducing duplicate testing are not easy. Such efforts require serious political will and concerted multilateral action across the 15-member RCEP to make the agreements enforceable.

The RCEP's stakeholders, notably China and Malaysia, which are ready to harness the dividends of the RCEP's unified rules of origin — which dictate the economic nationality of a product and affect how goods are treated in terms of tariffs and restrictions — could envision creating a seamless manufacturing corridor where raw materials from China are processed in Malaysia for duty-free export across the entire RCEP.

From the development perspective, amid the converging trend of Malaysia's Madani Economy framework and China's high-quality development goals, the bilateral cooperation is well poised to move beyond traditional trade in goods and into artificial intelligence-powered logistics, cross-border digital payments and electric vehicle manufacturing in Malaysia.

By leveraging the RCEP's tariff preferences and trade facilitation measures, the model of "Two Countries, Twin Parks" in both Qinzhou in China's Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region and Kuantan, Malaysia, provides a timely template to showcase an early triumph for the RCEP in the high-tech and new energy sectors.

Under the RCEP framework, deepening collaboration in fields such as 5G networks, smart cities, interoperability of cross-border payment systems, and the new energy vehicle industrial chain are the ready deliverables that can help jointly secure commanding heights for future development.

In the final analysis, the success of any regional framework rests upon the bedrock of trust. The "weaponization" of unilateral tariffs and the use of economic coercion are existential threats to the architecture of regional integration. Malaysia and its ASEAN neighbors are currently facing a test of their resilience.

However, the choice is clear. It is not a choice between global powers, but a choice between fragmentation and integration. Southeast Asian nations must maintain the liberty to decide what is best for their own economic destinies. This principle of strategic autonomy is enshrined in the ASEAN Treaty of Amity and Cooperation, a document to which both the United States and China have acceded.

As the China-ASEAN partnership seeks to deepen continuously amid the prevailing global tumult, it remains the most viable path toward a stable, prosperous and interconnected Asia, through optimization of the RCEP and implementation of CAFTA 3.0.

By translating macro-level visions into deliverable actions, we can ensure that the regional economy remains a beacon of growth in an otherwise uncertain world.

The author is president of the Belt and Road Initiative Caucus for Asia Pacific. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

CLIFFSIDE VALLEY LEAVES A LASTING IMPRESSION

Away from the glittering towers and LED light shows of the nation's metropolises, lantern-lit villages in Jiangxi are offering visitors a different view of China

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Once upon a time, a traveler's first taste of China would begin with the glittering towers of Shanghai, the imperial echoes of Beijing or the cuddly charm of Chengdu's pandas in Sichuan province.

But for a fast-growing tribe of young adventurers, that very first glimpse now comes steeped in mist and legend — a cliffside valley deep in rural Jiangxi province.

They didn't find it flipping through a guidebook. They found it through soaring drone footage flickering across online travel posts, passed along in viral recommendations on social media.

In Wangxian Valley in Shangrao, timbered pavilions seem to cling to sheer cliff faces by nothing more than ancient magic as waterfalls carve silver ribbons through emerald gorges. And, when dusk spills over the mountains, thousands of lanterns glimmer along the streets and bridges, transforming the valley into what many visitors describe as a fantasy version of traditional China — a living, breathing scroll painting.

"We saw a lot of pictures and drone shots on social media like TikTok," said Symeon Theocharous, 32, a visitor from Greece. "But in real life, it's even more amazing. It's more breathtaking."

Nestled in Wangxian township, Guangxin district, this realm of wonder carries an unlikely origin story. The valley was once tied to stone quarrying and processing, its slopes scarred by industry. After years of painstaking ecological restoration and a cultural tourism renaissance, the former mining site has been reborn — as a retreat where dramatic natural beauty meets folk-style streets, cliffside architecture, night tours, live performances and the soulful flavors of local cuisine.

The numbers tell a tale of enchantment. Wangxian Valley welcomed 180,000 overseas visitors in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 76 percent. In the first five months of this year alone, more than 100,000 international travelers have walked its lantern-lit paths, with over 30,000 visitors arriving in May.

The valley's ethereal waterfalls, its lantern-lit nights and its tableaux of Jiangxi-style intangible cultural heritage offerings have cast a spell across overseas social media platforms, weaving the irresistible image of a "real-life *xianxia* world" — the kind of mythical realm known from Chinese fantasy tales where immortals dwell among clouds and cliffs.

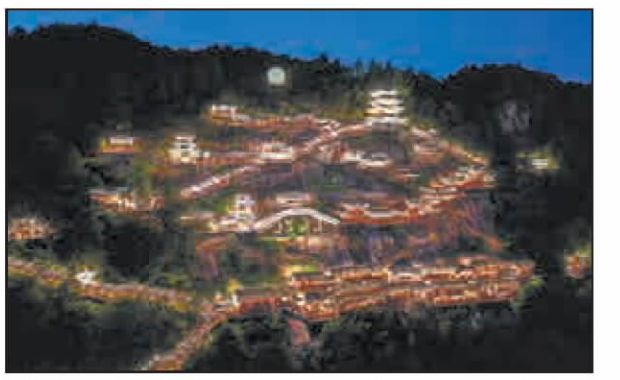
Some videos of Wangxian Valley have garnered over a million likes, and its dreamlike scenery has been shared by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning on her own social media channel.

For 26-year-old French national Johan Rapetti, Wangxian Valley had appeared on social media feeds before he came to China. His itinerary also included Shanghai, Beijing, Chengdu and Chongqing, but the valley offered a different view of the country.

"We saw a lot of things on social media in France about this place, and we are so happy to be here in reality," he said.

Marion Letourneur, 24, from Paris, said Wangxian Valley gave her a different impression after Shanghai. "It's really beautiful because it's not something we can see in France," she said. "It's a way to see China in a different way."

For Elyse Mazenier from New Zealand, the contrast with China's major cities was part of the appeal. "It's really cool and it's nice to see the two different sides of China," she said. "I feel like this is what traditional China would look like."



Hillside pavilions of the Wangxian Valley illuminate the night sky in Jiangxi province on July 11, 2025. LIU JINHAI / XINHUA

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CHINA

Intl cooperation key to environment regulation

By **YANG ZEKUN**
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As environmental crimes increasingly cross borders and threaten ecosystems, communities and sustainable development, prosecutors and experts called for stronger cooperation to close enforcement gaps and improve global environmental governance at a roundtable meeting in Beijing on Monday.

The meeting, themed "The Role of Prosecutors in Global Environmental Governance", gathered prosecutors and experts from more than a dozen countries and organizations for discussions on strengthening environmental enforcement, combating environmental crimes and protecting the public interest.

Participants said climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and the illegal exploitation of natural resources are interconnected global challenges that cannot be solely addressed by any one country or institution. They called for closer judicial cooperation, information sharing and professional exchanges among prosecutors, courts, law enforcement agencies, civil society as well as international organizations.

Zhang Xueqiao, deputy prosecutor general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate, said building a clean and beautiful world is both a Chinese initiative for global ecological civilization and an essential requirement for sustainable human development.

China has advanced ecological civilization through legislation, enforcement and judicial practice in recent years, he said, noting that the country's top legislature adopted the Ecological and Environmental Code in March.

Chinese procuratorial organs have placed ecological and environmental protection high on their agenda, using criminal, civil, administrative and public interest litigation functions to strengthen judicial protection. The SPP has launched public interest litigation campaigns involving major river basins, including the Yangtze, Yellow and Pearl rivers, and carried out supervision campaigns on hazardous waste crimes and green, low-carbon development.

In complex cross-regional cases, procuratorial organs have strengthened integrated case handling, cross-regional cooperation and the use of technologies such as satellite remote sensing, drones and rapid testing to improve evidence collection and damage assessment, he said.

Xu Xiangchun, head of the SPP's public interest litigation department, said procuratorial organs have handled more than 608,000 public interest litigation cases involving ecological and resource protection since July 2017, accounting for 47 percent of all such cases.

More than 90 percent of administrative public interest litigation cases were resolved before trial, he said, helping reduce judicial costs while encouraging administrative authorities to perform their duties.

Xu said procuratorial organs have also strengthened coordination with courts, the public and administrative departments including those responsible for water resources, ecology and environment, agriculture and rural affairs and forestry. The SPP also promoted public participation through a volunteer platform that has recruited 126,000 volunteers nationwide.

International participants said environmental governance requires stronger cross-border cooperation and more effective legal enforcement.

Hindenburgo Chateaubriand, deputy prosecutor general of Brazil, said environmental crimes do not stop at national borders and enforcement cannot be carried out by any single institution alone, making transnational judicial cooperation an important priority for prosecutors.

He said China is currently Brazil's largest export market for agricultural and livestock products, with large volumes of trade in key commodities such as beef, adding that the deep economic ties between the two countries also create favorable conditions for closer cooperation in social development, environmental protection and sustainability.

Trade growth should go hand in hand with ecological and climate protection, he said. Brazil has taken steps to strengthen regulation in the beef industry and plans to extend supervision to supply chains such as soybeans to build greener and more resilient systems.

Elizabeth Mrema, assistant secretary-general of the United Nations, said China has made inspiring progress in environmental legislation, enforcement and jurisprudence. She said China's public interest litigation system offers important innovations and lessons, with prosecutors playing a key role in closing the gap between environmental laws and their implementation.

She also noted that China's Ecological and Environmental Code is an important development not only for China but also for the region and the world, as it reflects a broader trend of modernizing environmental legal frameworks to respond to increasingly complex environmental challenges.

Adam Weiss, chief programmes and impact officer at environmental law organization ClientEarth, said China's experience has become an important reference model for many countries seeking more effective legal and institutional responses to environmental challenges.

While environmental laws and policies continue to develop around the world, effective implementation and enforcement remain essential, he said. Prosecutors have a unique role in ensuring compliance, pursuing accountability for environmental harm and safeguarding the public interest.

Participants noted that dialogue among prosecutors and other justice actors can help countries share good practices, improve enforcement capacity and better implement international environmental commitments.

Zhang said Chinese procuratorial organs will continue to actively perform their duties, make full use of the public interest litigation system and strengthen exchanges and cooperation with international partners to build a fair, reasonable and mutually beneficial global environmental governance system.

Haven for migrants



A staff member cleans a crane rehabilitation enclosure at a migratory bird rescue center in the Hengshui Lake national nature reserve, Hebei province, on Sunday. Located along the East Asian-Australasian flyway, the reserve is home to diverse ecosystems and has recorded 337 bird species, making it an important refuge for migratory birds. YANG WENBIN / XINHUA

CCG holds ops east of Taiwan island

China terms Japan-Philippines delimitation talks illegal and invalid

By **JIANG CHENGLONG**
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China conducted law enforcement and maritime traffic patrols in waters east of its Taiwan island in early June, moves that are believed to demonstrate the country's jurisdiction, capability and resolve to safeguard its rights in the area following the Japan-Philippines unilateral delimitation move.

The Ministry of Transport organized a special maritime traffic law enforcement operation on Saturday in waters east of Taiwan island, fully exercising China's maritime administrative law enforcement jurisdiction, according to the ministry.

The operation was carried out by maritime safety administrations in Fujian and Guangdong provinces, as well as navigation support and rescue authorities in the East China Sea. It aimed to strengthen long-range offshore patrol and law enforcement capabilities, improve traffic management in key waters, ensure maritime traffic safety and safeguard national interests, the ministry said.

On June 1, China Coast Guard spokesman Jiang Lue said a CCG vessel fleet conducted law enforcement patrols in accordance with the law in waters east of Taiwan island.

Both the CCG and the Ministry of Transport stressed that the operations were "necessary actions" in response to Japan and the Philippines' unilateral announcement of launching maritime delimitation talks regarding waters east of China's Taiwan island, which they said seriously infringed upon China's territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests.

Jiang urged the two countries to immediately stop all illegal actions that undermine China's sovereignty and rights, noting that the CCG will continue to strengthen control and management over relevant waters and resolutely safeguard national territorial sovereignty and maritime rights and interests through "concrete actions".

Zhang Junshe, a former researcher at the Naval Research Academy, said the operations were not only the most direct response to the so-called delimitation talks by Japan and the Philippines, but also demonstrated China's jurisdiction over relevant waters east of Taiwan island.

The operations came after Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Mao Ning said at a regular news conference on May 29 that the so-called delimitation talks between Japan and the Philippines are "completely illegal and invalid" and will have no impact on China's rights claims in waters east of Taiwan island or China's exercise of its lawful rights.

On May 28, following a meeting between Japanese Prime Minister Sanae Takaichi and visiting Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr, Tokyo and Manila announced the launch of formal negotiations on the delimitation of their exclusive economic zones and continental shelves. According to the joint statement, the proposed delimitation areas include overlapping waters east of Taiwan.

Mao said that under China's domestic law and international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, China has an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the area.

She added that Japan and the Philippines' unilateral launch of so-called maritime delimitation talks seriously infringes upon China's maritime rights and interests, and violates international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the basic norms governing international relations, expressing strong dissatisfaction and firm opposition to the move.

Zhang said the latest operations showed that China's maritime law enforcement forces have not only the determination, but also the capability and strength to safeguard the country's rights.

He said the waters east of Taiwan island are complex and pose a major test for vessel performance and law enforcement capabilities.

Those operations proved that China's coast guard and maritime safety forces are already capable of conducting regular law enforcement patrols, control and management in waters east of Taiwan island, he said.

More importantly, Zhang said, they show that China has effectively established a relatively complete system for protecting sovereignty and maritime rights and interests, as well as governing waters around Taiwan island.

New tech surgery aids recovery of vision

By **CHEN MEILING** in Beijing and **HE CHUN** in Changsha

A blind woman in China has recovered partial vision after receiving a brain-computer interface surgery in Changsha, Hunan province, bringing new hope to patients suffering from degenerative retinal diseases.

Chen, 61, was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa at the age of 40, a condition that eventually left her completely blind in both eyes. On April 23, she was selected for a clinical trial and underwent an implantation surgery at Xiangya Hospital of Central South University.

During the surgery, an electrode array measuring 6 millimeters by 10.8 mm — roughly the size of a fingernail — was implanted onto the retinal surface of the macular region inside the eyeball.

Following the procedure, the patient wears a pair of glasses equipped with a miniature camera and a wireless transmission module. The camera captures environmental images, which a video processor analyzes and encodes. The encoded data is then transmitted via radio frequency wireless technology to the implant, which converts the data into electrical stimulation signals that act on retinal nerve cells. This visual information is ultimately relayed to the brain.

"If we compare the eyeball to a camera, the retina is the film. When the film is damaged, we directly use electrical signals to 'tell' the intact nerve cells behind what is being seen, which is equivalent to building a bypass for the visual system," said Xu Huizhuo, who conducted the surgery and leads the clinical trial project called the IMIE intelligent retina system.

Once the system is activated, patients initially experience phosphenes — a visual phenomenon manifesting as bright pinpoint lights against a dark background. Through systematic training, patients learn to assemble these light spots to identify object outlines, obstacles, directional markers and simple letters.

Xu explained that bionic vision functions more like a low-resolution visual system delivering light and dark outlines, and cannot yet match the rich, colored vision experienced by people with normal sight.

"Nevertheless, for patients who have been blind for a long time, such visual information can greatly improve their ability to live and move around independently," Xu said, emphasizing that artificial vision helps patients regain a degree of visual perception rather than restoring normal eyesight. Patients usually require several months or longer of rehabilitation training to interpret the new information.

At present, Chen's visual acuity has recovered to 0.1. During tests, she was able to recognize striped patterns in specific orientations and complete tasks such as indoor directional walking.

Degenerative retinal diseases like retinitis pigmentosa are major causes of irreversible blindness. Among advanced-stage patients, conventional medicines, surgeries and gene therapies often fail. The new method bypasses impaired photoreceptor cells to reconstruct an artificial visual pathway.

Remarkably, China's self-developed IMIE intelligent retina system boasts 256 stimulation channels, marking a more than fourfold improvement in data capacity compared with comparable overseas products featuring 60 channels.

"If artificial vision is compared to an electronic display screen, the number of stimulation channels is equivalent to 'pixels'. A 60-channel system is like a very blurry black-and-white image, whereas the 256-channel version delivers far more details," Xu said.

The team has already completed the development of 512-channel flexible electrode technology, aiming for future iterations ranging from 1,024 to 2,048 channels. The technology is applicable to patients whose optic nerves and brain visual pathways remain functional. As the system is still in the clinical research stage, relevant costs will be finalized following subsequent regulatory approvals.

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2025 data shows marine conditions remain stable

By **LI MENGHAN**
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China's marine ecological protection and restoration efforts yielded preliminary results, with overall marine conditions remaining stable and localized improvements observed last year, according to a bulletin released on Monday by the Ministry of Natural Resources.

Coral reefs, seagrass beds, mangroves and island ecosystems remained in good condition, the ministry said in its 2025 bulletin on China's marine ecological early warning and monitoring.

Released to mark the 18th World Oceans Day, the bulletin drew on monitoring data from 14 standard offshore transects, 1,579 monitoring stations, 126 typical ecosystem areas and 350 islands across China's jurisdictional waters.

The report showed that biodiversity indicators for plankton and large benthic organisms in nearshore waters remained consistent with the five-year average. Surface seawater salinity, pH levels, inorganic nitrogen concentrations and dissolved oxygen levels in bottom waters also remained close to the 10-year average.

According to the bulletin, key bays and estuaries maintained stable biological community structures, with no significant shifts in dominant species groups. Sediment conditions remained sound, although localized eutrophication persisted in some areas.

The bulletin also warned of marine ecological risks linked in part to global climate change. Last summer, nearshore surface water temperatures in China were 0.7 C above the long-term average.

Although both the frequency and affected area of red tides declined compared with the 10-year average, risks from Ulva prolifera, or green tides, localized biological outbreaks and estuarine hypoxia remain, it said.

The ministry also released the second batch of its marine data open-sharing catalog on Monday, providing data support for marine economic development, disaster prevention and mitigation, resource exploitation and scientific research.



Fishermen dry seaweed on a beach in Qionghai, Hainan province, on Monday. Processed into high-quality feed for marine creatures, the seaweed industry helps support both marine conservation efforts and local livelihoods. MENG ZHONGDE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Building on 37 data products included in the first batch released in June 2024, the updated catalog adds 10 global three-dimensional ocean datasets covering temperature, salinity, currents, waves and atmospheric pressure, as well as seven new statistical analysis products for global marine hydrological and meteorological data.

Since the first catalog was published, marine data services have been accessed more than 600,000 times by more than 100 government departments, research institutes and maritime enterprises, delivering more than 600 million data records, the ministry said.

China's marine monitoring capacity has expanded significantly in recent years, forming an integrated observation network that combines coastal stations, radar systems, buoys, research vessels, drones and satellite remote sensing.

The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) calls for enhancing the protection and sustainable use of marine resources and accelerating the building of a maritime power.

In line with the plan, the ministry said it will continue advancing marine ecological protection and restoration, using high-level environmental protection to support the high-quality development of the marine economy.

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CHINA

Shopping with your heart, not your head

Emotion-driven, experiential consumption the new retail driver

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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Left: Visitors enjoy themselves at the Shangxiahang historical and cultural street in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on May 2. LIN SHANCHUAN / XINHUA **Above:** Tourists visit the "scruffy dog" topiary in Jing'an district, Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY





Left: A barista prepares coffee at the 2026 Yinchuan Coffee and Music Carnival in a forest park, Yinchuan, Ningxia Hui autonomous region, on May 4. YANG ZHISEN / XINHUA **Right:** Customers interact with dogs at a pet shop in Huzhou, Zhejiang province, on April 27. YI FAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Shanghai recently witnessed the birth of an unlikely internet sensation — a 5.2-meter-high "scruffy dog" topiary in central Shanghai's Jing'an district.

Originally designed for the 2026 Shanghai International Flower Show from April 18 to May 5, the West Highland White Terrier-shaped shrubbery, made up of more than 20 types of flowers and plants, has become so popular that the city decided to keep it on display for another three months. In less than a month, more than 30 million people have flocked to see it.

The local government has also invited people to give it a name based on its shape and the rapidly growing greenery it is made of.

The cute attraction, located in the outdoor area of Shanghai Suhe MIXC World, is also being credited with triggering skyrocketing sales in the vicinity.

Retailers located around the topiary reaped over 2 billion yuan ($295 million) in sales during the official exhibition period. Total sales revenue has jumped 49.22 percent year-on-year to nearly 61.6 million yuan since "scruffy dog" was unveiled. A total of 1.7 million consumers visited the mall over the period, up 192.53 percent from a year earlier.

"People have come for the scruffy dog. They linger, take pictures, then find themselves grabbing a coffee, sitting down for a meal, and strolling through the nearby shops. Wrapped in a sense of calm, consumption unfolded as a natural afterthought," officials from the commerce bureau of Jing'an district said.

Han Meiyi, a human resources specialist in Shanghai, is one of the many fans of the topiary puppy. She made a trip to the mall on a rainy day to attend an ongoing bread festival. Despite the weather, she encountered flocks of people wanting to see the novel attraction.

Han described the day as a "sweet memory", with the aroma of bread wafting in the air.

"I bought bread from five different bakeries, enjoyed two milk teas while shopping for bread, and of course, took pictures with the iconic scruffy dog, and loved every minute of the day," she said.

Emotional value

The topiary dog is now being considered for cultural and creative product development, according to Jing'an district officials.

At a news conference in mid-May, Shen Weihua, director of the Shanghai Municipal Commission of Commerce, defined the retail boost associated with the popular attraction as "emotion-driven consumption". The city will come up with more unconventional scenarios to provide new consumer experiences, he said, adding that stimulating consumption would be a major mission for the municipal government in the coming years.

The Chinese consumer market has entered a new age, according to Joanna Lu, a partner at consulting company Bain & Co. "The core of consumption is 'love'. People are looking for meaning and emotional value from different experiences. That is why consumption is more driven by scenarios, social groups and sentiments," she said.

> "When people have time, they can become easily bored. In other words, they are more willing to pay for experiences like studying abroad, making their life more colorful while fulfilling their childhood dream."
>
> **Wu Mianqing,** CEO of data service provider BigOne Lab

Liu Gongrun, deputy director at the CEIBS Lujiazui International Institute of Finance, said the Chinese consumer market has been undergoing a revolution, moving from buying tangible goods to savoring intangible services. Consumer satisfaction has been upgraded from goods to value, Liu said.

In 2025, China's sales of services grew 5.5 percent from a year earlier, 1.7 percentage points higher than that of goods, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

Moreover, service consumption has consistently outpaced goods consumption for years.

A look at the consumption habits of wealthy Chinese also provides an insight into the changing consumer market, as industry figures predict future lifestyle trends.

Consumption in China has been rapidly transforming from "possessing things" to "prioritizing experiences", the Hurun Research Institute, which has been researching affluent Chinese for nearly three decades, said in a report in January.

The size of the Chinese high-end consumer market contracted 5 percent year-on-year to 1.56 trillion yuan in 2025. In addition, the super rich plan to cut their annual expenditure on luxury watches and jewelry by 10 percent over the next three years. However, they have increased their budgets for experience-based consumption, such as travel and health management, by 12 percent.

"The super rich no longer consider consumption as a tool to demonstrate their identity. Life quality and emotional satisfaction are of greater value to them," said Rupert Hoogewerf, founder and chief researcher of Hurun.

Worthiness wins

A similar consumption trend is happening among younger Chinese.

Guochao, or China chic, reflects their close connection to Chinese culture with aesthetic value and shopping experiences overtaking brand cachet, said Liu from the institute of finance.

The younger generation's greater demand for experiences is making the focus of domestic brands more international, as younger consumers are well-educated with a global outlook. This means brands will have to be more innovative to provide "extraordinary" experiences, Liu said.

Purchasing domestic brands can evolve from a one-time shopping spree to repeated purchases, he added.

"The core targets of the *guochao* brands, which are younger consumers aged between 20 and 30, are more rational and less easily drawn to the traditional internationally well-established brands. To them, consumption is an expression of their own value. The product's worthiness outweighs affordability when they buy something," Liu said.

According to market consultancy iiMedia Research, the *guochao* market size reached 2.5 trillion yuan in 2025, with the figure expected to top 3 trillion yuan in 2028.

The rise in China chic has also been boosted by inbound travelers looking for different consumer experiences in China, iiMedia analysts added.

The pursuit of new shopping experiences, however, is not restricted to categories or age groups.

China's domestic tourism market is a good example. It hit record numbers last year in both the number of trips taken and total spending, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism.

Domestic tourists made 6.52 billion trips throughout 2025, up 16.2 percent from a year earlier. Their travel spending jumped 9.5 percent year-on-year to 6.30 trillion yuan. "Immersive experiences" were listed as top priorities for traveling.

The elderly, those age 60 and above, were important contributors to the travel industry. According to the Chinese domestic travel agency HopeGoo, they accounted for over 70 percent of tourists who booked outbound luxury cruise trips and over 90 percent who took polar cruises. Their average expenditure on a single trip exceeded 12,000 yuan, higher than all other age demographics.

Their demands for tailored travel experiences have also increased.

International language training institution EF said it has seen elderly Chinese people's rising interest in overseas study programs. In 2019, only 3 percent of the program participants were aged above 50. But that ratio rose to 20 percent in 2023.

Retired doctors, engineers, teachers and company executives aged between 55 and 65 make up most of the participants.

The two- to four-week programs, priced at 20,000-70,000 yuan per person, are affordable for well-off people, EF said.

"When people have time, they can become easily bored. In other words, they are more willing to pay for experiences like studying abroad, making their life more colorful while fulfilling their childhood dream," said Wu Mianqing, CEO of data service provider BigOne Lab.

Importantly, the purchase of language courses by elderly Chinese travelers was preceded by the experience of overseas travel. "Based on my parents' experiences, they expressed strong willingness to learn English after several overseas trips. Now they have become loyal subscribers of a paid language-learning application. It forms a perfect loop for such travel service providers," Wu said.

A recovery in the capital market is likely to generate more income for Chinese consumers, making them more optimistic and confident to buy, he added.

Experiential, it's a thing

Some financial analysts argue that the Chinese consumer market has slowed down, but Qin Shuo, a Shanghai-based financial commentator, explained that this is only one side of the coin.

In certain situations, consumers see value-for-money purchases as the priority. However, when it comes to experience or sentiment-related consumption — such as travel or raising pets — they spend generously.

A "K-shaped" economy, where growth and decline are taking place simultaneously across different segments, has been used to describe the current Chinese consumer market.

But Qin believes that is an oversimplification of the bigger picture. It is true that the consumer price index has not been rising significantly, he said, but that is a reflection of prices, not the size of consumption. In addition, low prices are a result of strong supply, he said.

A more important factor is the maturity of Chinese consumers, who are looking for "high-quality and fair shopping experiences", according to Qin.

Online retailers, for example, have made products once only sold in first-tier cities available to consumers in lower-tier cities and counties.

Lu of Bain & Co said the current maturity of Chinese consumers should be measured against the development of consumerism in the country over the last five decades.

Before the 1980s — which was the age of scarcity of goods — consumption was all about "having it or not". Brands barely mattered. The market was driven by supply, which meant that if a company could make the product, someone would definitely buy it, Lu said.

Entering the 1990s, Chinese consumers began to tell the world who they were with what they had bought.

Between 2000 and 2010, there was an abundance of supply and Chinese consumers shopped for products to fit their taste, style and identity. Self-expression was the key reason for consumption during this period, Lu said.

"Chinese consumers now have a 'value awakening'," she said.

"More and more consumers are willing to pay for emotional value and spiritual satisfaction. Consumers are no longer buyers. They wish to express their emotions, seek out experiential scenarios, participate in culture and even co-create brand stories with each purchase," she said.

"All these demands have posed higher requirements on brands, pushing them to come up with deeper insights into human nature and more refined crafting of experiential settings," she added.



Visitors interact with an AI plush toy at the 2026 China New Cultural and Creative Market and Trendy Carnival in Beijing on May 16. CHEN XIAOGEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

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CULTURE



Ancient wisdom for global challenges

Sinologists explore the relevance of China's experiences to international issues, **Hu Yumeng** and **Ma Jingna** report in Lanzhou.

In a city where the ancient Silk Road still lingers in stone and wind, the Third World Conference of Sinologists unfolded not merely as an academic gathering, but as a lived encounter between civilizations.

Bringing together more than 300 Sinologists, policymakers and cultural practitioners from nearly 70 countries and regions, the conference on Wednesday in Dunhuang, Gansu province, explored how Chinese cultural values and development experiences can offer fresh perspectives on some of today's shared global challenges.

"Today, the world needs more dialogue than confrontation and more understanding than prejudice," said Joel Mikael Walker, a German content creator and practitioner of traditional Chinese medicine. "What Chinese culture addresses are some of the most universal questions facing humanity.

"Chinese culture has much to contribute to addressing these challenges. It is not a relic in a museum, but a living system of wisdom that continues to speak to the modern world."

Walker's perspective echoed one of the recurring themes throughout the conference: that Chinese culture is increasingly being viewed not only as a subject of historical study, but also as a source of contemporary insight.

"We live in a time of conflict, environmental pressures and growing anxiety," he said. "Concepts from Chinese philosophy offer valuable perspectives on many of the challenges facing the world today.

"The balance of yin and yang teaches us that differences can coexist. The idea of harmony between humanity and nature reminds us to reconcile with the environment. The concept of preventing disease before it occurs emphasizes foresight rather than remedy," Walker said. "These ideas are not only China's treasures. They belong to humanity."

Many Sinologists extended that discussion beyond culture to China's broader development experience.

Andrey Kortunov, former director-general of the Russian International Affairs Council, said one of the distinctive features of China's engagement with the world is its ability to understand the needs of other countries, particularly those in the Global South.

"There is a great deal of empathy in the Chinese approach to international engagement," Kortunov said. "China tries to understand what other nations need in terms of development and security, and how it might assist them."

He also highlighted flexibility and continuity as defining features of this approach.

"Consistency means predictability, and predictability brings trust," he said, noting that many countries regard China as a reliable long-term partner.

For Indian scholar Saheli Chattaraj, associate professor of China studies at Somaiya Vidyavihar University, China's experience offers practical lessons for other large developing countries facing complex governance challenges.

Having conducted research on local governance and environmental management in Zhejiang province for years, she said many of the challenges China has confronted, from urbanization to pollution management, are familiar to India.

"China and India share many similarities as populous and diverse countries," she said. "What interests me is how different regions in China have explored solutions and adapted policies to local conditions."

Chiara Romagnoli, director of the Interdepartmental Center for Studies and Documentation on China and East Asia at Roma Tre University, said the outside world often overlooks China's diversity and complexity.

"Many people think China is a homogeneous society, but in fact it is diverse and complex. That is where its richness lies," she said.

Romagnoli added that China's development philosophy also carries a broader message.

"Development should not belong to one country alone. More countries should benefit from it. Development is for all humanity," she said.

For Taing Mengchhong, the Cambodian director of the Confucius Institute at the Royal Academy of Cambodia, one of the most significant contributions of Chinese modernization is that it has expanded the global imagination of what modernization can look like.

"Chinese modernization has reshaped the picture of modernization in the world," he said. "Modernization was once associated mainly with a small number of developed countries with relatively small populations. China has shown that a country with more than 1.4 billion people can achieve modernization, changing the global landscape of development."

He noted that China's experience demonstrates that modernization is not synonymous with Westernization.

"Developing countries should explore modernization paths that fit their own national conditions, cultures and realities," he said.

Taing Mengchhong pointed to the Phnom Penh-Sihanoukville Expressway, Cambodia's first expressway and a flagship Belt and Road project, as an example of how China-Cambodia cooperation has improved people's lives. The project has shortened travel times, improved logistics and strengthened regional connectivity.

"The achievements of Cambodia-China cooperation must be visible to ordinary people," he said. "Only when people can see and experience the benefits in their daily lives can they truly understand the value of our partnership."

Sinologists also highlighted that people-to-people exchanges matter most in the current era for promoting civilizational dialogue.

"Without people-to-people exchanges, any policies, strategies, decisions or initiatives cannot work," said Iljaz Spahiu, former minister-counselor at the Albanian embassy in China. "This is a foundational pillar of enhancing international relations."

"We're living in a difficult time, faced with many shared challenges," said Mohamed Rasheed, chairman and founder of the China-Maldives Cultural Association. "Chinese philosophy, which advocates peace, coexistence and dialogue, is highly valued today by humanity for its contribution to prosperity. When you promote Chinese culture, it encourages openness to coexist with other cultures and to appreciate the strengths of others."

Yang Mingze contributed to this story.

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Above and left: Participants of the Third World Conference of Sinologists try their hand at Chinese calligraphy, writing the Chinese character *fu* (fortune). **Below left:** A guest paints a wood carving of flying apsaras at a cultural experience area during the conference. **Below right:** Another guest gets acupuncture treatment at the area during the conference. PHOTOS BY YANG MINGZE / CHINA DAILY

The man taking Yuju Opera to audiences across the world

By ZHANG KUN in Shanghai
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Scenes from the Yuju Opera production *Cheng Ying Rescues the Orphan*. It was one of 10 productions staged in Shanghai from May 21 to last Wednesday by winners of the Plum Blossom Award, China's highest honor in theater. PHOTOS BY CHEN ZUDE AND ZHOU SHUNLIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Ten winners of the Plum Blossom Award, China's highest theatrical honor, gathered in Shanghai from May 21 to last Wednesday to showcase their masterpieces to industry professionals from around the world.

Among them was Li Shujian, a veteran of Yuju — a folk opera originating from Central China's Henan province. On May 27 and 28, Li and the Henan No 2 Yuju Opera Theater staged two performances of *Cheng Ying Rescues the Orphan* at Wanping Theater. Based on Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) playwright Ji Junxiang's classic, the opera is often dubbed "China's *Hamlet*", as it highlights themes of sacrifice and loyalty that resonate across cultures.

Commenting on the production's raw power, Guillaume Soulard, director of France's Le Grand Angle theater, said, "The story is so strong that five minutes after the show, you are still in it ... It becomes part of your life."

Dagmar Bednarikova, a member of the Presidium of Czech ITI (International Theater Institute) Centre, said she would really recommend the show to her friends. She added, "Because it is original ... we do not see it in Europe very often, so it's great to be able to come to China to see it here."

Han Jihua, a Chinese opera enthusiast and middle school teacher from Nanjing, Jiangsu province, took the high-speed train to Shanghai for the opera. Li is his favorite artist, Han told China Daily on the opening night.

"He is particularly good at integrating singing with his spoken lines. He masterfully blends his singing with clear narrative delivery and as such has a strong emotional impact. His powerful performance is widely beloved among folk opera lovers all over the country, and he is especially admired for his portrayal of tragic heroes," he said.

With a history of just 300 years, Yuju Opera is relatively new compared to Peking Opera or Kunqu Opera. Yet, Li explained, it is one of China's most widespread local operas, boasting 163 professional troupes and over 2,000 private ones. In rural Henan, Li recalled performing for crowds exceeding 50,000. "People bring their own stools and packed lunches," he told China Daily. In one scene, as Li portrays an elderly beggar walking through the crowd, "people put food and even cash in my basket. That is how they express their love".

Now 64 and a troupe leader for 34 years, Li has taken this regional art form global. Since its premiere in 2002, *Cheng Ying Rescues the Orphan*, with scripts by Chen Yongquan, has been performed over 2,100 times and adapted into more than 20 other folk opera styles. It has toured 30 countries, from Broadway to the Chinese-built cruise ship *Adora Magic City*.

Taking a dialect-based opera internationally posed challenges. During a 2006 tour of Italy, poor translations led to comical errors, such as rendering "my wife" as "my old woman". To solve this, Li enlisted Wang Shaojun, director of the Performance Department at the National Academy of Chinese Theatre Arts, to refine the scripts. Today, the opera features subtitles in seven languages.

To attract younger audiences, Li has also embraced the digital age. A pioneer on Douyin (the Chinese TikTok), he once earned 160,000 yuan ($22,000) from a single three-hour livestream. "He who does not embrace the internet will be abandoned by the times," he said.

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CLASSICS KEEP ENDURING IN MODERN TIMES

Scholars are finding new relevance in the study of time-honored texts as technology reshapes societies across civilizations, **Wang Ru** reports.

Retold for centuries, the story of Prometheus has evolved from a tale of power struggle into a symbol of revolution and enlightenment. In some interpretations, Prometheus, the Titan who stole fire from the gods, reflects tensions between migrants and locals.

Later, poets such as Percy Shelley (1792-1822) recast him as a tragic hero who defied authority.

That image resonated with Chinese intellectuals in the early 20th century, who invoked Prometheus as a metaphor for pioneering revolutionaries introducing Marxism to China.

"Mythological stories are an important focus of classical studies," says Huang Yue, a professor of comparative mythology at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications.

"Prometheus remains widely known because generation after generation has continued to tell his story. People have interpreted and shared it in different ways. That process is important because classics provide intellectual resources that can inspire modern people. This is the value of classical studies today."

Traditionally defined as the study, translation and interpretation of ancient Greek and Roman texts, classical studies have gained renewed momentum in recent years, particularly following the World Conference of Classics held in Beijing in 2024.

The event brought together more than 400 scholars from over 30 countries and regions to discuss the contemporary relevance and global significance of classical studies.

The second edition of the event is taking place on Tuesday and Wednesday in Athens, Greece.

He Fangying, director of the Research Center for Classical Civilization at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, says the field can be traced back to the Hellenistic Period, when philosophers from across regions that were once dominated by Alexander the Great reinterpreted ancient Greek works. As a formal discipline, however, it was established at the University of Goettingen in Germany in 1777.

"In the past, Western scholars didn't include the study of other ancient civilizations in their definition of 'classical studies'. For example, research on Mesopotamian, ancient Egyptian and Chinese classics was categorized under 'Oriental studies'," she says. "That reflected a perspective that viewed these cultures through a Western lens."

Today, however, the definition of classical studies has broadened, particularly among Chinese scholars.

Li Xinwei, director of the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens, says, "We believe that every ancient civilization has its own classical period, one that continues to exert a profound influence on its modern development ... Therefore, the scope of classical studies should include the classical works of all civilizations."

The expanded definition raises a further question: Why do the classics still matter in the modern world?

According to Huang, ancient texts offer wisdom that remains relevant to contemporary challenges.

"Throughout history, people have confronted many of the same issues — ecological crises, regional conflicts, or tensions between civilizations," Huang says.

"Can we learn from how earlier generations responded to these challenges? Classics provide the source code of a culture, or more precisely, the foundational elements of a nation's cultural identity."

He, director of the Research Center for Classical Civilization, adds that classical studies also offer a broader perspective on current affairs. Modern disciplines are increasingly specialized, often separating literature, history, philosophy, and politics into distinct fields. Classical studies, by contrast, help reveal the connections among them, providing a more panoramic understanding of the human experience.

Material progress

Lou Lin, a professor of classics at Sichuan University in Chengdu, Sichuan province, reflects on the role of technology in shaping the modern world.

"Strictly speaking, the modern world is largely defined by technology. It gives us the impression that humanity is constantly progressing because our material lives continue to improve," he says.

"But when it comes to complex questions such as human nature, philosophy and social order, it is difficult to argue that our understanding is deeper than that of people who lived 2,000 years ago."

Lou is particularly drawn to the ideas of French philosopher Simone Weil (1909–43). While technology and systems can help people understand the world in objective ways, Weil says, essential aspects of humanity remain beyond their reach.

"Such elements, I guess, refer to the relationship between humans and nature, a theme explored extensively in classical texts," says Lou.

One example can be found in *Zhuangzi*, a foundational Taoist text in ancient China. Philosopher Zhuangzi (369-286 BC) wrote: "Heaven and earth are born with me; all things are one with me." The idea emphasizes the inseparable bond between humanity and nature.

In a world where many people experience isolation and alienation, Lou believes such reflections can help balance society's heavy emphasis on technology.

"That sense of disconnection can lead to genuine inner emptiness," he says. "The reflections on human nature and humanity's relationship with nature found in classical texts remain valuable today."

Lou also recalls a story from the Southern Song Dynasty (1127-1279).

Philosopher Zhu Xi (1130-1200) once invited fellow thinker Lu Jiuyuan (1139-93) to lecture at the Bailudong Academy in present-day Jiangxi province. Lu highlighted the idea that "a man of virtue is guided by righteousness; a petty man, by personal gain" from *The Analects* (*Lunyu*), a compilation of the ideas of Confucius.

According to Lu, the lesson was not simply about choosing between right and wrong. Rather, it encouraged learners to clarify the purpose of their studies from the outset.

"I think this offers an important lesson for our time. In an era dominated by artificial intelligence, we still need to ask fundamental questions: What are my aspirations? What gives my life meaning? Technology alone cannot answer such questions, but classics offer valuable insights," Lou says.

He Fangying notes that concerns about technology are not unique to the modern age.

She points to a story in *Homer's Epics* in which Odysseus passes through the island of Scheria, where advanced technology allows fruit to ripen automatically and ships to navigate according to people's thoughts. Despite such prosperity, the kingdom declines after being punished by Poseidon, the god of the sea. The story has been interpreted as a warning against excessive reliance on technology while neglecting human virtues.

"It reminds us that while we enjoy the convenience technology brings, we should also remain aware of its potential risks," says He.

Mutual learning

Beyond helping individuals navigate modern challenges, ancient texts also encourage cultural exchange and mutual learning — forces that have long driven the development of civilizations.

In *Timaeus*, a book of dialogues written by the ancient Greek philosopher Plato (427-347 BC), Athenian statesman Solon travels to Egypt and discovers records preserving knowledge that had long been lost in Greece.

"This is a story Plato heard and recorded. Maybe it's not historical fact, but it probably contains traces of reality," says Lou, adding that in *The Lives and Opinions of Eminent Philosophers*, one of the most important accounts of the lives of the West's best-known philosophers, author Diogenes Laertius (flourished in the third century) also mentioned that philosophy was influenced by ancient Egypt.

Evgenios Kalpyris, the Greek ambassador to China, highlights the value of communication between Greek and Chinese civilizations, mentioning that their differences can lead to positive results.

"Historical records indicate that the earliest encounter between Chinese and Greek civilizations dates back at least 2,400 years," says Kalpyris.

"We have learned to seek common ground while respecting differences. We do not view differences as barriers. On the contrary, they can promote coordination and harmony. Differences create opportunities for remarkable outcomes."

He points to differing views on human nature. Chinese philosopher Mencius (372-289 BC) believed human nature is good, while another philosopher, Xunzi (313-238 BC), believed it is inherently evil. Ancient Greek philosophers generally viewed human nature as neutral. Despite these differences, all believed that education and moral cultivation could help individuals grow.

Education and moral development are still among the most effective ways to address many of the world's challenges, Kalpyris says.

Inspired by such lessons, modern societies increasingly recognize the value of dialogue among civilizations. One example is the establishment of the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens following the inaugural World Conference of Classics in 2024.

According to Li, the school's director, researchers from the school visited more than 50 sites across Greece during the past year, selected the Aggeokastro site for a joint excavation project with Greek archaeologists, and organized exhibitions, lectures and academic events in Athens.

"In the past, Chinese researchers often relied on existing Western scholarship without access to first-hand materials," Li says.

"Therefore, we established this school to gain firsthand knowledge through archaeological research and the study of Greek civilization, including its history, philosophy and art. This will lay a foundation for further study. Only on that basis can equal dialogue with Western scholars generate new ideas."

The second World Conference of Classics is another effort to deepen exchanges among civilizations in a new era.

He Fangying hopes the conference will encourage further discussion on topics such as virtue, social order, friendship and technology.

"This time, Chinese classical studies will be presented at the very birthplace of Western civilization. This is a milestone in the history of world civilizations," says He.

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Online
Scan the code to watch the video.

Soundbites

Huang Yue, *a professor focusing on comparative mythology at Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications*

Mythical studies not only provide us with evidence of the lives and environments of ancient people, but also allow us to see how our civilizations have gradually advanced to the present day. ... By tracing the earliest versions of a myth, we can then examine how it undergoes minor adjustments under the pens of different writers and across various books and narratives. In doing so, we feel as if we have found mirrors through which we can view the spiritual history of a nation.

Li Xinwei, *director of Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens*

When we talk about classical studies in China, they extend beyond the traditional concept of ancient Greek and Roman classics.
We believe that every civilization has its own classical era. China's classical era has had a profound and lasting influence on its entire historical path, its modern development, and the formation of its identity. It has also deeply shaped China's cultural confidence and the modernization process with Chinese characteristics. Its present and future are inseparable from the inheritance of its own traditions.

Lou Lin, *a professor of classics at Sichuan University*

The core concept of classical education is learning to become a fully realized human being. It is difficult to say that classical teachings can provide ready-made solutions to modern problems. However, when it comes to a person's cultivation, the classics may help one grow into a more complete, more aspirational, and more capable individual.
Such a person should be better able to solve problems. This may well be one of the most important applications of classical studies in modern times.

He Fangying, *director of the Research Center for Classical Civilization at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences*

Each generation has its own ancient past, and every ancient generation responded to the challenges of its time, as well as those of earlier times. From this perspective, classical studies are constantly being renewed.
We are always preceded by earlier generations, and we always look toward the future. ...
Whether it is Homer from more than 2,000 years ago or China's Confucius, they were figures from distant eras, yet they can also be our friends in the modern age.

Evgenios Kalpyris, *the Greek ambassador to China*

The theory of yin and yang has extensive influence on Western countries.
Although yin and yang are different in nature, they complement and connect with each other, culminating in harmony. ... We have witnessed wisdom in the two civilizations, seeing how we have sought common ground while preserving our differences.
We have never considered differences as negative or barriers, but rather as opportunities to boost coordination and harmony.
Differences can create exceptional results.

ILLUSTRATION BY CHEN XINYUE, CHEN ZIXUAN, LAN LAN AND WANG YI / FOR CHINA DAILY

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COMMENT

Editorials

Strategic guidance keeps China-DPRK ties advancing with times, achieving new progress

General Secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and President Xi Jinping's state visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on Monday and Tuesday presents an opportunity to strengthen top-level planning and strategic guidance for China-DPRK relations in the new era.

The visit has not only preserved the legacy of China-DPRK relations as good neighbors, good friends and good comrades but also helped lay out the practical priorities for the future development of relations.

During his meeting with Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, in Pyongyang on Monday, Xi put forward four proposals for advancing bilateral relations: The two sides should be guided by the high-level exchanges and consolidate the foundation of political mutual trust; stay committed to the goal of delivering benefits to the people and elevate the level of practical cooperation; uphold the inheritance of friendship as a driving force and strengthen the bonds between their peoples; and uphold fairness and justice as a guiding principle to enrich the substance of strategic coordination.

This provides strategic guidelines for the healthy and stable development of China-DPRK relations.

High-level exchanges have long played an important role in the development of China-DPRK relations. As the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance is commemorated this year, increased interaction at all levels between the two sides will help consolidate political trust and generate sustained momentum for bilateral cooperation.

Both countries are pursuing their respective development goals and have broad opportunities to deepen cooperation in economic and social fields. China stands ready to work with the DPRK to strengthen the alignment of development strategies, and expand practical cooperation in such areas as economy and trade, agriculture, construction, science and technology, and health care, to bring greater benefits to the two peoples.

Xi called on both sides to leverage the opportunity of the full reopening of border crossings and the resumption of civil aviation flights and international passenger trains to increase people-to-people exchanges and foster mutual interaction.

Equally significant is the emphasis placed on carrying forward the traditional friendship between the two peoples. The traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, forged in blood, is a valuable shared asset of the two peoples. Today, educational cooperation, youth exchanges, cultural programs and academic engagement are helping ensure the friendship continues to flourish.

As regional and global dynamics become increasingly complex and volatile, it is imperative that the two sides strengthen their strategic coordination on international and regional affairs to safeguard their common interests and promote stability. In doing so, the two countries can better safeguard their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, and jointly promote regional peace and development.

Xi said in a signed article published by Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the DPRK, ahead of his visit, that the two sides should uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core and the international order based on international law. In the process, they should oppose hegemonism and power politics, and reject any scheme or action aimed at reviving militarism and undermining regional security and stability.

No matter how the international situation changes, the CPC and the Chinese government's firm stance on highly valuing the China-DPRK traditional friendship will not change, the firm support for Kim in leading the DPRK's socialist cause will not change, and the firm commitment to safeguarding the shared interests of the two countries and preserving a favorable strategic environment will not change, Xi said in the meeting.

The two sides should make concerted efforts to translate the important consensus reached by the two leaders during the visit into concrete actions and tangible outcomes to keep bilateral relations advancing with the times and achieve greater progress.

Drawing from the past for the future

The second World Conference of Classics is being held in Athens, Greece, on Tuesday and Wednesday. With the theme "Dialogue between Ancient and Modern: Contemporary Inspirations from Classical Wisdom", it brings together leading scholars in classical studies, as well as experts in civilization, culture and archaeology from China and other countries, to discuss issues related to classical civilizations and promote academic exchanges and consensus-building in global classical studies.

The event serves as a timely reminder of the importance of cultural exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations in an era marked by geopolitical tensions and deep-seated mistrust.

It has long been realized that ancient Eastern Mediterranean civilization is not the only form of civilization, nor is it the best. There is a heritage of civilization all over the world, and the acceptance of that heritage is important for countries to get along.

There is a misconception about classics that we study ancient times to gain certain wisdom or practices that can be directly borrowed. But the real significance of classics is that they help us understand the causes of some of the most consequential decisions in history. They provide practical food for thought for political theory and political thinking today.

For instance, the Thucydides trap is much talked about today. Knowing its origins helps us better understand if it is relevant today and, if so, how it can be avoided.

Civilizations are wellsprings of wisdom, embodying a vast repository of rational and practical knowledge about understanding and transforming the world. They have always thrived through exchanges and interaction. The ancient Silk Road, for instance, was not merely a trade route but a conduit for cultural, technological and philosophical exchanges between the East and the West.

All this underscores the potential of civilizational dialogue to foster mutual understanding and cooperation, two things the world is in dire need of today.

The public goods China has put forward in recent years — such as the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and Global Governance Initiative that are foundational for the building of a community with a shared future for humanity — are frameworks deeply rooted in the traditional Chinese notion that common challenges require collective action and shared solutions. Their resonance comes from the belief in ancient times in an ethical community — a group of individuals who share common ethical values and principles, working collectively to maintain social harmony and justice. In ancient times, these communities were often localized, such as within a village or kingdom, where shared values and norms governed behavior.

The importance of an ethical community lies in its ability to foster cooperation, mutual respect and a sense of belonging among its members, which are essential for societal stability and well-being. It is thus easy to see why China's proposals have been widely accepted by those countries hoping to build a more harmonious world. From the Belt and Road Initiative to the Global Governance Initiative and through mechanisms such as the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, China is steadfastly striving to foster a sense of interconnectedness and a more ethical and collaborative global community based on mutual respect and the pursuit of shared development.

Mutual understanding and respect are crucial for the success of a harmonious global community. By engaging in cultural exchange and dialogue, nations can gain insights into different civilizational frameworks and work toward common goals. China's emphasis on harmony and reciprocity in international relations, influenced by Confucian values such as the importance of moral and righteous behavior and the cultivation of virtues, can serve as a foundation for building trust and cooperation among diverse nations.

Such classical wisdom offers inspiration for enriching societal values and addressing pressing global issues, as the cultivation of mutual understanding and respect is essential for building a harmonious world and finding solutions to the common challenges humanity faces.

As scholars from different countries convene in Greece, they will walk where Plato taught and Aristotle spoke. But their deeper task is to make it clear that ancient wisdom can still guide modern action. As we look to the future, the lessons of the past can continue to illuminate the path to a more harmonious and interconnected global community.

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Jin Ding



Opinion Line

Who bears cost for unbearable weight of resource-hungry AI?

Given the boom in artificial intelligence, the industry has been made to look like it is weightless and comes without cost. But there is no such thing as a free lunch.

A growing body of research is shedding light on the uncomfortable reality that AI is emerging as one of the world's most resource-hungry industries. According to a recent report by the United Nations University Institute for Water, Environment and Health, by 2030, AI-driven data centers could consume 945 terawatt-hours of electricity annually — roughly triple the combined electricity consumption of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Nigeria. Their water use could also reach levels equivalent to the basic needs of 1.3 billion people.

For years, Silicon Valley sold the digital economy as a cleaner alternative to heavy industry. The internet was supposed to dematerialize economic activity. Instead, AI is rematerializing it. The cloud turns out to be made of steel, concrete, copper, electricity and water.

The challenge is that AI companies currently enjoy a remarkable privilege: they are allowed to externalize a significant portion of their environmental costs.

When a data center is built in a drought-prone region, local residents often pay the price through strained water supplies and higher utility bills. When electricity grids require upgrades to accommodate massive computing clusters, the costs are frequently socialized while the profits remain private. Gains accrue to shareholders and technology executives; infrastructure burden falls on everyone else.

It is astonishing that many AI companies disclose model capabilities in meticulous detail while revealing comparatively little about the electricity, water and land footprints of their systems. The European Union is already moving toward mandatory sustainability disclosures for large data centers. That should become the global norm. People have a right to know how much water a chatbot consumes, just as consumers know the fuel efficiency of a car.

Economists have long argued that markets work best when costs are visible. If an AI model requires vast computing resources, that expense should be reflected in its business model rather than hidden in public utility bills. By extension, AI companies should pay the full costs of grid expansion, water extraction and environmental mitigation associated with their operations. Governments should reward efficiency rather than scale alone. The industry's current incentive structure resembles an arms race in which larger models automatically attract more investment. Yet UNESCO research suggests that smarter design and model optimization can dramatically reduce energy consumption without sacrificing performance. The future of AI should be measured not only by intelligence per parameter, but by intelligence per watt.

Policymakers should resist the temptation to frame this as a choice between innovation and regulation. It is neither. Aviation did not flourish because governments ignored safety. The pharmaceutical industry did not gain legitimacy by avoiding oversight. The most successful technological revolutions have always combined entrepreneurial dynamism with public guardrails.

AI's environmental footprint is not an argument against AI. Indeed, the technology may help optimize power grids, accelerate scientific discovery and improve climate forecasting. But those benefits will lose legitimacy if communities conclude that they are sacrificing water, land and affordable electricity so that technology companies can train ever-larger models.

The defining question for the next decade, therefore, is not whether AI will become more powerful. It almost certainly will. The question is whether society can ensure that the industry's resource bill is paid by those generating it, rather than by everyone else. If AI is to become humanity's most transformative technology, it must first learn a very human lesson: there is no such thing as a free kilowatt-hour.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

SCO cooperation narrowing regional digital divide

Editor's note: *The inauguration of the China-Shanghai Cooperation Organization joint laboratory for digital and intelligent applications and the China-SCO computing power industry alliance in Tianjin marks a significant step forward in the SCO's digital development. People's Daily Overseas Edition spoke to Zhu Shuai, a researcher at the China Center for Information Industry Development, and Xiao Bin, a researcher at the Institute of Russian, Eastern European and Central Asian Studies in the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, to discuss this development. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

The establishment of the laboratory and the alliance addresses two critical elements of the global digital transformation: computing power and scenario applications. This is not only an upgrade in technological cooperation, but also the materialization of a new generation of regional digital infrastructure.

The SCO's digital cooperation initiatives increasingly focus on data and computing power, strengthening the foundation for regional industrial collaboration. Progress in digital infrastructure has accelerated, with cross-border fiber-optic networks, big data centers and 5G facilities extending further into Central and South Asia. This helps narrow the region's digital divide.

At the same time, thanks to the integration of industries and trade, technologies such as smart customs systems, electronic clearance services, Silk Road e-commerce platforms and digital freight train services are making cross-border trade more efficient and reducing transaction costs.

Years of security and economic cooperation have fostered a high degree of political trust within the SCO, creating favorable conditions for cross-border data flows and cybersecurity cooperation.

Also, the diversity of SCO members generates strong complementarities. China has emerged as a major player in areas such as computing power, large artificial intelligence models and embodied intelligence, while countries in Central and South Asia have rapidly growing markets, pressing digital transformation needs and demographic potential.

The SCO's digital cooperation is guided by the principles of equal consultation and respect for the data sovereignty of its member states.

Additionally, the SCO's digital agenda is increasingly aligned with the Belt and Road Initiative, gradually forming a cooperation framework that combines platforms, laboratories, alliances and projects. This model promotes coordinated progress in areas ranging from data connectivity and regulatory alignment to talent development.

For regional economies, digital and intelligence cooperation can help modernize traditional sectors such as energy, agriculture and logistics, foster new drivers of growth and enhance the resilience of regional industry and supply chains.

From a broader international perspective, this cooperation reflects an open, inclusive and mutually beneficial approach to digital governance. It demonstrates that countries at different stages of development can work together through consultation and cooperation to build a secure and transparent digital ecosystem, offering valuable experience for global digital governance.

Efforts will continue to strengthen regional digital infrastructure connectivity and develop data markets. Greater emphasis will be placed on integrating digital technologies into economic and social development and advancing coordination on cross-border data governance.

Cooperation in digital talent cultivation and green digital transformation is also likely to expand, ensuring that digitalization and sustainable development progress in tandem. By focusing on practical cooperation and enhancing technological capabilities, the SCO can support economic growth, regional prosperity and long-term development across its member states.

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VIEWS

Sophia Papaioannou

From argument to accord in ancient debates

The rhetorical traditions of ancient China and ancient Greece are among the most influential systems of communication in world history. Although both cultures developed sophisticated theories of persuasion during the same periods in history, they differed significantly because they emerged from distinct philosophical, social and cosmological assumptions.

The study of Pre-Qin (221-206 BC) rhetoric of Wei Yongkang, a scholar from the University of Texas Rio Grande Valley, identifies three defining features: harmony, self-effacement and paradox.

These characteristics contrast sharply with the argumentative, individualistic and logical orientation of Greek rhetoric associated with Aristotle, Plato and later Roman theorists such as Quintilian.

A major difference between the two traditions concerns the purpose of discourse. Greek rhetoric was fundamentally agonistic, developing within democratic city-states where public debate, legal disputes and political competition shaped civic life.

Aristotle defined rhetoric as the ability to discover the available means of persuasion in any situation, emphasizing effectiveness, argumentation and intellectual victory.

Pre-Qin Chinese rhetoric, by contrast, sought primarily to preserve harmony rather than to win debates. It focused on expressing one's position without creating disruption or social conflict.

Rooted in Confucian and Daoist thought, communication was understood as part of a broader ethical and cosmic order. The rhetor's task was therefore not simply to persuade but also to maintain proper social relationships and align discourse with the Dao.

These differing aims produced contrasting ideals of the speaker. Greek rhetoric elevated the individual rhetor, stressing visible authority, confidence and personal distinction. Aristotle's concept of ethos emphasized the persuasive force of character, while Roman rhetoric celebrated the eloquent statesman. Public speaking in the Greco-Roman world was often performative and self-assertive.

Chinese rhetoric instead cultivated humility and restraint. Wei describes this quality as "self-effacement", with the speakers avoiding overt self-assertion and minimizing the intrusion of personal ego into the discourse. Scholars such as Geoffrey E. R. Lloyd have contrasted the "agonistic Greeks" with the "irenic Chinese".

Whereas Greek and Roman rhetoric encouraged individual advancement, Chinese rhetoric prioritized social harmony and collective stability. Legitimacy depended less on originality than on alignment with accepted moral and cosmological principles.

The distinction also appears in rhetorical structure. Greco-Roman rhetoric generally favored deductive organization: a thesis was stated clearly and supported through systematic argument. This reflected the Greek commitment to analytical reasoning and logical progression.

Chinese rhetoric, on the other hand, was indirect and inductive. Ideas emerged gradually, and their meaning depended heavily on context, implication and shared cultural assumptions.

Direct confrontation risked damaging social harmony, so the discourse tended to appear subtle, elliptical, or understated from a Western perspective.

The philosophical foundations of the two traditions also diverged. Greek rhetoric developed alongside formal logic and philosophical inquiry. Thinkers from the Sophists to Aristotle explored questions of truth, reason and epistemology, and persuasive speech was judged according to coherence and argumentative rigor.

Pre-Qin Chinese rhetoric did not reject logic — Mohist thinkers demonstrated considerable logical sophistication — but it did not treat logic as the highest source of knowledge. Chinese thought emphasized holistic and relational understanding rather than strict deduction. Consequently, rhetoric relied heavily on analogy, paradox and contextual meaning. Daoist texts such as the *Dao De Jing* illustrate this tendency through statements that challenge linear reasoning.

The idea that "good men do not argue" reflects a rhetorical ideal in which persuasion can arise through non-assertion.

This paradoxical approach marks one of the clearest contrasts with Greek rhetoric. Greek practice generally assumed that persuasion required active argument and explicit proof.

Daoist rhetoric, however, promoted the principle of *wu-wei*, or "action through non-action". In rhetorical terms, this meant persuading indirectly rather than overwhelming audiences through forceful reasoning. Ambiguity and openness were treated not as weaknesses but as deliberate strategies encouraging reflection and participation.

The two traditions also differed in their understanding of truth and authority. Greek rhetoric often centered on discovering or defending the truth through debate.

Chinese rhetoric, especially within Confucianism, linked effective speech to sincerity, ritual propriety and moral trustworthiness. Pivotal is the principle that rhetoric should be oriented toward establishing trust.

Credibility depended less on individual reputation than on one's place within a moral and social network.

Despite these differences, the traditions shared important similarities. Both recognized language as a powerful force capable of shaping society and influencing human behavior. Both attached ethical significance to communication and viewed rhetoric as more than ornamental language.

Both traditions also emerged during periods of political instability and intellectual pluralism. The Warring States Period (475-221 BC) in China and the democratic experiments of classical Greece each stimulated reflection on persuasion, governance and social order. In both civilizations, rhetoric developed as a practical response to conflict and the need to influence others.

Ultimately, the comparison reveals two complementary visions of communication.

Greek rhetoric privileges individuality, logical demonstration and persuasive mastery, while Chinese rhetoric emphasizes harmony, contextual sensitivity and relational balance. Greek rhetoric seeks victory through argument; Chinese rhetoric often seeks understanding through subtlety and restraint.

In today's globalized world, studying these traditions together offers valuable insights into intercultural communication.

Greek rhetoric highlights the importance of clarity, reason and public debate, whereas Chinese rhetoric emphasizes humility, relational awareness and the ethical responsibilities of discourse.

Together, they broaden our understanding of rhetoric and demonstrate the diversity of human communicative practices.

The author is a professor of Latin literature in the Faculty of Philology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



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Jin Fangting

Civilizations illuminating one another through dialogue

The second World Conference of Classics is being held in Athens, Greece, on Tuesday and Wednesday, under the theme "Dialogue between Ancient and Modern: Contemporary Inspirations from Classical Wisdom".

Since the inaugural conference convened in Beijing in 2024, the joint hosting of this event by China and Greece, together with the establishment of the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens, has created a new platform for the exchange and mutual civilizational learning between China, Greece and the broader international community alike.

A joint initiative titled "Illuminating Humanity's Path Forward with Classical Wisdom" is to be announced at the conference, alongside the launch of the "Global Scholar Residency and Exchange Program" of the Chinese School of Classical Studies.

Following the conference, participants will be invited to visit the Angelokastro archaeological site, the first joint Sino-Greek archaeological project, moving from discursive dialogue toward substantive collaboration in joint archaeology and youth exchange programs.

Classical studies is an epistemological and methodological key capable of moving civilizational exchange from surface-level dialogue to genuine mutual understanding.

But to achieve this depth of mutual learning, Chinese classical scholarship must go beyond the passive acceptance of existing academic frameworks and establish a comparative discourse that reflects China's own scholarly subjectivity.

Comparative research between ancient China and ancient Greece is precisely the arena in which such a discourse can be built, tested and refined.

The World Conference of Classics is reshaping the overall landscape of comparative and mutual learning research between ancient China and ancient Greece in the following respects.

First, testing comparative discourse through joint archaeology and substantive collaboration.

One of the most defining transformations of the Second World Conference of Classics has been the forging of a closer bond between academic discourse and fieldwork practice.

The Angelokastro Archaeological Project was officially launched in April, marking the first time Chinese scholars have taken a leading role in an archaeological project at the very heart of Western classical civilization.

The project focuses on the Aetolian region of Greece, which during the Hellenistic period served as a nexus of extensive cultural exchange across the Eurasian continent.

Archaeologists hope that excavation will bring to light early evidence of long-distance trade networks.

This collaborative venture signals a broader shift: the comparative study of civilizations is moving beyond textual analogy toward an evidence-based dialogue rooted in material remains.

It is hoped that joint archaeology will serve as a catalyst for building a comparative framework — one grounded in China's own scholarly traditions yet fully engaged with Greek and international academia — where discourse and fieldwork reinforce and validate each other.

Second, talent development in Sino-Greek comparative studies — equally versed in Confucius and Plato.

These words speak directly to the most tangible human foundations sustaining Sino-Greek comparative research.

Over more than two decades, classical education in China has established well-structured training programs at Peking University, Tsinghua University, Renmin University of China, Sun Yat-sen University and Chongqing University, among others.

A new generation of young and mid-career scholars, deeply grounded in Chinese classical literature and internationally minded, has risen rapidly, making substantial strides in their command of ancient Greek, Latin and other classical languages, as well as in the close reading of classical texts.

Third, building an equal and open comparative dialogue across civilizations.

Classical studies can serve as a powerful bridge in international cultural exchange, bringing together scholars from different countries to deepen mutual understanding through shared inquiry, built on respect for each other's heritage.

To truly achieve this, we must move beyond the long-standing practice of interpreting Chinese civilization solely through borrowed frameworks.

Building a comparative discourse that reflects China's own scholarly voice calls for the principle of "two-way interpretation" — treating the core concepts and modes of thought within Chinese civilization as an independent knowledge system, and thereby offering the global classical studies community a truly dialogic comparative framework.

This effort both enriches existing comparative paradigms and meaningfully advances the vision of civilizational dialogue.

In this sense, classical studies hold the key to deeper exchanges between civilizations precisely because it does not merely study their differences, but asks how civilizations can speak to one another across those differences — and illuminate each other through dialogue.

With this in mind, we call on the scholarly community to take a more proactive stance: systematically mapping China's existing body of Sino-Greek comparative scholarship from its own perspective; continuing to examine homegrown comparative concepts such as "the dao and the Logos" and "the Kingly Way (*wangdao*) and democracy"; and exploring diverse approaches — from broad comparisons of historical philosophy and civilizational patterns to close readings of key concepts and intellectual history.

The goal is to gradually build a comparative theoretical framework that is firmly rooted in China's own scholarly traditions yet capable of deep engagement with the international classical studies community — one that is continuously tested across different civilizational contexts and remains vital and generative over time.

To understand the civilizational character of contemporary China, one must truly grasp the unique fabric of historical China — and to grasp historical China, one must engage in dialogue with other classical civilizations, such as ancient Greece, in order to see more clearly what makes Chinese civilization uniquely its own.

As the Sino-Greek joint archaeological project and the youth exchange program advance steadily, and as the second World Conference of Classics opens in Athens, this is a moment of exceptional opportunity for the deeper development of comparative ancient civilizational studies.

Drawing on a century of Chinese scholarship in comparative ancient civilizations, and using that legacy to establish China's own voice in classical studies, this is both a timely intellectual mission and China's meaningful contribution to civilizational exchange across the world.

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Kang Bing

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Turning the tide on tap water quality

China's revised Water Supply Regulations, issued by the State Council, or the Cabinet, late last year and effective from June 1, may seem like a technical policy document. Yet their impact could flow directly into the lives of ordinary people. Designed to strengthen water security and improve services, the regulations aim to ensure a safer and more reliable water supply for 1.4 billion citizens across the country.

China's history of tap water stretches as far back as that of many Western countries. British businessmen built the country's first modern tap water plant in Shanghai in the 1880s.

But for much of the population, clean water supply remained a luxury until China launched reform and opening-up in the late 1970s.

Fifty years ago, tap water was available in my home city Xi'an, Shaanxi province. Yet, hundreds of families still depended on a single public tap installed at a street corner. Lack of funds meant that water pipes could not be extended into every household.

As a result, people of my generation became skilled at carrying water home using shoulder poles fitted with baskets at either end. In rural areas, the situation was even more difficult. People had to fetch water from rivers, rainwater pools or wells. In my father's village, located 50 kilometers east of where the Terracotta Warriors were buried, residents depended on the only 100-meter deep well for drinking water. Life was hard.

Over the past decades, however, huge investments have transformed the country's water supply system. Thousands of reservoirs have been built. Massive diversion projects now carry water across hundreds of kilometers to cities facing water shortages. Deep wells have been drilled using modern technology while extensive efforts have been made to clean polluted rivers and improve water sources.

The regulations make governments at all levels responsible for water supply security and require the same standards for water quality in both urban and rural areas.

According to the Ministry of Water Resources, by the end of 2025, tap water penetration was 96 percent in rural areas and 99 percent in urban areas. The implementation of the new regulations is expected to consolidate these achievements and further improve both the quantity and quality of the water supply.

The regulations make governments at all levels responsible for water supply security and require the same standards for water quality in both urban and rural areas.

If fully implemented, these regulations could prove to be a big blessing for rural residents, many of whom get tap water of varying quality.

In cities and towns across China, tap water is usually supplied by State-run plants and subjected to strict quality control as part of municipal responsibilities. In rural areas, tap water supply is often provided by a mix of villages, towns, nearby factories and private investors. Such fragmentation can result in inconsistent standards and inadequate water security.

The new regulations seek to change that. Relevant departments of local governments will be required to inspect water quality regularly and establish full-chain management systems covering every stage of supply. With the screws tightened by administrators, stricter supervision and greater investment are expected from both governments and operators, helping ensure cleaner and safer tap water for rural residents.

Urban residents stand to benefit too. For years, disputes have arisen between consumers and suppliers over various charges.

Now that millions of residents live in high apartment buildings, insufficient water pressure has become a persistent headache for those living on upper floors. Installing high-pressure pumps costs money. But while residents on higher floors are willing to pay for more powerful pumps, those living on lower levels often see no reason to share the expense for a problem that doesn't bother them.

Another challenge lies underground. Water pipes in houses built decades ago have become worn or rusty with age.

Replacing them is the only viable solution, but such projects require cooperation from all residents. Who will organize the work? Who will pay the bill? For many urban residents, these questions have remained stuck in the pipeline.

The new regulations could help break the deadlock. They stipulate that suppliers can charge only those fees approved by local governments for water consumption and a few other services. Other costs, including the upgrading of water supply equipment and facilities, must be shouldered by suppliers.

As China shifts its focus from expanding access to tap water to improving quality and service, citizens of the country are keeping their eyes and mouths open for clean tap water.

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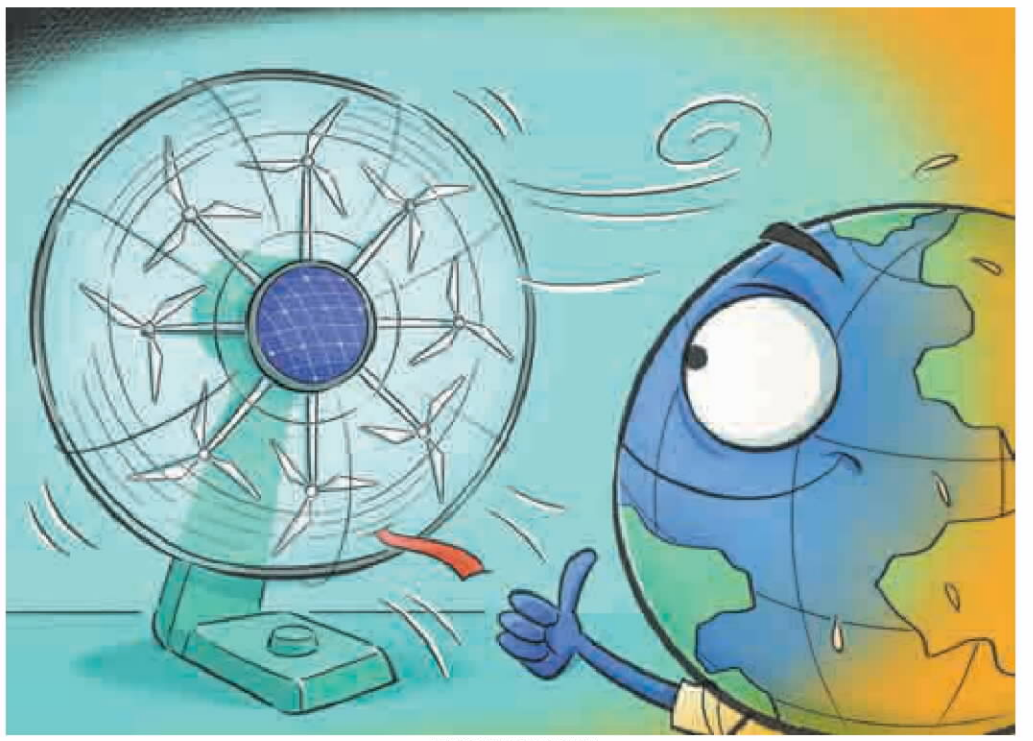
GLOBAL VIEWS

MICHAEL E. MANN

Time to turn up the heat on action

Climate crisis leaves no room for complacency



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The past three years have been the hottest on record. Research shows that such extreme heat is virtually impossible without warming caused by humans. With modest assistance from El Nino, the continued burning of fossil fuels made this possible.



The World Meteorological Organization estimates that there is an 86 percent likelihood that this temperature record will be broken within the next five years. With another El Nino event brewing in the tropical Pacific, that new record could be set as early as next year. The planet will keep getting warmer as long as we keep releasing carbon pollution by burning fossil fuels for energy and transportation.

Global average temperature, however, is an abstract measure. We do not "feel" it. What we experience instead are the consequences of that warming, particularly the role that warming plays in intensifying extreme weather events that we are witnessing across the world.

Whether it was record-breaking stifling May heat in Philadelphia, the United States, a few weeks ago and in Europe over the past week, or the deadly floods and landslides in central and southwestern China in recent days, the consequences of climate change are now upon us.

Climate science deniers like to cite scientific uncertainty as a reason for not taking action. But the cost of inaction is far greater. Research shows that climate models may be underestimating the extent to which climate change influences extreme weather disasters. They may also be underestimating the potential impact of global warming on ice sheet disintegration, rising sea levels and the occurrence of deadly typhoons.

The question is no longer whether climate change is a threat. The question is how severe we are willing to allow that threat to become. The case for urgency is clear.

Equally important is the recognition that it's not too late to act. A recent study, which was widely misrepresented by opponents of climate action, showed that the efforts underway to transition toward clean energy are paying dividends. The world is making real progress in lowering emissions that lead to climate change.

A decade ago, worst-case emissions scenarios projected catastrophic warming of 4 C to 5 C by the end of this century. Today, those projections have reduced to 3.5 C to 4 C. Even a "business-as-usual" scenario, where no further policy action is taken, would likely lead to around 3 C warming, still dangerous but considerably less than what we faced just a decade ago. This improvement reflects the policy progress the world has made.

But even a 3 C increase is a very dangerous level of planetary warming, which could lead to potentially irreversible climate impacts. We have made progress, but it is not nearly enough.

Part of the problem is that the US, once a leader in climate action, is now backsliding under its current leadership. The bilateral climate agreement between China and the US during the Barack Obama administration set the stage for the landmark Paris Agreement in 2016.

Since then, only China has made good on its end of the bargain. In 2014, it promised to peak carbon emissions before 2030. Driven by an expansion in renewable energy deployment, including wind, solar, battery technologies, electric vehicles and high-speed rail, China's carbon emissions have entered a "flat or falling" trend well before the 2030 deadline.

In 2025, renewable energy accounted for nearly 86 percent of newly added power generation and reached nearly 50 percent of installed power capacity worldwide. The leading US scientific journal, Science, named the renewable energy surge as the 2025 Breakthrough of the Year. It singled out China's role: "China's mighty industrial engine is the driver. After years of patiently nurturing the sector through subsidies, China now dominates global production of renewable energy technologies."

In contrast, the US is moving in the opposite direction. The current US administration and its Republican supporters have rejected global climate agreements, partnered with oil-producing countries and doubled down on fossil fuel extraction, thereby sabotaging clean energy efforts.

The US once prided itself on being the hub of technological innovation. That honor has now shifted to China. Chinese automaker BYD has developed technology that charges EV batteries to 97 percent capacity in just 12 minutes even in freezing temperatures, putting the US EV industry to shame. The Chinese all-electric and now largely renewable-driven bullet trains are breaking records both for usage and speed. More than 4 billion passenger trips were made on the network in 2025, and trains routinely move at speeds of 350 kilometers per hour. Meanwhile, the US national rail service, Amtrak — long underfunded and under assault from fossil-fueled Republicans — languishes with aging equipment. Its flagship Acela high-speed service struggles to maintain an average speed of 132 km per hour.

The US is no longer the conductor of the bullet train that is the global clean energy revolution. It should decide whether to climb on board or get left behind at the station. The rest of the world, and China in particular, should remain resolute in moving toward a global clean energy economy. The stakes could not be higher.

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SUI CHUAN

From heart to heart

Low-cost works outshine those of big-name directors as Chinese audiences choose authenticity over hollow spectacle

The recent phenomenon that Chinese moviegoers have been sidelining big-budget productions by celebrated directors in favor of low-budget films by amateurs may indicate epochal tendencies. *Dear You*, produced on a budget of 14 million yuan ($2.06 million), has already grossed over 1.6 billion yuan at the box office — and its popularity is still growing.



The short drama series *Enemy* has achieved over 800 million views on China's TikTok platform Douyin without the support of A-list celebrities or overwhelming marketing.

At the other end of the spectrum, some big-budget productions by renowned directors have fared poorly in recent years. *Being Toward Death* flopped at the box office, *Bureau 749* scored only 3.2 on the professional review platform Douban in contrast to 9.2 recorded at present by *Dear You*, and *Dongji Rescue* almost collapsed under public backlash over accusations of historical nihilism.

This is no coincidence. On the surface, it seems like an imbalance between budget and returns; at a deeper level, it reflects a structural misalignment in the logic of content production.

The core lies in the difference between the "othering narratives" told from a Western-prone perspective and the "cultural self-awareness" rooted in the Chinese spirit that tells emotional stories from a traditional perspective.

Many renowned directors have been deeply influenced by Western popular culture from the beginning of their careers. Their imitation of Hollywood films has led to a reliance on "Western-centrism" in narrative style, aesthetics and values. Their obsession with blending Eastern and Western cultures has ultimately rendered their films culturally out of place in China.

On the other hand, works that have embraced the spiritual essence of Chinese culture have done exceedingly well. The rise of *Dear You* is the most vivid illustration. By using *qiaopi* — the overseas Chinese remittance letters recognized as a UNESCO Memory of the World heritage — as its spiritual anchor, the film brings the sense of family and country down from grand narratives to everyday emotions, allowing audiences to find a spiritual homeland in simple values such as loyalty and righteousness. When filmmakers no longer rely on Western narrative standards, they often find a market that appreciates the enduring spiritual themes of Chinese culture.

There is a stark contrast between the sincere content of these low-budget works and the assembly-line production of the industrial machine. The strength of low-cost works lies in their story-first, emotion-driven approach, which contrasts sharply with the big-budget production model of many renowned directors.

Lan Hongchun, director of *Dear You*, spent three years interviewing over 120 elderly Chaoshan-descended overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia, all over 80 years old. Ninety percent of the film's plot is based on real stories. The film has no clear heroes or villains, no dramatic conflicts or climactic twists. Through understated cinematography and a consistent emotional tone, it tells a story of nostalgia and family bonds, elevating it to a sense of shared community — a sentiment that embodies the devotion to loyalty, compassion and mutual support of people of Chinese origin.



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The same is true of *Enemy*. The female protagonist, driven by a profound sense of loyalty to her native land, chooses to perish together with the invaders. When she changes the opera line from "the two of us" to "we, husband and wife", a fleeting gleam in her eyes feels heavier than any love confession ever could.

Meanwhile, high-budget productions spend fortunes on sweeping visual effects and A-list ensembles, yet their core narratives are perfunctorily cliched and rejected by viewers.

Ultimately, there is an irreconcilable contrast between grassroots expressions that connect emotionally and detached narratives from an elite perspective. Low-cost works excel at capturing the emotional pain points of ordinary people, striking a chord with audiences. In contrast, some films by renowned directors display an elite arrogance, underestimating or dismissing the aesthetic judgment of viewers.

Today's young audiences are increasingly avoiding cinemas. Industry research shows that the share of viewers under the age of 24 dropped sharply from 38 percent in 2019 to 15 percent in 2025. The root cause is the glut of hollow plots, heavy-handed preachiness, and stiff acting by glamorous stars, all of which alienate young audiences seeking genuine emotional depth.

A renowned director once declared during a road show that 15 million tickets are the survival line for Chinese cinema, urging audiences to support his latest film. Meanwhile, *Dear You*, with no star power, started with a mere 1.6 percent screening rate on its opening day but became one of the highest-rated domestic dramas of the decade through word-of-mouth recommendations. *Enemy* sparked in-depth discussions online with its exquisitely crafted, nuanced performances. Netizens eagerly captured and shared screenshots, created fan edits, and wrote lengthy analytical posts. Its popularity grew entirely through organic word-of-mouth.

While renowned directors lament the slump in the film industry, amateur teams with extremely low budgets have reaped market returns hundreds of times larger. Clearly, the market has not abandoned good films. It has only turned its back on works that are overly Westernized and mechanically imitative.

The true vitality of cinema lies not in budget size but in whether creators have the courage to step away from a cultural "othering" perspective, root themselves in Chinese culture and genuinely respect the emotional needs of the audience. That might help renowned directors emerge from their winter.

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BUSINESS

General Mills off-loads Haagen-Dazs shops as stiff competition bites

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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General Mills Inc's recent decision to sell its Haagen-Dazs ice cream shops on the Chinese mainland to an investor group that includes Ningji, a fast-growing Chinese tea brand, signals intensifying competition in the country's ice cream market, amid consumer desire for constant relevance and innovation.

Under the terms of the deal, the buyer will receive an exclusive license to operate Haagen-Dazs-branded ice cream shops and gifting businesses on the mainland. General Mills will retain ownership and operations of Haagen-Dazs retail and food service channels in China outside of the licensed outlets. Financial terms were not disclosed. The transaction is expected to close in 2026, pending regulatory approvals and customary closing conditions.

The move aligns with General Mills' "accelerate strategy", which focuses on prioritizing brands and channels with the highest potential for profitable growth, said the company. Since 2018, the company has reshaped its portfolio, divesting nearly a third of its net sales base through acquisitions and divestitures.

Haagen-Dazs has relied on its premium positioning in China since opening its first store in Shanghai in 1996. However, the brand has faced steady contraction: according to industry tracker canyandata.com, Haagen-Dazs operated 262 stores in May 2026, down from more than 550 locations at its 2019 peak. However, the broader Chinese ice cream market continues to expand rapidly.

Research by the Zero Power Intelligence Group shows the ice cream market size growing from 120 billion yuan ($17.69 billion) in 2020 to 200 billion yuan in 2024, with projections reaching 250 billion yuan by 2030. Despite overall market growth, Haagen-Dazs has struggled to capture a strong share of the market, being outpaced by emerging domestic competitors.

The brand remains one of the top players in China's limited-service ice cream segment, ranking third in foodservice transaction value in 2025, according to Euromonitor International. It ranks behind domestic rival Mr. Wildman and US-based Dairy Queen.

Mr. Wildman specializes in fresh gelato and operates 1,326 stores.

Ningji, founded in 2021, is primarily known for its lemon-flavored handmade beverages, priced around 15 yuan on average. The company grew rapidly with backing from investors including ByteDance, Tencent and Xiaomi, but its store count has stabilized at 1,799 outlets, according to canyandata.com.

In recent years, coffee and tea beverage chains have continuously diversified their menu, adding bakery items, desserts and recently, ice cream and gelato. Even so, integrating the premium Haagen-Dazs business into Ningji's value-oriented beverage-focused model could be a challenge for the new owners, according to industry observers.

Consumption analyst Yang Huaiyu said that Ningji's move to buy Haagen-Dazs locations is aimed at leveraging the high-end brand equity to achieve a leap, thereby breaking free from the low-price involution plaguing the tea beverage market.

"Haagen-Dazs stores come with a built-in high-net-worth customer base and prime spots in core business districts, which can quickly compensate for Ningji's shortcomings in high-end scenarios," Yang said.

Yang added that the deal would also allow Ningji to expand its product matrix, establishing a differentiated advantage in the fiercely competitive lemon tea track. "By moving beyond a single-category focus, the brand can mitigate the risks of market saturation and price wars," Yang said.

Consumers are seen at a Haagen-Dazs store in Beijing on May 15.
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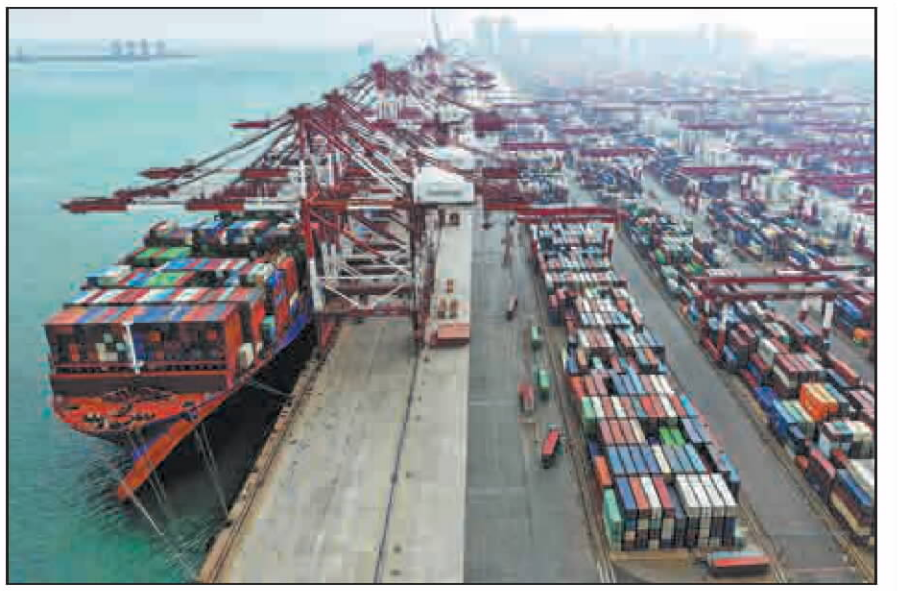
A containership docks at a port in Qingdao, Shandong province, on Thursday. YU FANGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

'Remarkable resilience' seen in China's exports

Surging demand for nation's high-tech products to spur H2 growth

By **WANG KEJU**
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China's export sector, driven by surging global demand for high-tech products, is expected to remain robust in the second half, which will provide strong support for the country's economic growth, senior economists said.

The recent thaw in trade relations between China and the United States could also help improve market expectations and reduce uncertainty over external demand in the months to come, they added.

China's export sector is displaying "remarkable resilience", driven by a global artificial intelligence investment boom and a sustained energy super-cycle, with Chinese firms well-positioned to capture growing global market share in relevant fields, said Robin Xing, chief China economist at Morgan Stanley.

Xing said global capital spending on AI hardware continues to expand, and Chinese firms have developed "core competitiveness" in printed circuit boards, optical components and memory chips, allowing them to share in the sector's upside.

China's integrated circuit exports have entered a phase of rising volumes and prices, with monthly export value growth exceeding 20 percent for 13 consecutive months as of April, said the China Chamber of Commerce for Import and Export of Machinery and Electronic Products.

Gao Shiwang, a spokesperson for the chamber, said that in the first four months, integrated circuit export volume rose 10.6 percent, while the value of exports jumped 78.3 percent. April alone saw a 92 percent year-on-year increase in export value.

"China's mature manufacturing and supply chain capabilities give it a unique position in the global AI hardware ecosystem. We are not only a major producer, but also a vital link in the value chain," Gao said.

On the energy front, Xing said large AI data centers require massive amounts of electricity, and China has taken "a leading position" in the global energy transition from wind and solar components to grid equipment and storage batteries.

The General Administration of Customs said exports of electric vehicles surged 68.1 percent year-on-year in the first four months, while lithium battery exports rose 43.2 percent and wind power generation equipment climbed 40.7 percent.

After weathering the COVID-19 pandemic, geopolitical conflicts, trade frictions and energy shocks, China's supply chain resilience has won global recognition, and global capital looking to invest in AI hardware and the energy transition would find it hard to bypass China, Xing added.

Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOCI China, said China's export strength, especially in high-tech sectors, will be a "key stabilizer for growth" in the second half.

Guan said robust exports are driving industrial production and manufacturing investment, while imported inflationary pressures are also helping to improve the country's price trajectory — factors that could push economic performance above expectations.

The easing of trade tensions between Beijing and Washington after US President Donald Trump paid a state visit to China in mid-May could also lower the uncertainty that weighed on China's export sector and US businesses alike, experts said.

"Cooperation with the US helps reduce external uncertainties for China, which greatly contributes to the stability of the Chinese economy," said Zhu Min, former deputy managing director of the International Monetary Fund.

"For the US, working with China is beneficial to its economic development and helps boost its demand. Especially in a year marked by so much uncertainty, we are introducing a factor of certainty, which carries great significance," Zhu said.

However, Guan from BOCI China warned of the external uncertainty still remaining in the second half due to situations in the Middle East.

"Currently, the Middle East is in a state of neither war nor peace," Guan said. "If the conflict escalates or the blockade of the Strait of Hormuz is prolonged, the resulting energy supply disruptions and international logistics blockages will have an increasingly severe impact on the global economy and trade."

"If the global economy falls into recession, China will not be immune," he added.

Uruguay to roll out visa waiver for Chinese citizens

By **LI JING**
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Uruguay's announcement to grant visa-free entry to Chinese citizens makes it the second South American country after Brazil to waive visa requirements, underscoring a growing effort by countries in the region to attract Chinese tourists and business travelers as economic ties with China deepen.

Uruguayan Foreign Minister Mario Lubetkin announced on Thursday that Uruguay would implement a visa-free policy for Chinese citizens holding ordinary passports, with details to be released at a later date.

The announcement came less than a month after Brazil unveiled a similar policy allowing holders of ordinary Chinese passports to stay for up to 30 days visa-free.

Analysts say the back-to-back decisions suggest a growing willingness among Latin American governments to lower barriers for Chinese visitors following China's unilateral visa-free policies to the region.

Niu Haibin, director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies, said China's unilateral visa-free policies for Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay have helped build mutual trust over the past year.

> The policy has strengthened mutual understanding and demonstrated the benefits of easier mobility."
>
> **Niu Haibin,** director of the Center for Latin American Studies at the Shanghai Institutes for International Studies

"The positive response to China's visa-free arrangements, together with Brazil's decision to grant visa-free access to Chinese citizens, has created momentum for broader policy coordination across the region," Niu said. "If the policies operate smoothly, more Latin American countries may consider similar measures in the future."

Travel agencies reported increased inquiries following the announcement, with Beijing-based travel agency UTour saying consultations related to Uruguay rose by about 15 percent.

Li Mengran, marketing manager at UTour, said Chinese tourists traveling to South America typically visit several countries on a single trip, meaning easier entry procedures in one country often have spillover effects across the region.

"Brazil and Uruguay introducing visa-free policies in succession will significantly improve travel convenience for Chinese visitors and help stimulate demand across the broader South American tourism market," Li said.

Analysts at Qunar's big data research institute said easier access to multiple destinations could help travelers spread the cost of long-haul flights across several countries, boosting the appeal of South America as a destination during the upcoming summer holiday and National Day travel seasons.

However, Li noted that visa waivers alone would not eliminate some of the structural constraints facing South American tourism.

Most routes still require multiple flight connections due to limited air links with China, while differing visa requirements across neighboring countries continue to complicate multi-destination travel planning, she said.

Visa facilitation has already helped boost travel flows between China and South America.

According to the Shanghai General Station of Immigration Inspection, more than 81,000 travelers from Brazil, Argentina, Chile, Peru and Uruguay entered China through Shanghai ports between June 1, 2025 and May 31, 2026, up 50.5 percent year-on-year. Notably, nearly 70 percent of these arrivals utilized the visa-free policy.

Niu said this experience has enabled more Latin American visitors to gain first-hand exposure to China.

"The policy has strengthened mutual understanding and demonstrated the benefits of easier mobility," he said.

According to China's General Administration of Customs, bilateral trade between China and Uruguay reached $7.19 billion in 2025, up 9.2 percent from a year earlier, with China remaining Uruguay's largest trading partner and largest export market.

Exports to China totaled $3.49 billion last year, accounting for about 26 percent of Uruguay's total exports. China is also the largest overseas market for Uruguayan soybeans and wool, and one of the leading destinations for its beef exports.

At the same time, Chinese products accounted for roughly a quarter of Uruguay's imports, including automobiles, machinery and electronic equipment.

Analysts said easier travel could also facilitate business visits, trade negotiations and investment discussions, helping support broader commercial engagement between the two countries.

The visa waiver follows a period of intensified diplomatic engagement between Beijing and Montevideo, Uruguay's capital.

In February, Uruguayan President Yamandu Orsi visited China, where the two countries issued a joint statement on deepening their comprehensive strategic partnership.

"As economic ties deepen, governments on both sides are seeking to reduce practical barriers to the movement of people," Niu said. "Visa facilitation is often one of the most visible outcomes of deeper political trust and economic integration."

Mega infra project to boost ties with UAE

By **REN QI**
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The Emirates airport maintenance hangar project in Dubai, undertaken by China Railway Construction Corp, and the deepening China-UAE infrastructure and industrial cooperation, will inject new momentum into the local economy and further enhance the bilateral partnership, experts said.

The megaproject, which kicked off in May, is located in the Dubai World Central area. It covers a total construction area of about 1.21 million square meters with a total investment exceeding $5 billion. Scheduled for 2030 completion, it is set to become a major global civil aviation maintenance hangar cluster, featuring top technical standards.

The facility includes eight large maintenance hangars, two specialized painting hangars and related support facilities. Once completed, it will be capable of simultaneously providing full-process services — including airframe overhauls, engine maintenance and aircraft painting — for 28 wide-body aircraft.

Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Maktoum, chairman and CEO of Emirates Airline, said the commencement of this world-class aviation engineering project marks an important step for Dubai in the future development of its aviation industry. The project will effectively integrate specialized capabilities, such as infrastructure and parts manufacturing, injecting new momentum into the UAE's economic growth, he noted.

Dai Hegen, chairman of CRCC, said that the cooperation between CRCC and Emirates is an important example of deepening good-neighborly friendship, pragmatic cooperation, and the high-quality joint construction of the Belt and Road Initiative between China and the UAE. It also serves as a demonstration project of "Chinese construction" contributing to the building of a China-UAE community with a shared future.

Relying on the construction of this aviation infrastructure project, Chinese enterprises will further demonstrate their comprehensive strength in engineering technology, construction quality and project management, Dai said. This will promote "Chinese construction" to better enter the high-end infrastructure market in the Middle East, continuously enhance international brand influence and industry competitiveness, and add new vitality to deepening China-UAE cooperation.

In recent years, with the continuous deepening of bilateral cooperation, Chinese enterprises have actively participated in infrastructure construction in the Middle East.

Data from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs show fruitful pragmatic cooperation between the two economies. The UAE is China's largest export market and second-largest trading partner in the Middle East. In 2025, bilateral trade value reached $108 billion, with China's exports at $72.88 billion and imports at $35.12 billion.

China mainly exports mechanical and electrical equipment, home appliances, vehicles and their parts, as well as steel and its products to the UAE, while primarily importing crude oil, natural gas, plastics and their products, organic chemicals and copper and its products. The UAE is China's sixth-largest source of crude oil imports, supplying 37.513 million metric tons to China in 2025.

Furthermore, Chinese enterprises are assisting Arab countries in upgrading their local industrial development levels through technology transfers, joint production and the construction of industrial parks. In the UAE, the China-UAE Industrial Capacity Cooperation Demonstration Zone focuses on high-end manufacturing, clean energy and modern logistics, with multiple projects already implemented through joint investments by Chinese and UAE enterprises.

"What we learn is not only products, but also knowledge and capabilities, which will help us achieve long-term sustainable development," said Reem Al Muhairi, an industrial project management official at an enterprise in the UAE.

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BUSINESS

Guangdong champions new industry model

Province's recent innovations in manufacturing, mobility going global, showing further growth possibilities

By LI JIAYING
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Autonomous minibuses developed by WeRide, an autonomous driving technology company, are seen in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, on March 24. DENG HUA / XINHUA





Left: A humanoid robot serves popcorn to reporters at Shenzhen Dobot Corp in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, on Oct 29. LIU LIHANG / XINHUA
Right: Staff members test industrial robots at a production base of Topstar Technology in Dongguan, Guangdong, on March 25, 2025. DENG HUA / XINHUA

A driverless robotaxi glides through the streets of Guangzhou, Guangdong province, slowing to pick up a passenger before merging back into traffic. Roughly 70 kilometers away in Dongguan, robotic arms work in harmony on an assembly line, while in Shenzhen, an engineer uploads a circuit design to an online platform, and within hours the first prototype is already entering production.

Though these technologies appear to belong to different industries, they share one thing in common: many are being developed by private enterprises from Guangdong, China's largest provincial economy and one of the country's most vibrant innovation hubs.

One year after the implementation of the Private Economy Promotion Law — the country's first comprehensive legislation dedicated to promoting private sector development — Guangdong is increasingly emerging as a testing ground where policy support, manufacturing capabilities and entrepreneurial vitality are combining to nurture a new generation of globally competitive industries.

According to the Guangdong Federation of Industry and Commerce, private businesses accounted for more than 95 percent of all market entities in the province by the end of 2025, contributing over 60 percent of its GDP and foreign trade.

More importantly, private businesses have become the backbone of Guangdong's innovation ecosystem, making up more than 80 percent of both the province's national-level "little giant" enterprises and nationally recognized high-tech companies.

Labs to real roads

Few sectors better illustrate Guangdong's push toward innovation-driven growth than autonomous driving.

Founded less than a decade ago in Guangzhou, WeRide has grown into one of the world's leading autonomous driving companies whose automobility services have been deployed in more than 40 cities across 12 countries.

Eyeing an expanded global footprint, in April, WeRide launched robotaxi operations in Singapore through a partnership with Grab, while also rolling out commercial driverless services in Dubai together with Uber, further extending the reach of Chinese autonomous driving technology overseas.

For a private company founded less than 10 years ago to compete on the global stage, "everything starts with technology", said Maeve Zhang, assistant to the president and head of marketing at the company.

Zhang said at the heart of the company's strategy is its self-developed WeRide One universal autonomous driving platform, which allows robotaxis, minibuses, autonomous sanitation vehicles and freight vehicles to share nearly 90 percent of their underlying software architecture and algorithms.

"The unified platform not only reduces development costs, but also gives the company the flexibility to adapt quickly to vastly different operating environments — from tropical downpours in Southeast Asia and extreme heat in the Middle East to Europe's stringent data privacy regulations," Zhang said.

The company's robotaxi fleet has grown from 100 vehicles in 2023 to around 1,300 today, and aims to increase that number to 10,000 by 2029 and 100,000 by 2032, she said.

"There is no finish line for a technology company," Zhang said. "Its technologies must continue to evolve, and the services must also continue to improve."

Behind WeRide's global ambitions lies the strength of Guangzhou's broader automotive ecosystem. As one of the city's three pillar industries, automobile manufacturing grew 5.5 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, while new energy vehicle output surged 36.1 percent.

Production of lithium-ion power batteries for vehicles and intelligent in-car equipment also jumped 41.7 percent and 35.3 percent, respectively, providing fertile ground for the development of next-generation mobility technologies.

Showcases to factories

If Guangzhou's private innovators are redefining how people move, manufacturers in Dongguan and Shenzhen are transforming how things are made.

Guangdong Topstar Technology Co, a Dongguan-based industrial robotics manufacturer, has spent nearly two decades evolving alongside the province's vast factory economy. Starting with automation solutions for injection molding workshops, the company later expanded into multi-joint industrial robots and intelligent manufacturing systems.

In 2025, it unveiled Xiaotuo, a humanoid robot designed specifically for injection molding applications, followed by the launch of its quadruped robot Xingzai, capable of traversing rough terrain and carrying heavy loads in firefighting, security inspection and industrial maintenance scenarios.

Yet for Topstar, the biggest challenge is not building robots, but making them reliable enough for real-world applications.

"Completing a single pick-and-place task in a laboratory is relatively easy," said Zhang Jian, a senior executive at the company. "What customers want on a production line is continuous operation without failure."

Zhang said that delivering industrial-grade reliability requires advances not only in artificial intelligence algorithms, but also in the robot's mechanical body and the precision manufacturing equipment behind it.

"Many of the high-end machine tools used to produce complex robot components once depended on imports," he said. "Today, we have achieved independent control over core technologies, giving us a much stronger foundation for large-scale deployment."

The company's recent growth is a vivid reflection of the rising demand for intelligent manufacturing upgrades across China's industrial sector. Topstar's industrial robot and automation business revenue surged more than 80 percent year-on-year in the first quarter, while revenue from the computer numerical control machine tool business expanded over 60 percent.

A similar story is unfolding about 80 kilometers south in Shenzhen, where collaborative robot maker Shenzhen Dobot Corp is helping bring Chinese intelligent manufacturing solutions to factories around the world.

As the world's largest collaborative robot supplier by shipment volume in 2025, the manufacturer now gets more than half of its revenue from overseas.

Xie Kaixuan, Dobot's marketing director, said foreign customers are no longer choosing Chinese robots simply because they are cost-effective.

"Overseas clients are no longer asking us only, 'How much does your robot cost?' They are increasingly asking, 'How long can it work, and how reliably can it operate?'" Xie said.

That trust has been earned thanks to the strong industrial foundation that Chinese manufacturers have built over years of serving the world's most complicated and comprehensive production environments, he added.

"What overseas customers value most is that we can offer a trusted solution that has been repeatedly validated in China's extensive and real industrial environments and proven capable of long-term, stable operation," Xie said.

In many ways he believes the globalization of Chinese manufacturing is entering a new phase.

"China is no longer exporting simply cost-effective machines," Xie said. "We are exporting integrated intelligent solutions that customers can truly rely on."

Ideas to businesses

What enables so many of Guangdong's private technology companies to move from an idea to a commercial product so quickly?

Part of the answer lies not only in the province's manufacturing strength, but also in a growing ecosystem that lowers the barriers to innovation itself.

For many hardware entrepreneurs in Shenzhen, innovation now begins with a simple click.

An engineer uploads a circuit design to an online platform, and within hours the first printed circuit board enters production. A few days later, a physical prototype is ready for testing and refinement.

"Whether it's a student experimenting with a personal idea or an early-stage startup producing a small batch of prototypes, our platform makes it possible to bring those ideas to life — something traditional manufacturing often cannot support," said an executive of operations at Shenzhen JLC Technology Group Co, an integrated platform covering PCB prototyping, component sourcing, assembly and precision manufacturing.

By digitalizing the entire process, it has reduced the cost of a single PCB prototype from several thousand yuan to just tens of yuan, while shortening delivery time from several weeks to as little as 12 hours.

"Our goal is to become an accelerator for global hardware innovation and technology commercialization," he said, adding that a humanoid robot can now move from design drawings to a fully assembled prototype in as little as one to two weeks.

By the end of 2025, JLC's online platform had attracted more than 9.59 million registered users, up 34.73 percent year-on-year. The company had also served customers in over 180 countries and regions and processed more than 21.08 million orders during the year.

"Foreign users increasingly value our end-to-end service model, spanning everything from electronic design automation to prototype manufacturing," he said. "What underpins that capability is China's complete industrial ecosystem. The ability to seamlessly connect design, components sourcing and manufacturing at such speed and scale is something that is still hard to find elsewhere in the world."

Ceramic tile factory embraces future with digital brain, green heart

By LI JIAYING

What does a ceramic tile factory look like in the age of artificial intelligence?

The answer, at least at Marco Polo Holdings' Shatian digital and intelligent factory in Dongguan, Guangdong province, is probably very different from what many people would imagine.

Walking through its production line, there is little of the dust-filled air, deafening noise and sweltering heat often associated with traditional ceramic production. Instead, intelligence is embedded in nearly every process.

In the raw-material workshop, an intelligent batching system enables rapid formula switching, shortening production changeovers and making it easier to handle smaller, more diversified orders. Nearby, smart continuous ball mills operate around the clock, while powdered materials are automatically transported to the molding area through an intelligent storage and delivery system.

Further along the line, ultrawide roller presses continuously feed tile bodies into towering kilns. Inside a nearby control room, engineers no longer rely solely on experience to judge firing conditions. Instead, an AI-powered monitoring system tracks the status of ceramic products in real time, helping raise the premium-product yield rate from 97.5 percent to 99.8 percent.

Once fired, the tiles move to the printing stage, where each product receives a unique anti-counterfeiting identifier.

"By checking the product's identity code, we can clearly trace where it goes and how it is used. It also helps consumers effectively identify counterfeit products," said Xu Xiaoyong, head of marketing at the group.

Before entering warehouses, every tile must pass one final test. An AI-powered inspection system scans each product for dimensional accuracy, flatness and surface defects.

"This effectively avoids missed detections and errors that can occur with manual visual inspection," Xu said.


A worker is on duty at Marco Polo Holdings' Shatian digital and intelligent factory in Dongguan, Guangdong province, in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For Huang Jianping, chairman of the group, digitalization is not simply about adopting fashionable technologies.

"The true value of AI lies in whether it genuinely solves problems," said Huang, adding that for the traditional manufacturing sector, developing new quality productive forces is not simply about upgrading equipment or improving efficiency, it is more about shifting from scale-driven production toward innovation-led value creation.

"At its core, this means creating a development model that is more technologically advanced, more efficient, higher in quality and more sustainable," Huang said.

Beyond its digital brain, the factory also has a green heart. Open-air collection ponds, storage tanks and a web of underground pipelines form a complete rainwater harvesting system. On the rooftop, solar panels stretch across the factory, supplying 70 percent of its electricity.

"We use the collected rainwater for production. The entire factory has achieved 100-percent recycling of industrial water, and no industrial wastewater is discharged," Xu said.

"These green technologies are especially important when building factories in overseas markets with relatively strict environmental requirements, such as the United States."

Today, the Chinese ceramic tile manufacturer operates five major production bases — four in China and one in Tennessee, US — and exports to more than 130 countries and regions, with an annual revenue of 6.5 billion yuan ($958 million) in 2025.

This plant offers a window into a broader move toward intelligent upgrades in the country's manufacturing sector.

The Ministry of Industry and Information Technology said China has so far built 15 "pilot-level" intelligent factories — representing the highest tier of global intelligent manufacturing — where AI has penetrated more than 70 percent of their business scenarios.

In addition, the country is also home to more than 35,000 basic-level, over 8,200 advanced-level and over 500 excellence-level intelligent factories. By 2025, the application rate of AI technology among industrial enterprises above designated size exceeded 30 percent, MIIT data showed.

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WORLD

Penn Station stabbing



New York Police Department officers are seen outside Penn Station in New York after five people were wounded on Sunday in a stabbing inside the transport hub, according to officials, who said all victims were moved to hospital and the alleged attacker was "in custody". The victims were all civilians, including one person who sustained serious injuries, the New York Fire Department said in a statement. JOHN LAMPARSKI / AFP

Sister-city summit urges enhanced ties

Ongoing collaboration strengthens Sino-US people-to-people relations, forum hears

By LIA ZHU in San Francisco
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Diplomats, mayors and civic leaders from both sides of the Pacific gathered in San Francisco for the eighth China-US Sister Cities Summit, renewing their commitment to the subnational partnership that national governments alone cannot forge.

Themed "Shared Efforts for High-quality City Development", the summit drew more than 150 Chinese delegates representing 15 provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities and 12 cities, alongside 160 US delegates from 21 states and 36 cities.

The gathering, held on Friday, featured exchanges on three central themes — green development and urban governance, culture and tourism, and education and youth.

"Everything depends on meeting each other, shaking each other's hand, looking each other in the eye," Carol Robertson Lopez, chair emeritus of Sister Cities International, told China Daily on the sidelines of the summit.

Gatherings like this one, she said, do something that virtual exchanges cannot fully replicate."When we have gatherings like this, it just seals the friendships that we've developed, in many cases online."

She said that hearing how cities in different countries have approached shared challenges is a form of practical benefit.

"What's really important is just bringing people together," she said. "It's interesting to hear all the different things, and we do get a lot of ideas that we can take back home."

The gathering has grown into a platform for subnational diplomacy since its launch by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, or CPAFFC, in 2014.

China and the United States currently maintain 50 pairs of sister provinces and states, and 238 pairs of sister cities.

Yang Wanming, president of the CPAFFC, pointed to California and San Francisco as proof of what local investment in the relationship can achieve. California holds more sister-city ties with China than any other US state, he said, and both California and San Francisco have been pioneers in bilateral subnational engagement.

Yang cited two recent developments as an example of the momentum. San Francisco Mayor Daniel Lurie visited Shanghai in April, his first official overseas trip as mayor, and within two months, Shanghai had sent a delegation to San Francisco to attend the summit. "This shows the deep relations between the two cities," Yang said at the summit.

He also highlighted in October the presence of Oregon Senate President Rob Wagner, who had visited China in October and returned to San Francisco for the summit, where he met with representatives from sister partners of Fujian province and Tianjin municipality. These showed the relationship becoming closer through mutual visits and the nature of win-win collaboration, he said.

Joint collaboration

Through openness and collaboration, the people in the two countries have continued to write new chapters of friendship, Chinese Ambassador to the United States Xie Feng said in video played at the summit. For China-US relations to keep moving forward, he said, the two sides need not only meetings between the leaders, but also broad engagement across all social sectors.

He said there is still much that China and the United States can and should cooperate on and, leveraging sister-city ties as a platform, the two countries should actively expand cooperation from traditional areas such as economy, trade and agriculture to emerging fields including artificial intelligence, new energy and humanoid robots.

Lurie, the San Francisco mayor, said his city is uniquely positioned to hold this summit. "Cities are where history is lived," he said. "Cities are where people build their small businesses, raise their families and form the relationships that cross oceans and cultures."

San Francisco, he said, is home to the oldest Chinatown in North America and one of the most vibrant Chinese American communities in the country.

"For generations, Chinese Americans have helped write the story of this city, shaping our economy, our civic life and our culture in ways that are impossible to separate from who San Francisco is," he said.

It was that history that led Lurie to make China the destination for his very first foreign trip as mayor. His April visit to Shanghai marked the 46th anniversary of the San Francisco-Shanghai sister-city relationship.

Beyond Shanghai, Lurie emphasized San Francisco's friendship-city ties with Shenzhen and Guangzhou in Guangdong province, where ongoing collaboration spans innovation, trade and education.

Zhang Jianmin, China's consul general in San Francisco, described sister-city cooperation as carrying "tremendous potential as engines of economic growth" and called on both sides to broaden their ambitions as the world changes around them.

The summit concluded with the signing of five cooperation agreements, covering 31 cooperation projects and spanning sister-city partnerships, cultural and tourism exchanges and youth programs.

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Chinese EVs make gains as Australia posts record sales

By ALEXIS HOOI in Sydney
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Battery-electric vehicles made up one in five of all new vehicle sales in Australia in May, hitting a record high and marking a major shift away from fossil fuels on the back of more Chinese carmakers helping to power the green transition, according to latest industry figures.

More broadly, electric vehicles — which include battery, conventional hybrid and plug-in hybrid versions — accounted for nearly half or 46 percent of a total of 100,206 new vehicle sales in May, the Federal Chamber of Automotive Industries, or FCAI, said in a statement on Wednesday.

The FCAI, which is the apex industry body for the automotive sector in Australia, highlighted the considerable gains made by major Chinese makers such as BYD, Omoda Jaecoo and Geely. BYD, fueled by its popular Sealion EV series, alone achieved sales of 8,211 vehicles in May, a 155 percent increase year-on-year.

Three Chinese carmakers are among the top 10 models by sales volume for the month, according to the FCAI.

Hussein Dia, a professor of transport technology and sustainability at the Swinburne University of Technology in Melbourne, told China Daily the latest figures are significant because "they suggest Australia may be moving beyond the early adopter phase of the EV transition and into a more mainstream phase of market acceptance".

He pointed to a broader shift in consumer preference away from conventional gasoline and diesel vehicles.

Dia said the factors behind the move include the recent fuel-price volatility and concerns about energy security that remind consumers of Australia's exposure to global oil market volatility, a result of supply chain disruptions due to the ongoing conflict in the Middle East.

The growing influence of Chinese manufacturers is "difficult to ignore" amid these developments, he said.

"Their success reflects the increasing availability of competitively priced electrified vehicles and greater consumer choice. By bringing more affordable models to market, these manufacturers have helped accelerate EV adoption (rates) and increased competition across the broader automotive sector," Dia said.

"These figures also highlight how quickly the competitive landscape is changing. The transition is no longer being driven solely by traditional automotive manufacturers. New entrants, particularly from China, are playing an increasingly important role in shaping consumer choice, pricing and the pace of electrification in Australia," he said.

Similarly, Electric Vehicle Council CEO Julie Delvecchio said in a statement that the figures marked a significant milestone in Australia's transition to cleaner and more affordable transportation.

"We know Australians buy cars that save them money, suit their lifestyle and perform well. Record EV sales suggest more Australians are finding electric vehicles tick all three boxes," she said.

Cost of living pressures

Delvecchio said that cost of living pressures were continuing to drive interest in EVs. The council is the national body that represents the EV industry in Australia.

She said the record sales data and continued strong interest in EV ownership highlight the urgent need for an accelerated national EV infrastructure plan.

"While the government has rightly invested in charging infrastructure, with adoption increasing, the federal, state and local governments all need to work together to redouble efforts to meet demand," she said.

Stronger EV adoption places greater pressure on charging infrastructure, according to the FCAI.

"As the number of EVs on the road continues to grow, charging infrastructure must become more of a priority. Continued investment and enabling policy settings will be essential to ensure infrastructure keeps pace with consumer adoption," FCAI Chief Executive Tony Weber said.

Dia also pointed to vehicle supply "improving faster than charging infrastructure in some parts of the country, particularly for apartment residents, renters and regional communities".

The next phase of the green transition will depend not only on vehicle affordability but also on the accessibility of EV chargers and customer confidence, he said.

"Both government and industry have important roles to play. Governments can help ensure charging infrastructure keeps pace with adoption and provide clear long-term policy signals. Industry, meanwhile, must continue improving customer support, servicing networks and spare parts availability as EV sales grow," Dia said.

Conservation campaign



The 6.1-meter shark made of wicker is seen along a beach in Falmouth, United Kingdom, on Sunday. The project, launched by Falmouth University lecturer Duncan Cameron, returned to Falmouth this year, aiming to raise awareness of marine pollution ahead of World Ocean Day on Monday. JORY MUNDY / GETTY IMAGES

China calls for greater engagement to support Afghanistan's development

By MINLU ZHANG
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China on Monday called for continued international engagement with Afghanistan and greater support for the country's humanitarian and development needs, as the UN Security Council reviewed the situation in the country.

Addressing a United Nations Security Council meeting on Afghanistan, China's permanent representative to the United Nations Fu Cong said Afghanistan faces ongoing challenges in humanitarian assistance, economic development and counterterrorism despite an overall stable security situation.

China called for maintaining the momentum of pragmatic engagement with Afghanistan, said Fu. He noted that growing exchanges and cooperation between Afghanistan and the international community, particularly neighboring countries, have contributed to regional stability and economic development.

The envoy urged all parties to maintain dialogue and engagement with the Afghan authorities, narrow differences and build consensus.

Fu called for greater efforts to improve living conditions in Afghanistan, where nearly half of the population remains in need of humanitarian assistance. "Traditional donors should increase support for Afghanistan, and countries bearing historical responsibilities should take the lead," he said.

China also urged relevant countries to return Afghanistan's overseas assets in full, lift unilateral sanctions and support the rebuilding of the country's financial system, said Fu.

On basic human rights, Fu said China is concerned over restrictions on girls' education and called on the Afghan authorities to take positive measures to ensure girls' access to education and better protect women's rights to employment, healthcare, public services and social participation.

China also called for the removal of restrictions preventing Afghan female staff members from working in UN offices, saying such measures have seriously affected the operations of UN agencies in the country.

On counterterrorism, Fu urged Afghanistan to intensify efforts to combat all terrorist groups operating within its territory and strengthen cooperation with regional countries and the international community.

The envoy also noted China's efforts to help ease tensions between Afghanistan and Pakistan.

Representatives from China, Afghanistan and Pakistan held an informal meeting from April 1 to 7 in Urumqi, northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. According to Fu, the meeting reached consensus on maintaining good-neighborly relations, enhancing dialogue and exploring comprehensive solutions.

He reiterated China's support for the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), whose mandate expires later this month.

Fu said China will work with UN Security Council members to build consensus and support the smooth renewal of UNAMA's mandate.

According to the UN, Afghanistan remains one of the world's largest humanitarian crises, with 21.9 million people requiring humanitarian assistance in 2026.

Georgette Gagnon, the secretary-general's deputy special representative for Afghanistan and officer-in-charge of UNAMA, said that while the de facto authorities faced "no meaningful armed or political challenge", the country remained under "increasing control by the de facto authorities without a clear end-state".

She told the Security Council that economic pressures, large-scale returns of Afghans and restrictions on women and girls continue to pose significant challenges for the country.

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SPORTS

TENNIS

ZVEREV CLEARS MAJOR HURDLE

German finally crowned Grand Slam champion



Alexander Zverev lifts the coveted Coupe des Mousquetaires after defeating Flavio Cobolli in the French Open final at Roland Garros in Paris on Sunday. AFP

It all came rushing back to Alexander Zverev when he was lying on his back on the center court at Roland Garros, his hands covering his face, and sobbing on Sunday as he realized that he had — finally — become a Grand Slam champion.

It was the same court where he twisted his right ankle and crumpled to the ground, wailing in agony before being pushed off on a wheelchair during a semifinal match against Rafael Nadal in 2022.

The same court where he wasted a lead of two sets to one against Carlos Alcaraz in the 2024 championship match.

"All the emotions came out, because this court is very, very special to me. It's special in a very positive way, but also special on the negative way, because I had some of the toughest moments of my life here," Zverev said.

"I was laying on this court with an injury that I didn't know if I would ever come back from. I lost a Grand Slam final here, so all of those memories for me, they're not wiped out. They're still with me, but this one will beat all of them."

After so many missed opportunities, Zverev is no longer one of the best players never to win a major title.

In his fourth major final, Zverev beat Flavio Cobolli 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-1 for the French Open title.

Without Jannik Sinner or Alcaraz across the net, it was a unique opportunity for Zverev and the third-ranked German took full advantage.

When Cobolli missed an overhead on the second championship point, after more than four hours of the five-set encounter, Zverev joined an elite group of players that captured their first major in their fourth final: Eight-time major champion Andre Agassi, 2001 Wimbledon winner Goran Ivanisevic and 2020 US Open champion Dominic Thiem.

Then, when Zverev finally got his hands on the Coupe des Mousquetaires, he turned it upside down, held it between his legs and then hoisted it above his head with both arms as he let out a loud roar.

"This trophy, for me, is very important, because if I had lost this one, this self-belief would have gone down a lot," Zverev said.

"But now that I've won it, I feel like I can do it again."

No Sinner or Alcaraz

Zverev had been an overwhelming favorite for the title ever since the top-ranked Sinner struggled in the first week's heat wave and wasted a two set and 5-1 lead against Argentine Juan Manuel Cerundolo in the second round.

A day later, 24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic was also eliminated.

Alcaraz, the two-time reigning champion, withdrew before the tournament with an injured right wrist.

Zverev also lost a lead of two sets to none in the 2020 US Open final to Thiem and was beaten in straight sets by Sinner in the 2025 Australian Open final.

It was the 25th title of Zverev's career.



Zverev poses for a picture with the Roland Garros ball boys and girls following his maiden Grand Slam title win on Sunday. AFP

Cobolli's first Slam final

The 14th-ranked Cobolli had never been past a Grand Slam quarterfinal until last week. He was attempting to become the first Italian man to raise the singles trophy at Roland Garros since Adriano Panatta 50 years ago.

Cobolli comes from the same tennis club in Rome as Panatta did, and Panatta was asked by tournament organizers to present the trophy to celebrate the anniversary of his 1976 triumph.

The honors, however, went to Zverev.

Russian teenager Mirra Andreeva won the women's singles trophy on Saturday.

Flawless start

The match was played in perfect conditions, and Zverev's game was almost flawless at the start as Cobolli appeared nervous.

A group of women in the stands held up letters to form Zverev's nickname: "Sascha".

Cobolli tends to stand way over near the corner of the court and hit big kick serves out wide into the ad court.

Zverev knew what was coming and returned one such kick serve early in the first set with a backhand that he wrapped around the outside of the net post. Cobolli ended up winning the point, but it was a message from Zverev that he knew how to handle his opponent's tactics.

The next time Zverev hit a similar return, Cobolli couldn't handle it and Zverev won the point.

Both players were treated by a physiotherapist as the match wore on, and Cobolli appeared to run out of energy in the fifth set.

"He deserved it more than me at the end of the match," Cobolli said, adding that he was slowed by cramps.

Zverev said his cramps "were more mental".

"I actually think that the cramp helped me in a way, that I let go, I kind of hit my shots a bit more and just let go," he added.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Cobolli sees bright future, despite heartbreak in Roland Garros decider

Flavio Cobolli left everything on Court Philippe-Chatrier as he chased a first Grand Slam title on Sunday, but the Italian admitted the pressure of playing on the biggest stage ultimately proved decisive in a heartbreaking defeat.

The 24-year-old arrived at Roland Garros having never gone beyond the quarterfinals of a major tournament and left it as a Grand Slam runner-up, his reputation transformed, despite falling one match short of the title.

"Of course, I have a very different level of self-belief and awareness compared to when I started this tournament," he told reporters after losing 6-1, 4-6, 6-4, 6-7 (5), 6-1.

"But, I think the goals are still the same."

Those goals now include qualifying for the season-ending ATP Finals in Turin, a target Cobolli revealed had been set before the clay-court major began.

"We've set ourselves a goal that I don't want to tell you yet ... actually, it's Turin. That has been the objective since the start of the year," said Cobolli, who moved up to fourth place in the Race to Turin.

"We're working to get there. It's very difficult, because only eight players make it, but with the level I've shown over these weeks, and with all the work my team does behind the scenes, I'm sure I'll get there."

Cobolli came within touching distance of taking a two-sets-to-one lead, but believes a missed opportunity late in the third set altered the course of the contest.

"The biggest regret? Yes, that game at the end of the third set changed everything," he said.

"But, as I said before, I'm not used to this kind of pressure yet. I felt I was close, and, in the important moments, maybe I rushed a little. That's what hurt me. But you learn from those decisions."

The Italian had spent the previous two weeks playing with freedom and confidence, but the magnitude of the occasion hit him from the moment he woke up on Sunday morning.

> "I'm not used to this kind of pressure yet. I felt I was close, and, in the important moments, maybe I rushed a little. That's what hurt me. But you learn from those decisions."
>
> **Flavio Cobolli,** French Open runner-up

"Yesterday, I was nervous, but I handled it well and stuck to the routine we've followed for two weeks," he said.

"Today, I woke up much more nervous than I expected. I had a huge knot in my stomach, something I don't usually have, and I had to fight that feeling all day.

"You have to understand the pressure of a Grand Slam final, especially for someone who isn't used to playing matches like this."

In true Italian style, he also paid tribute to his family, particularly his mother, who rarely travels to tournaments but was present for the biggest match of his career.

"My mother raised me," Cobolli said.

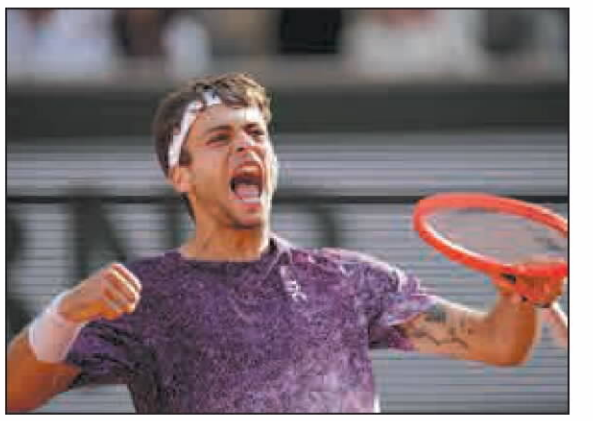
"She drove me everywhere, sat through every practice session and was always there for me. She deserves to have been here."

As painful as the defeat was, Cobolli preferred to focus on what had been gained rather than what had slipped away.

"At the end of the day, they'll hug me because we've played a Grand Slam final, and nobody can take that away from us," he said.

"As I said during the ceremony, this match has to be taken with a smile. We all gave everything. I have no regrets, so I can be calm and keep moving forward."

REUTERS



Flavio Cobolli reacts after winning the fourth set against Alexander Zverev during their French Open final on Sunday. AP

Red clay of Paris unearths future Chinese tennis star

By **SUN XIAOCHEN**
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Having celebrated many historic moments in Chinese tennis, the red clay of Roland Garros might have just witnessed the rise of the nation's next big thing.

Even without any of its senior stars making a deep run, China still turned heads on the final weekend at this year's upset-laden French Open, with teen talent Sun Xinran's appearance in the girls' tournament final serving up notice of its next future star.

Fifteen-year-old Sun's breakout run in Paris made her the first Chinese player to reach a junior final at Roland Garros, and has propelled her to the No 1 spot on the International Tennis Federation's junior world rankings this week, despite her straight-sets loss to 17-year-old Alisa Oktiabreva in the championship match on Saturday.

Seeded second in the girls' draw, Sun carried on her recent hot form as she stormed through five straight matches, conceding only one set en route to the final, where the gap in strength and experience between herself and Russian-born Oktiabreva, who's already a regular on the WTA circuit, proved too great to surmount.

The Chinese prodigy, however, has taken the loss in her stride, displaying a maturity that will stand her in good stead when she faces the ups and downs of the pro stage.

"Of course, I felt a bit disappointed not being able to win it all, but I have a better understanding where I need to improve," said Sun, who's become the third Chinese player to ascend to the female junior No 1 spot, following Wang Xiyu in September 2018 and Xu Shilin in October 2014.

"I couldn't accept even a little bit of failure in the past, but playing through setbacks at the international level taught me to embrace it with a positive mindset and always set my sights on the next opportunity.

"After all, tennis will be my job in the future."

One it looks like she will be good at.

Born in Shenzhen, a hub of domestic and international tennis tournaments in Guangdong province, Sun's journey in the sport began at six years old. She started training as an amateur influenced by her mother, an avid tennis fan, who then offered her full support when, at age 11, Sun said she wanted to take it to the next step.



Sun Xinran with the French Open junior singles runner-up trophy on Saturday. XINHUA

"It was my own idea, 80 percent, give or take, and the other 20 percent was the support of my family," Sun said of her early commitment to the sport — something that could, for an ordinary family, be viewed as a bold gamble back then.

Despite the financial pressure of supporting her travel and training expenses while competing on the ITF tour and entry-level senior circuit, Sun's parents pulled out all the stops to enable their daughter to unleash her full sporting potential at every stage, while making sure her education kept up as well.

Traveling across the world on a weekly basis for competitions on ITF's tightly-scheduled junior tour, Sun has managed to stay on top of her school work at the Shenzhen Hongshan Middle School via online tutoring at restaurants, on her way to the airport or in her hotel room.

"I've actually got used to (this) life," said Sun, who's racked up 24 wins out of 26 matches on the ITF junior circuit, and an additional seven victories in 11 appearances at entry-level ITF senior events and WTA125 tournaments this year. "It is my choice. It's more than just a hobby, and I am enjoying it very much."

With the intensity of her game picking up and experience gained on all kinds of surfaces, since early last season, Sun has seen her talent and hard work pay dividends.

She wrote her name in history for the first time in October when she won her first singles title on the ITF Women's World Tennis Tour in Egypt to become the youngest Chinese winner of an international senior event at 15 years and 95 days old.

Two months later in Florida, Sun won China's first singles title at the Orange Bowl at Fort Lauderdale, a renowned cradle for future major champions, before picking up another confidence boost by winning her first match on the WTA125 circuit earlier last month, beating a world top-200 senior in Lina Gjorcheska in Istanbul to become the youngest Chinese player to secure a win at that level.

Back-to-back clay-court title runs at J300 in Plovdiv, Bulgaria, and J500 in Milan in the lead-up to the French Open kept Sun in winning form to introduce herself, big time, at Roland Garros last week.

Now, having left her own mark at the clay-court mecca where legend Li Na won Asia's first singles major trophy in 2011 and her senior compatriot Zheng Qinwen delivered Olympic gold for the nation at Paris 2024, Sun said she is daring to dream big, but is doing so by taking it one small step at a time.

"The junior world No 1 doesn't really guarantee anything," said a composed Sun. "I just hope it will earn me more wildcard entries into even more senior tournaments.

"Only by testing myself against higher-level opponents can I make a smoother transition from the junior circuit to the professional tour," said Sun. "That's what my goal will be."

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Growing trade
Imports outpace exports in the first five months
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Waterway upgrade
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CHINA DAILY

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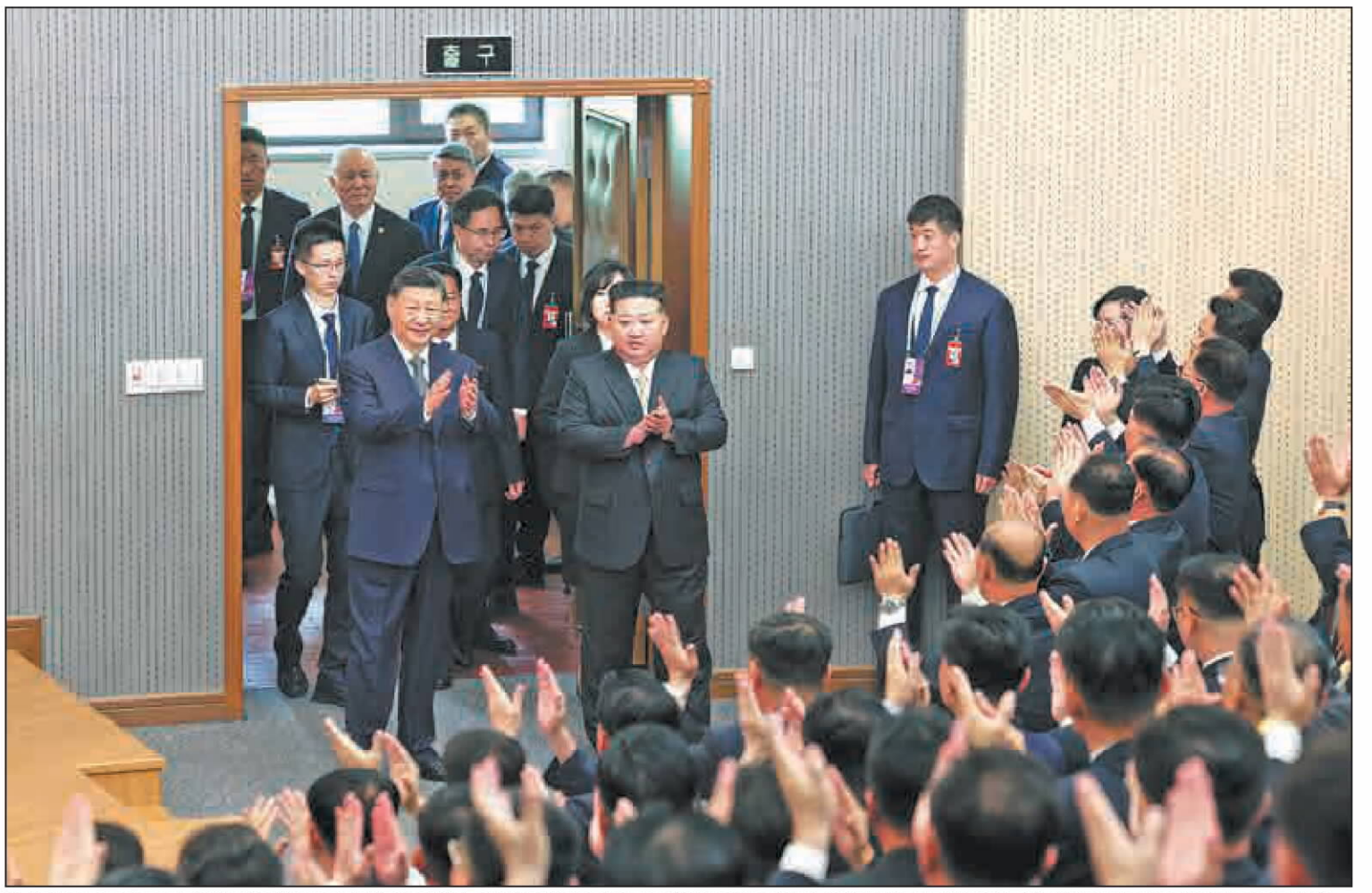

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, walks into a lecture hall of the Central Cadres Training School of the Workers' Party of Korea in the company of Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the WPK and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, in Pyongyang, the DPRK, on Tuesday. YAO DAWEI / XINHUA

Xi, Kim vow to carry forward friendship

Leaders pledge to promote youth education programs



President Xi Jinping straightens the ribbons on a flower basket while paying homage at the China-DPRK Friendship Tower with his wife, Peng Liyuan, in the company of DPRK top leader Kim Jong-un, and Kim's wife, Ri Sol-ju, in Pyongyang, the DPRK, on Tuesday. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA

The top leaders of China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea agreed on Tuesday that the two countries should carry forward their great traditional friendship from generation to generation.

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, and Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, made the remarks as Xi paid homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower in Pyongyang with his wife, Peng Liyuan, accompanied by Kim and his wife, Ri Sol-ju.

Xi and Kim also agreed that the years when China and the DPRK fought side by side in the 1950s are an eternal historical memory shared by both countries.

The two leaders pledged to jointly maintain memorial facilities dedicated to the Chinese People's Volunteers martyrs, carry out distinctive programs on revolutionary traditions and youth education, and carry forward the great spirit of the War to Resist United States Aggression and Aid Korea (1950-53).

On Tuesday morning, Xi, accompanied by Kim, also visited the Central Cadres Training School of the WPK in Pyongyang.

In the wooded area between teaching buildings, Xi and Kim jointly planted a fir tree. The fir tree remains evergreen throughout the year, symbolizing the enduring and ever-renewing friendship between China and the DPRK.

Before departing for Beijing, Xi and Peng attended a luncheon hosted by Kim and Ri.

Xi said that he reached an important consensus with Kim on developing relations between China and the DPRK in the new era.

The two sides also had in-depth discussions on safeguarding peace and stability in the region and the world, Xi said.

Xi thanked Kim for the warm hospitality and thoughtful arrangements for the visit, noting that through the visit, the warmth and friendship extended by the WPK and the DPRK government and people toward the CPC and the Chinese government and people is felt even more deeply.

The mutual understanding between China and the DPRK has become deeper and more comprehensive, and the future development direction has become clearer and more definite, Xi said.

He also said that he is ready to work with Kim to jointly lead China-DPRK relations toward greater development and inject new and strong impetus into the socialist cause of the two countries.

Kim said that Xi's visit was a complete success, sending a positive message to the world that the DPRK and China are strengthening their friendly cooperation further, attracting widespread attention from various sides.

Xi's visit was of great significance to bilateral relations and the future development of the region, Kim said, noting that the DPRK stands ready to earnestly implement the important consensus reached during the visit, promote new tangible outcomes in bilateral cooperation, and advance DPRK-China relations to a new and higher level.

On Tuesday afternoon, Xi returned to Beijing after concluding his two-day state visit to the DPRK. Kim and his wife went to the airport to see Xi and his wife off, holding a grand farewell ceremony in their honor.

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

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Scholars seek inspiration from classical wisdom at Athens dialogue

By **WANG HUAZHONG** and **ZHENG WANYIN** in Athens

Walking past the marble statues of Aristotle and Plato, classical studies scholars from around the world entered the auditorium of the Academy of Athens on Tuesday for a dialogue spanning the East and West, from the past to the present day.

The Second World Conference of Classics is being held in Athens, the capital of Greece, from Tuesday to Wednesday to seek inspiration from classical wisdom in addressing the questions of our time. The event is jointly organized by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, the Greek Ministry of Culture and the Academy of Athens.

"This is not only an academic gathering, but also a profound act of putting ideas into practice," said Nikiforos Diamandouros, president of the Academy of Athens and moderator of the conference's opening ceremony.

"Our goal is to ensure that classical wisdom ... becomes a living force that continually provides inspiration and guidance for the advancement of human society and civilization.

"Plato, Aristotle, Hesiod, as well as Confucius, Laozi and Sun Tzu — these great sages remain present among us today."

He added that as the two oldest civilizations in human history, Greece and China possess distinct yet mutually enriching cultural traditions, which "complement one another and can make a decisive contribution to this dialogue".

Hu Heping, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, said that classical civilizations provide spiritual resources for human development, as well as power for the prosperity and progress of countries.

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WORLD WATCH
By Arkebe Oqubay

Coherent policies seen as key to poverty alleviation

China has achieved a landmark development milestone by ending absolute poverty over the past decades and lifting approximately 800 million people out of destitution — a figure representing roughly 75 percent of global poverty reduction targets agreed upon at the United Nations. The scale and speed of this transformation are unprecedented in history.

The significance is both practical and symbolic. It shows that a large, populous nation can eliminate extreme poverty through sustained, systematic policy rather than exceptional circumstances. For the Global South — where over 80 percent of the world's population lives and where poverty reduction remains a core development imperative — China's experience is a powerful and instructive reference point.

China's achievement did not stem from a single intervention but from a coherent, mutually reinforcing set of policies. Within the overarching framework of reform and opening-up, the strategy combined high economic growth with targeted rural intervention, inclusive development principles, agricultural modernization and sustained productivity gains. These elements worked in concert: Broad growth raised average living standards, while targeted measures ensured that the most marginalized populations were not left behind.

This integration of macro-level growth strategy with micro-level targeting is arguably the most instructive aspect of China's experience. Poverty reduction was treated not as a residual outcome of economic expansion but as a primary policy objective, requiring direct administrative attention and dedicated resource allocation.

Ending poverty is one challenge; preventing relapse is another.

China has put in place several concrete mechanisms to secure the progress that has been made. A dynamic monitoring system identifies households at risk of falling back into poverty, enabling early intervention. Ongoing industrial and economic support is channeled to formerly poor regions to ensure that development is structurally embedded rather than dependent on short-term transfers.

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TOP NEWS

China, Georgia jointly elevate bilateral ties

Two sides have upheld principles of mutual respect over the past 34 years

President Xi Jinping and Georgian President Mikheil Kavelashvili exchanged congratulations on Tuesday on the 34th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the two countries, and jointly announced the elevation of bilateral relations to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

In his congratulatory message, Xi said that China and Georgia, over the past 34 years, have consistently upheld the principles of mutual respect, mutual trust and win-win cooperation, promoted the healthy and steady development of bilateral relations and achieved fruitful outcomes in cooperation across various fields.

Since the establishment of the strategic partnership between China and Georgia in 2023, mutual political trust between the two sides has been further strengthened, practical cooperation has been accelerated, and multilateral collaboration has become more productive, Xi said.

No matter how the international landscape evolves, China always views its relations with Georgia from a strategic and long-term perspective, Xi said, adding that he would like to take the anniversary as an opportunity to announce, jointly with Kavelashvili, the upgrade of the two countries' ties to a comprehensive strategic partnership.

He expressed the belief that the elevation of bilateral ties will open up new prospects for the development of China-Georgia relations, write a new chapter in their traditional friendship, inject strong momentum into their mutually beneficial cooperation, and deliver more benefits to the peoples of the two countries.

Kavelashvili said in his message that over the past three decades and more, Georgia and China have established a lasting friendship, and bilateral relations have achieved remarkable progress based on mutual respect, mutual trust and constructive cooperation.

On the occasion of the 34th anniversary of bilateral diplomatic ties, the two sides have made a joint decision to lift Georgia-China relations to the level of a comprehensive strategic partnership, Kavelashvili said. He also said he believes that the elevated ties will create more opportunities for bilateral cooperation, bring greater benefits to both countries, and further strengthen the bonds of friendship between their peoples.

XINHUA

Xi congratulates new governor general of Canada

By JI HAISHENG
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President Xi Jinping on Monday sent a message to Louise Arbour, congratulating her on assuming office as the 31st governor general of Canada.

In the message, Xi said that the sound and steady development of China-Canada ties serves the common interests of both countries, and is conducive to world peace, stability, development and prosperity.

He said he attaches great importance to the development of bilateral ties. Xi expressed the willingness to work with Arbour to advance the China-Canada new strategic partnership along a sound, stable and sustainable track in the spirit of mutual respect, mutual benefit and win-win results, as well as seeking common ground while shelving differences, so as to bring more benefits to both peoples.

Arbour, 79, was installed as Canada's new governor general on Monday after a swearing-in ceremony. She had previously served in a number of influential positions both at home and abroad.



Strong demand, policies fuel foreign trade expansion

By ZHONG NAN
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China's import growth outpaced export expansion by nearly 9 percentage points in the first five months of 2026, underpinned by robust domestic demand and broader market-opening measures, economists and government officials said on Tuesday.

They said two key policy initiatives will sustain strong import momentum throughout the year. The Ministry of Commerce's "Big Market for All: Export to China" campaign has broadened access to China's vast consumer and industrial markets for global exporters. The government's expanded zero-tariff treatment for all African countries that have diplomatic ties with China, which took effect on May 1, is also expected to support import growth.

China's foreign trade grew 15.3 percent year-on-year to 20.68 trillion yuan ($3.05 trillion) during the January-May period, with exports rising 11.8 percent and imports jumping 20.5 percent, data from the General Administration of Customs showed.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said the strong growth in imports reflected the effectiveness of policies aimed at expanding imports, boosting consumption and advancing high-standard opening-up.

> "China's highly developed supply chains, rapid commercialization of new technologies and strong engineering capabilities continue to create opportunities for both imports and exports."
>
> **Shen Kelei,** Marelli Holdings Co's executive vice-president

For example, China's imports from Africa surged 15 percent year-on-year to 95.13 billion yuan in May alone, marking the ninth consecutive month of growth, customs statistics showed.

The faster growth in imports also underscored China's role as a key engine of global demand, creating new opportunities for overseas exporters and supporting trade flows at a time when many economies are facing slower growth, Wang said.

Lynn Song, chief economist for China at Dutch bank ING, said that both China's imports and exports exceeded expectations in the first five months. This was partly supported by rising prices of high-tech products, which lifted the value of both outbound and inbound shipments.

"The country's trade structure is also becoming increasingly tilted toward technology-intensive goods," he added.

Echoing that view, Sheana Yue, senior economist at British think tank Oxford Economics, said China's industrial upgrading, technological advances and well-established supply chains have enhanced the competitiveness of Chinese products, helping to sustain trade growth and market share gains despite external uncertainties.

Lyu Daliang, director of the GAC's department of statistics and analysis, said China has deepened practical economic and trade cooperation with its partners since the beginning of this year and continued to serve as a stabilizing force for global trade.

Beyond supporting imports, China's broader opening-up efforts and regional trade agreements are also helping both domestic and foreign businesses integrate more deeply into regional supply chains, facilitating both imports and exports.

Techtronic Industries (Dongguan) Co, a Dongguan, Guangdong province-based manufacturer of power tools and outdoor garden equipment, imported goods worth 1.44 billion yuan from other economies of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership agreement between January and May, according to information released by Huangpu Customs in Guangdong.

Zheng Jiancai, the company's head of customs affairs, said the RCEP agreement has helped lower sourcing costs and improve supply chain efficiency while expanding market access across the region.

"Our lithium-ion battery packs are mainly exported to Australia and New Zealand," said Zheng.

"Since the RCEP came into force, raw materials sourced from Malaysia have been treated as originating materials under the agreement, enabling our products to qualify for preferential tariffs and enjoy tariff reductions of up to 5 percent."

In addition to importing key parts and components into China, Marelli Holdings Co, a Japanese automotive parts manufacturer, is expanding its presence in the country in areas such as smart lighting, electronics and intelligent cockpit technologies, underscoring China's growing role in the company's global operations.

"China's highly developed supply chains, rapid commercialization of new technologies and strong engineering capabilities continue to create opportunities for both imports and exports," said Shen Kelei, the group's executive vice-president.

Classics: Every civilization possesses its unique value

From page 1

Hu stressed the need to relearn, reactivate and retransform ancient great wisdom while making modern interpretations of classics, to refresh classical wisdom and lead human civilization.

"We should focus on the holistic development of individuals to nurture citizens' moral character through classical wisdom. We should focus on the prosperity and progress of the nation to strengthen the foundations of the spirit of modernization through classical wisdom. And we should focus on harmony and shared flourishing in the world, drawing on classical wisdom to address global challenges."

Lina Mendoni, minister of culture of Greece, highlighted the establishment of the Chinese School of Classical Studies at Athens in 2024, following the inaugural World Conference of Classics in Beijing.

She said the most important outcome of this cooperation demonstrates that when different cultures engage in open and sincere dialogue, seeking understanding rather than imposing their own views, "conflict is not inevitable".

"There is an ancient saying: When the winds of change blow, some people build walls, others build windmills.

"In an age of profound change, ... let us choose dialogue over isolation, understanding over prejudice, and cooperation over confrontation. This is the enduring wisdom that the classics offer us, and perhaps the most valuable legacy we can pass on to future generations."

Gao Xiang, president of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said that no civilization evolves in isolation, but grows, develops and thrives through exchanges and mutual learning.

However, there exists a certain notion of "civilizational superiority", as some continue to believe that their civilization is superior to others, regarding their own standards as the only valid standards.

"This is not the right path. It only serves to deepen conflict and division," said Gao, warning that "the world must not be permitted to regress to the law of the jungle, nor should the principle that the strong prey on the weak be allowed to once again define international relations.

"I believe that every civilization possesses its own unique value, deserves respect, and should be treated as an equal."

Drawing from classical wisdom, scholars will hold discussions in four parallel subforums on virtue and paideia, friendship and community, peace and order, and technology and civilization.

Contact the writers at wanghuazhong@chinadaily.com.cn



Hu Heping, deputy head of the Publicity Department of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, delivers a speech at the opening ceremony of the Second World Conference of Classics on Tuesday in Athens, Greece. KONSTANTINOS PSOMAS/ FOR CHINA DAILY

Poverty: Sustained political commitment emphasized

From page 1

The social protection architecture has also been strengthened. This includes the minimum livelihood guarantee program, medical insurance subsidies for low-income households, and education assistance for vulnerable families. Together, these mechanisms are designed to mitigate the principal risks of poverty relapse — illness, natural disaster and economic shock — thereby consolidating the gains already achieved rather than treating them as permanent by default.

Broader implications

The broader implications for developing nations are clear. Poverty alleviation, equitable growth and inclusive development must be central to any national development strategy, embedded within a wider framework of structural transformation and sustained economic expansion. Poverty reduction is not a peripheral concern; it is Sustainable Development Goal 1 within the UN's 2030 Agenda — the foundational objective on which much of the broader framework depends.

China's experience shows that when a nation prioritizes this goal with sustained political commitment and institutional implementation over time, the eradication of absolute poverty is achievable. Countries will differ in their circumstances — geography, institutional capacity, historical conditions and the external environment all matter — but the underlying principle holds: Systematic, long-term effort directed at the poorest populations yields measurable and durable results.

It is equally important to note what China's model is not. It is not a transferable blueprint to be applied wholesale. Rather, it demonstrates what is possible when development strategy treats poverty reduction as a central, measurable objective rather than a hoped-for by-product of growth. Each nation must identify the interventions appropriate to its own political economy. What China offers is evidence of ambition and outcomes, not a universal template.

At the international level, China's achievement reframes the global development debate in at least two respects.

First, it challenges the assumption — prevalent in some development economics literature — that eliminating absolute poverty in large, complex economies requires generational time scales. The Chinese case has substantially compressed that timeline, with implications for what the international community should regard as achievable within the SDG framework and beyond.

President Xi Jinping's *The Governance of China*, volumes I to V, offers an authoritative source on China's opening-up and reform, and the nation's development strategies and policies provide primary insight into the strategic thinking and political philosophy behind China's poverty alleviation.

Second, the achievement shifts the center of gravity in development knowledge. For much of the postwar period, the dominant frameworks for poverty reduction originated in Western academic institutions and multilateral organizations. China's experience — increasingly documented by both Chinese and international researchers — provides an empirical basis for approaches rooted in the developmental realities of the Global South. "Four Decades of Poverty Reduction in China (2022)", a joint publication by the World Bank Group and the Development Research Center of China's State Council, the nation's Cabinet, synthesizes the process, data and outcomes with substantial academic rigor.

Finally, ending absolute poverty globally requires more than sound domestic policy. It demands renewed commitment to the 2030 Agenda, a global governance architecture that genuinely incorporates the voices of the Global South, and the conditions of peace and development, without which shared prosperity cannot take root. China's achievement demonstrates what national ambition can accomplish; the international community awaits equivalent resolve and action.

The author is former senior minister and special adviser to the prime minister of Ethiopia. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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XI'S VISIT







Left: Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and Chinese president, delivers a speech while attending a welcoming banquet hosted by Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, at Mokran House in Pyongyang, capital of the DPRK, on Monday. DING HAITAO / XINHUA
Middle: President Xi and DPRK top leader Kim jointly plant a fir tree in the wooded area of the Central Cadres Training School of the Workers' Party of Korea in Pyongyang on Tuesday. YAN YAN / XINHUA
Right: President Xi pays homage at the China-DPRK Friendship Tower with his wife Peng Liyuan, in the company of DPRK top leader Kim and his wife Ri Sol-ju, in Pyongyang on Tuesday. DING HAITAO / XINHUA

EVERLASTING FRIENDSHIP



President Xi concludes his state visit to the DPRK and departs from Pyongyang on Tuesday. DPRK top leader Kim and his wife Ri Sol-ju went to the airport to see President Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan off and held a grand farewell ceremony in their honor. XIE HUANCHI / XINHUA





Clockwise from above: A throng of people waving flags and holding balloons bids farewell to President Xi on his way to the airport in Pyongyang on Tuesday. YAO DAWEI / XINHUA
President Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan, along with DPRK top leader Kim and his wife Ri Sol-ju, attend an artistic performance at the Pyongyang Gymnasium in Pyongyang on Monday. LI XIANG / XINHUA
Artists dance during the performance at the Pyongyang Gymnasium on Monday. YIN BOGU / XINHUA



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CHINA

Offshore renewable energy powers nation

By **LI MENGHAN** in Fuzhou
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Rows of solar panels stretch across what were once abandoned tidal flats in Dongshan county, Zhangzhou, Fujian province. Steel pillars driven into the seabed hold the panels above the waterline, allowing aquaculture activities to continue below while clean electricity is being generated above — a visible example of how coastal provinces maximize limited marine space.

The 180,000-kilowatt solar farm, built on more than 200 hectares of mudflats, is the country's first offshore solar project in a high-wind-speed zone, operated by China Three Gorges Corporation. The project exemplifies how offshore wind and coastal solar are reshaping the province's energy landscape.

Dongshan is part of a larger national effort. China has to date approved more than 200 offshore wind projects, pushing cumulative grid-connected capacity past 47 million kW — around half of the global total and the world's top ranking for five consecutive years, according to the Ministry of Natural Resources.

"Fujian has some of China's best conditions for offshore renewable energy — strong, consistent winds averaging more than 9 meters per second, long coastlines with suitable tidal flats, and deep waters just offshore," said Chen Qingsen, deputy general manager of the Fujian Three Gorges Offshore Wind Power International Industrial Park Operations Co.

Chen said solar and wind power are complementary — solar generation peaks during daylight hours while wind often strengthens at night, creating a more stable collective output. He noted that one full rotation of a 16-megawatt offshore wind turbine generates about 34 kilowatt-hours of electricity, enough to power an average Chinese household for more than a week.

"From 2019, when the first domestically produced 6.7-megawatt offshore wind turbine was unveiled here, to 2024, when the world's largest 26-megawatt offshore wind turbine rolled off the production line, we have launched turbines of 8, 10, 13, 16, 18, 20 and 26 megawatts, continuously breaking global records while achieving 100 percent domestic production of key components," Chen said, adding that these turbines are accelerating their entry into overseas markets.

Prior to 2017, China's largest domestic turbine was limited to 5 MW, with critical components reliant on overseas suppliers. The 67-hectare park, established in 2016, broke that pattern as China's first industrial cluster covering the full offshore wind power chain.

Yue Qi, director of the institute for marine resources protection and utilization of the National Ocean Technology Center, emphasized that offshore renewable energy is a strategic priority for China's energy transition.

The outline of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) sets a target of 100 million kW of offshore wind capacity by 2030.

"The target reflects the central government's commitment to scaling up clean energy while developing the marine sector as a new engine of economic growth," Yue said.

Developing offshore wind along China's eastern seaboard also carries a logistical advantage over transmitting power from the west. "Short transmission distances and proximity to consumption centers mean we can avoid the massive losses and infrastructure costs of long-distance west-to-east power transfer," Yue noted.

As nearshore waters grow increasingly crowded, the industry is pushing farther out. China's site-selection standards have evolved from the early "double-10" principle — at least 10 meters deep and 10 kilometers offshore — to the current "single-30" standard of at least 30 meters deep or 30 km from shore.

In 2023, the Ministry of Natural Resources introduced policies for the three-dimensional, layered use of marine space. Around 4,000 such multiuse projects now operate nationwide, according to Yue.

Looking ahead, China is exploring a new frontier of undersea data centers directly powered by offshore wind to support artificial intelligence and 5G infrastructure.

Qin legacy unveiled



The special archaeological exhibition, *The Qin's Unification in Archaeological Treasures*, holds its opening ceremony at the Shanghai Museum on Tuesday. The exhibition opens to the public free of charge on Wednesday and runs through Sept 7. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Dancing after *gaokao*



Two students perform a ballroom dance outside the examination site at Wuhan No 16 High School in Hubei province on Tuesday to celebrate the end of the *gaokao*, also known as the National College Entrance Examination. HU DONGDONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Chongqi rail and road bridge hits milestone

Main span installed, Yangtze project to be fully operational by 2027-end

By **ZHENG ZHENG** in Shanghai
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The main span of the Chongqi Rail-Road Yangtze River Bridge is installed. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

The main span of the Chongqi Rail-Road Yangtze River Bridge was successfully installed on Tuesday, marking a major milestone for what will become the world's largest cable-stayed bridge combining ballastless railway tracks and highway infrastructure.

The 4.09-kilometer bridge spans the northern branch of the Yangtze River estuary and features a 400-meter main span.

Its double-deck design accommodates a six-lane highway with a design speed of 100 kilometers per hour on the upper level, while the lower deck will carry two high-speed railway lines supporting trains traveling at 350 km/h, alongside intercity railway lines designed for operations at 250 km/h.

The bridge is a key component of the Shanghai-Chongqing-Chengdu high-speed railway corridor.

It is both the world's largest rail-highway cable-stayed bridge under construction and China's first rail-highway Yangtze River bridge designed to accommodate 350 km/h high-speed trains.

"This bridge is the key control project of the Qidong-Taicang section in Jiangsu province," said Yin Xueguo, commander of Chongming operations at the Shanghai State Railway Engineering Construction Management Co. "Today's milestone is of great significance to the overall construction schedule."

Construction teams will now focus on installing bridge deck systems, ballastless tracks and auxiliary electrical facilities, with the bridge expected to be fully operational by the end of 2027, Yin said.

Hu Huiyue, chief designer of the bridge at the China Railway Major Bridge Reconnaissance & Design Institute Co, said integrating highway and railway infrastructure within a single structure posed unique engineering challenges.

"The highway and railway share construction space within the bridge area before separating to facilitate rapid traffic distribution and improve the efficiency of the transportation hub," Hu said.

"Our structural innovations include integrating the main and auxiliary spans to save space while optimizing bridge height to achieve a better performance balance for the 350 kilometers per hour ballastless track system," he added.

Since drilling work began in December 2022, construction teams have overcome numerous challenges, including complex waterway conditions, ultra-large-span installation work and stringent precision requirements.

The project pioneered the use of intelligent grouting technology for both pile bottoms and pile sides in domestic railway bridge construction, ensuring secure anchoring of 152 bored piles, each with a diameter of 2.5 meters, across the two main piers.

Construction adopted a single-cantilever method using two 1,100-metric-ton beam-lifting cranes integrated with intelligent monitoring systems. The digital systems continuously tracked steel beam positioning, structural stress and deformation while automatically adjusting lifting operations.

"Our two construction approaches successfully addressed world-class engineering challenges in single-cantilever installation and long-distance launching," said Xiong Kaibing, project manager at the China Railway Major Bridge Engineering Group Co.

"More importantly, through advanced data integration and system coordination, we achieved the high-precision bidirectional convergence that made today's successful closure possible," he said.

Upon completion, the bridge will significantly improve regional connectivity, reducing travel time between Shanghai and Qidong in Jiangsu province from two and a half hours to less than 30 minutes by rail.

The project is expected to strengthen the comprehensive transportation corridor along the Yangtze River Economic Belt and support deeper integration of the Yangtze River Delta region.

China has key role in intl fisheries governance

By **WANG XIN** in Shanghai
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China has been ramping up efforts to promote sustainable marine fisheries governance in recent years, fulfilling its responsibilities in combating illegal fishing and strengthening international cooperation to build a maritime community with a shared future, officials and experts said recently in Shanghai.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the implementation of the Agreement on Port State Measures, or PSMA. Having come into effect in 2016 and now involving 85 parties, including the European Union, the PSMA is the first binding international framework aimed at preventing, deterring and eliminating illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

The agreement's effective implementation contributes to the long-term conservation and sustainable use of living marine resources and marine ecosystems.

China became a party to the agreement in April 2025, a move widely regarded as a significant step in the country's efforts to participate in global marine fisheries governance, fulfill its international obligations and protect marine fishery resources.

A themed event was held at Shanghai Ocean University on Friday to mark International Day for the Fight Against Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing.

In a video address, Matthew Camilleri, a senior fishery officer in the Fisheries and Aquaculture Division of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, reviewed key milestones in the agreement's implementation and called for more parties to join in order to enhance its effectiveness.

Xia Liang, a professor at the university, said global fisheries governance has become increasingly complex over the past decade as a result of the combined effects of resource constraints, environmental pollution and climate change.

"While the international community once focused primarily on catch volumes and increasing production, greater emphasis is now being placed on resource conservation, ecosystem protection and sustainable development," Xia said.

"The fundamental characteristics of global fisheries governance have shifted from an emphasis on exploitation and utilization to a stronger focus on conservation, rule-based management and multilateral cooperation, attracting increasing attention worldwide," he added.

Xia, who also serves as head of China's national contact point for the PSMA, highlighted the country's progress in implementing the agreement over the past year, adding that the achievements demonstrate China's commitment to sustainable fisheries governance.

Those achievements include the establishment of interagency coordination mechanisms, revisions to the Fisheries Law, the designation of 23 ports open to foreign fishing vessels and expanded participation in international cooperation.

"The agreement represents a significant practical achievement of multilateralism in the fisheries sector," said Tang Yi, a professor at the university.

"China's accession to the agreement will facilitate deeper engagement in global fisheries governance, promote the improvement of governance rules, strengthen international law enforcement cooperation and advance the sustainable development of global fisheries," Tang said.

Tang and Xia noted that many of China's experiences and practices could contribute to global fisheries governance, including the application of advanced technologies and artificial intelligence, strict closed-season regulations, voluntary high-seas fishing moratoriums, and nationwide efforts to combat illegal fishing and ensure fishery safety.

According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, China will further advance the implementation of the agreement, strengthen its port state control system and enhance efforts to combat illegal fishing, while making proactive contributions to the sustainable development of global marine fisheries.

A TWIST IN THE TAIL: SQUIRREL FISH REELS IN GLOBAL FOODIES

Suzhou dish, made famous by Emperor Qianlong, is as much a feast for the eyes as it is for the taste buds

By **DENG ZHANGYU**
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"Is there a real squirrel inside the fish?" That's the first question Chen Ye's foreign friends ask when she introduces them to sweet and sour squirrel fish at the dinner table.

Chen, who works at a foreign bank in Shanghai, laughs every time. But the confusion never stops her from ordering the dish. In fact, it's her go-to trump card when hosting international friends.

"No matter how many dishes we have, squirrel fish is always the first to be finished," she says. "Many people even order a second serving. And what shocks me most? They eat the head and tail down to the bones — something we Chinese usually skip."

As one of the top 10 classic dishes of Jiangsu province and the signature icon of Suzhou-style cuisine, squirrel fish stands as one of the most recognizable presences in Chinese gastronomy.

The magic of squirrel fish is in its appearance the moment it arrives at the table. The head and tail of the delicately fried mandarin fish sit upright on the plate, while in between, its flesh is splayed into fluffy, golden layers that resemble the bushiness of a squirrel's tail. The most spectacular ritual comes when the piping hot sweet-sour sauce is poured over it — the fish sizzles with a crisp, chirping sound, just like an actual squirrel's call.

China Vibes 味出中国 — FOOD —

And the taste? Pure delight: a brittle, golden crust gives way to tender, juicy meat, perfectly balanced between sweet and sour, with layers of texture that linger long after each bite.

Astrid Poghosyan, an Armenian musician working for the Shanghai Symphony Orchestra, also frequently takes her international friends to try the dish.

"When foreigners think about Chinese cuisine, the first thing that comes to their mind is that sweet and sour taste," she said.

"To many foreigners, the taste of squirrel fish kind of represents Chinese cuisine."

Jin Hongnan, president of the Suzhou Culinary Association, has spent over three decades perfecting Suzhou-style cuisine. He's also the founder of Jiangnan Delicacy, a Black Pearl restaurant chain with 30 outlets in Suzhou.

In 2025, he opened a branch in San Francisco.

There, the squirrel fish dish sells for nearly 1,000 yuan ($140) — but more than half of all diners order it.

"Kids love it the most," Jin said.

Beyond the taste, the dish carries a culturally rich story. Legend has it that, during the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), Emperor Qianlong visited Suzhou incognito and dined at Songhelou restaurant. The chef prepared this special fish, and the emperor was so delighted with his meal that the dish became famous across the country. Today, it's still a must-order at many eateries in Suzhou.

The sauce itself, however, has evolved.

Jin explained that the original recipe used vinegar, soy sauce and sugar. But, in the early 20th century, as Western-style restaurants became popular in Shanghai, ketchup was introduced into the sauce — a fusion that made the flavor more mellow and appealing to foreign palates.

But the real star of the dish is the knife work. First, the fish must be completely deboned. Then the flesh is scored in a crisscross pattern, carefully cut without breaking the skin — allowing it to fan out like a squirrel's bushy tail during frying.

At Jin's restaurants, each fish, weighing about 1 kilogram, receives exactly 108 cuts.

Only a highly skilled chef can handle such precision.

Because the dish demands such advanced knife skills, it is rarely made at home and when it is, it is typically reserved for family banquets.

Nowadays, it is a common sight on New Year's Eve dinner tables in hotels and restaurants, said Jin.

In Suzhou, Songhelou remains the top destination for authentic squirrel fish — after all, it was there that the Emperor Qianlong first tasted it.

Last year, the brand opened a branch in London, swapping the traditional mandarin fish for local sea bass — yet the dish still received an overwhelmingly warm reception from the city's cosmopolitan diners.

As the years go by, Chinese chefs continue to adapt the dish, using different fish, tweaking the sauce and adding unique twists.

Today, squirrel fish has earned international fame. It appears on menus in Chinese restaurants globally, celebrated for its stunning presentation and unforgettable flavor.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Real issue is some developed economies' ostrich approach to self-made vulnerabilities

France is reportedly considering proposing a video dialogue between the G7 members and China with the aim of addressing "global trade imbalances".

During a G7 finance ministers' meeting last month, French Finance Minister Roland Lescure said France wants to move away from "finger-pointing" and engage constructively with all partners, including China, to resolve trade-related issues.

Although framed as a "global" concern, the "finger-pointing" that accompanies the complaints of a "trade imbalance" voiced by some developed economies is directed primarily at China. Ironically, while such a mindset has become increasingly apparent among some European Union politicians, they strongly oppose Washington's tendency to blame the EU for "exploiting" the United States through its trade surplus. The EU has dismissed the US' justification and threats as absurd. Yet it is the same group of EU politicians who are now trying to copy the US playbook and apply it to the EU's own dealings with China.

Against this backdrop, the proposed dialogue to be held before the G7 summit scheduled for June 15-17 in Evian-les-Bains, France, may provide an opportunity to engage in discussions to avoid harmful tit-for-tat "punishment" practices, demonstrating that trade disputes are best managed through constructive dialogue.

Yet if the purpose of such a dialogue is to address a so-called "trade imbalance" with China, it is starting from a false premise.

China itself records deficits with many other economies such as the Republic of Korea and Australia. The notion that all economies can simultaneously enjoy trade surpluses is mathematically impossible. China's trade surplus with some G7 economies and the EU is not the outcome of its policy. It is largely the result of industrial specialization and the structure of global supply chains.

For years, multinational corporations designed products in the EU and the US, financed them in London, marketed them in Paris and assembled them in China. When those products were shipped abroad from Chinese ports, they appeared in customs statistics as Chinese exports. Yet a substantial portion of the profits goes elsewhere.

Also, many developed economies have spent years restricting exports of advanced technologies to China while simultaneously complaining about bilateral deficits. One cannot block sales in sectors where one enjoys a competitive advantage and then lament insufficient exports. If some G7 members and the EU genuinely seek to reduce their trade deficit with China, relaxing certain export controls would likely achieve more than employing protectionist measures.

China-EU trade remains among the world's largest commercial partnerships, exceeding $820 billion in goods trade last year. Meanwhile, foreign investment in China has shown resilience, with thousands of European companies continuing to expand operations in the Chinese market. Their behavior suggests a more nuanced reality than the political rhetoric often implies. Strong European companies actively seek cooperation with China; it is only some weaker ones that attribute their loss of market share to politicized reasons.

Germany, France, the United Kingdom, Italy and Canada maintain extensive and generally stable commercial relationships with China. Yet when the same issues are elevated to the level of the G7 or the EU, they are frequently recast as "existential threats". That says less about economics than politics. The more immediate issue that advanced economies need to address is inflation driven by energy-market disruptions caused by the Middle East conflict. Higher energy prices are squeezing consumers and undermining growth. If the G7 members and the EU want to address their problems, they should spend less time scrutinizing China's trade statistics and more time examining the sources of their vulnerabilities.

This highlights the larger problem: the G7 increasingly appears less interested in discussing economics than in framing economics through the lens of geopolitics. The world's major challenges today include anemic economic growth, debt distress, climate financing, technological disruption and supply-chain resilience. These are global concerns requiring global solutions. The greatest threat to the international trading system stems from the resurgence of unilateralism and protectionism in some major developed economies.

If the G7 wants a productive conversation with China, it should focus on the real questions, including whether the world's advanced economies are prepared to defend the principles of openness and globalization that helped create their own prosperity in the first place.

US trying to rope allies into suppression

In yet another move to crack down on China's high-tech industries, the United States on Monday groundlessly added Chinese e-commerce giant Alibaba, along with Baidu, BYD, and some other Chinese tech companies, to a list of companies it alleges are aiding China's military.

Meanwhile, to draw its allies deeper into a "de-risking" strategy against China, the US administration has also urged NATO members to allocate defense spending toward efforts to replace components from Chinese high-tech companies in their networks and critical infrastructure.

Joshua Young, the US State Department's China coordinator, reportedly asked officials in Brussels in May to use their defense-related funding to remove Chinese-made equipment and replace it with products from other vendors.

Under pressure from the US, nearly all NATO allies agreed last year to increase overall security spending from 2 percent to 5 percent of GDP by 2035. Within this target, 3.5 percent would be directed toward core defense needs, while the remaining 1.5 percent would be allocated specifically to meet Washington's demand for a larger share of transatlantic alliance expenditures. According to a NATO official, this 1.5 percent can be used for defending networks, including replacing vendors.

By urging NATO countries to do that, Washington aims to push its transatlantic allies to reduce reliance on China in key sectors.

The US' bossy attitude toward its allies in the critical field of defense not only makes a mockery of the notion of Brussels having strategic autonomy, it also appears to serve the selfish aims of laying the groundwork for US companies to fill the equipment gap.

Under pressure from the US, some politicians of the European Union are already mulling plans to revise the bloc's Cybersecurity Act to restrict the use of Chinese equipment across various sectors.

Excluding Chinese high-tech enterprises will not help the concerned economies achieve the so-called "security" they seek. Instead, it will severely damage their image as an open market and markedly undermine the confidence of businesses from various countries to invest in the economies.

China will also be left with no choice but to take necessary measures to resolutely safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese businesses.

Moreover, forcibly removing high-quality and secure Chinese telecommunications equipment will inevitably result in massive economic losses and severely hinder the economies' digital competitiveness.

A joint study by the China Chamber of Commerce to the EU and KPMG in May predicts that the forced replacement of Chinese suppliers across 18 critical sectors would cost the EU 367.8 billion euros ($432.83 billion) between 2026 and 2030. The EU would have to replace hardware and write down assets, besides contending with lower efficiency and delayed development of digital networks in Europe.

Thus, some EU members, such as Germany and Spain, have stood up to oppose the EU plan to ban Chinese suppliers from telecommunications networks, with both governments warning that a bloc-wide ban would invite retaliation from China and hugely inflate the cost of Europe's AI infrastructure drive. The dissenting voices highlight the erroneous and unsustainable nature of the EU's proposed China-targeted policy and the US' demands.

In fact, Chinese high-tech companies have always demonstrated openness, transparency and efficiency in the global market. High-tech enterprises, such as Huawei, have earned the trust of customers worldwide through technological innovation and high-quality services. The so-called "national security risks" alleged by the US and some of its allies stem entirely from their own Cold War zero-sum mentality and fear of the rise of Chinese high-tech prowess. The US attempt to pressure NATO allies into using defense funds to replace Chinese equipment will not only waste resources but also severely harm the national interests of its allies.

The US allies should uphold rationality by resisting all baseless discrimination and exclusion, as the prosperity and development of the global economy require cooperation and mutual benefit, not the obstruction of suppression and unilateralism.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Dialogue on classics offers timeless wisdom for today

The ongoing second World Conference of Classics in Athens, Greece, serves as a reminder that comparisons between civilizations are meaningful. Confucianism and ancient Greek philosophy developed separately, but during a period — from about 800 BC to 200 BC — that was marked by major intellectual transformations across the world. Confucius, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle sought to answer the same questions: how to live, how to know, how to organize and govern societies, and how to cultivate virtue.

The comparison is best explained through one striking image. Thales of Miletus, often regarded as the first philosopher in the Greek tradition, saw water as the first principle of all things. Confucian thought also turned repeatedly to water, though not as an object of cosmological explanation, but as a moral image of goodness, nourishment and non-contention. The contrast is revealing. Greek philosophy often began in wonder; Confucian thought tended to turn nature into an ethical teacher. Together, they show two ways in which people have learned from the world.

There is also a difference in the ancient Greek and Chinese approaches to knowledge. Ancient Greek philosophy gave enduring importance to debate, logical argument and dialectical inquiry. The Socratic method helped form a tradition in which truth is pursued through argument. Confucianism, by contrast, often teaches through metaphor, analogy and moral evocation. In Mencius' parable of the *Ox Mountain Trees*, the once-lush terrain becoming barren due to the rampant cutting of trees is a reflection of human nature: goodness may be damaged by circumstances while still retaining the capacity for renewal.

In China, during the Shang (c. 16th century-11th century BC) and Zhou (c. 11th century-256 BC) dynasties, ritual, kinship and political hierarchy were closely bound together. Morality was understood in relation to family and society, and the state could be imagined as an extension of familial order. In ancient Greece, by contrast, the polis, or city-states, became the space in which human excellence could be realized through civic participation. Aristotle's famous statement that man is by nature a political animal rests upon this worldview.

For Socrates, virtue was closely tied to knowledge; for Aristotle, it meant excellence of character and intellect, cultivated through the disciplined exercise of body and mind. Confucian virtue, meanwhile, was inseparable from one's roles within the family and society. Aristotle's "golden mean" is embedded in a theory of excellence, while Confucian balance is deeply rooted in harmony among people, roles and ritual order.

In both ancient Greece and early China, poetry stood at the beginning of reflection on the world, carrying within it questions of cosmology, ethics, political order and human destiny. Epic and poetic traditions served not merely aesthetic purposes, but acted as one of the earliest vessels of thought. The Greek world preserved such questions through Homer and Hesiod, while Confucius is associated with the compilation of the *Book of Songs*, a collection of 305 poems dating from the 11th to 6th centuries BC. In both civilizations, philosophy did not emerge in opposition to poetry, but gradually unfolded from within it.

This is why the dialogue between Confucianism and ancient Greek philosophy should not be treated as a narrow academic exercise. Both traditions remind modern societies that human life cannot be reduced to material production, technology or present utility. Ancient Greek and Chinese thinkers, in different ways, understood human beings as part of a larger order — cosmic, natural, social or political. Their wisdom lies not in offering ready-made solutions, but in widening the horizon within which modern questions can be asked.

— ZHAO XU, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Efforts needed to boost basic research capabilities

Editor's note: *As a new phase of scientific and technological revolution unfolds, global competition in basic research has intensified. Justin Yifu Lin, dean of the Institute of New Structural Economics at Peking University, spoke to ThePaper.cn about China's strengths and weaknesses in basic research, strategies to address the challenges, and the roles of the government and businesses in advancing this critical area. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China has made significant strides in many industries, and is even leading in sectors such as home appliances, shipbuilding and new energy vehicles. When a country reaches the technological frontier in any area, it should make breakthroughs on its own instead of relying on other countries for new technologies.

China has notable strengths in basic research, including a vast talent pool from its 1.4 billion population. The country produces the largest number of science, technology, engineering and mathematics graduates globally, offering immense potential for an engineering workforce. The country's system for mobilizing nationwide resources is another advantage.

However, significant challenges persist in basic research. While developed countries have built systems for nurturing a steady stream of top-tier original research talent, China hasn't established such a system, focusing instead on importing foreign technologies to catch up with other nations.

A critical challenge is the research evaluation system, which overemphasizes quantitative metrics such as paper counts and impact factors, discouraging researchers from undertaking long-term, high-risk and original research that may not yield immediate results. Reforming this assessment framework is essential as China transitions from a "follower" to a "pace-setter" in science and technology.

Assessment cycles for certain disciplines should be extended to five, 10 years or longer, with greater emphasis on peer review rather than quantitative metrics. Efforts are needed to cultivate homegrown academic leaders and involve international scholars in the review process, gradually building an international review platform.

A clear division of labor is necessary in basic research. The outputs of fundamental research, mainly academic papers, are publicly accessible. Enterprises often lack a strong incentive to invest here since they cannot exclusively benefit from their investment. Government leadership and funding are essential in this area.

Conversely, enterprises drive development work by building on basic research breakthroughs to create new products and technologies that deliver exclusive returns. Companies are strongly encouraged to invest in this area, with market forces and competition providing the required vitality.

This division of labor is not absolute. Companies, being directly in touch with market and industrial demands, can sometimes better identify areas needing basic research breakthroughs. Therefore, an in-depth collaboration between the government and companies is needed.

Currently, investment in basic research accounts for roughly 7 percent of China's total R&D spending, compared to 15 to 20 percent in most developed nations. China should gradually raise the share of its R&D expenditure on basic research to 15 to 25 percent.

With limited fiscal resources, the government needs to identify sectors that are vital to the country's economic growth and national security, including semiconductors, key materials, biomedicine, energy security and agricultural breeding, and invest in R&D in these sectors.

Stronger intellectual property protection is essential to ensure profitable returns on new product development and encourage companies to make long-term investments. Meanwhile, the government should share the risks that companies face in basic research by issuing subsidies and offering tax incentives.

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VIEWS

Hu Mingyuan

Youth as torchbearers of China-DPRK relations

In his signed article published in Rodong Sinmun, the official newspaper of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), on Monday, President Xi Jinping, who was on a state visit to the country, emphasized that the two countries should continuously enhance the well-being and friendship of the two peoples.

China and the DPRK not only enjoy geographical proximity but also share a close deep-rooted friendship, cultivated by generations of leaders from both countries. The enduring relationship between the two countries has deep roots in their socialist development and is a cherished asset for both peoples.

Exchanges between the two populations reflect this goodwill, providing public support for neighborly relations and cooperation in the new era.

The youth play a crucial role in carrying forward this legacy of friendship. Both countries have consistently prioritized youth and cultural exchanges as a cornerstone of their people-to-people cooperation.

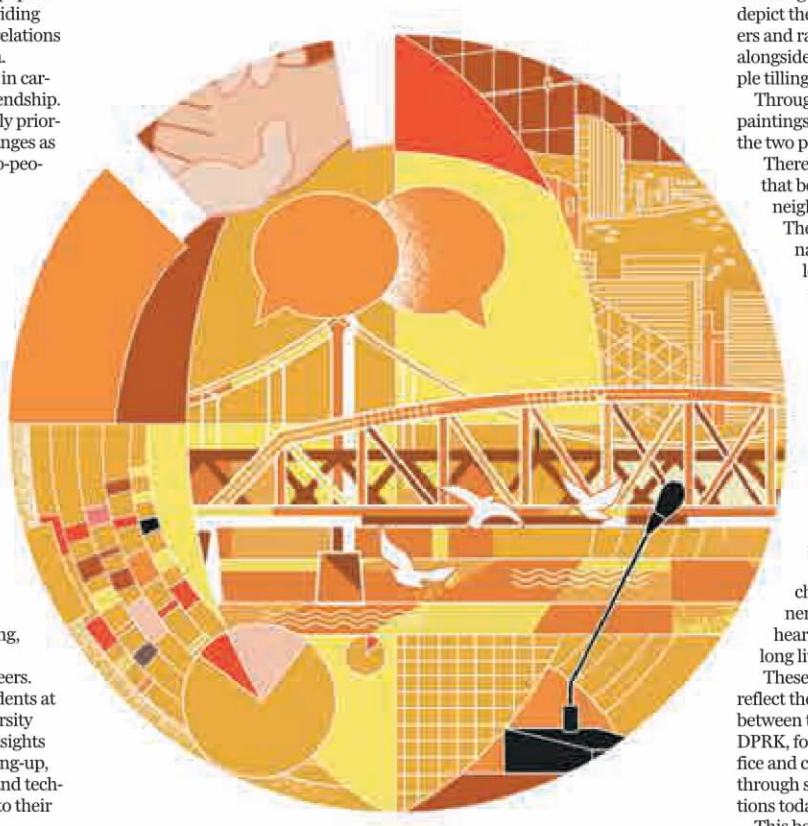
Through youth visits, study programs and inter-school activities, a stable and enduring framework of cooperation has developed. In May, 70 Chinese students from 16 universities across China, supported by the China Scholarship Council, arrived at the Pyongyang Sunan International Airport, where they were warmly welcomed by representatives from the DPRK Ministry of Education, Kim Il Sung University, and Kim Hyong Jik University of Education.

By immersing themselves in the Korean language and culture at universities in Pyongyang, Chinese students build lasting friendships with their DPRK peers.

At the same time, DPRK students at institutions such as Jilin University and Yanbian University gain insights from China's reform and opening-up, and advancements in science and technology, which they bring back to their country.

Such exchanges foster mutual understanding and strengthen emotional affinity between the two peoples, inspiring the youth to continue the traditional China-DPRK friendship and contribute to cultural exchanges.

Eager to acquire knowledge, young people lay a solid foundation for cultural exchanges between the two countries, while the vibrant folk cultures of both nations serve as a warm and enduring bond. In October 2025, to commemorate the 80th anniversary of the founding of the Workers' Party of Korea, the Shanghai Dance Theatre presented the classic dance drama *The Eternal Wave* at the East Pyongyang Grand Theatre.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The performance, staged twice, received enthusiastic acclaim and prolonged applause from the DPRK audience. This artistic tribute not only showcased the allure of Chinese culture but also created a platform for spiritual exchange among the youth, allowing them to share sentiments and revisit shared historical memories.

China and the DPRK share cultural roots and have similar folk traditions. Festivals such as Spring Festival and Lantern Festival are celebrated with kindred customs. Song and dance, cuisine, and handicrafts also reflect shared origins. Both countries have now prioritized folk activities as a means of engagement, launching interactive events such as "Happy Chinese New Year" temple fairs, intangible cultural heritage exhibitions, and folk culture experience programs.

These initiatives revive their shared cultural heritage and strengthen emotional bonds between people.

The integration of everyday folk practices is a testament to the bond between China and the DPRK. Both cultures cherish glutinous rice delicacies and spicy flavors, with *kimchi* and *tteok* paralleling pickled cabbage and niangao in Northeast China.

These dishes have similar ingredients and cooking techniques, which evoke shared memories and a sense of festive ritual.

Dandong in Liaoning province is the largest border city between China and the DPRK, offering a vivid snapshot of their blended food cultures. The streets are lined with delicacies such as cold noodles, barbecued meat, and *tteok*. On their part, DPRK residents enjoy Chinese snacks such as *jiaozi*, *tangyuan*, and fried dough twists, making food a delicious channel for emotional exchange.

At the Shencai Gallery in Shenyang, Liaoning province, DPRK oil paintings depict the white mountains, black rivers and railways along the Yalu River, alongside scenes of hardworking people tilling the yellow earth.

Through art and aesthetics, these paintings bridge the distance between the two peoples.

There's an ancient Chinese saying that benevolence and kindness to neighbors are a nation's treasures. The emotional bond between nations is nurtured by countless warm interactions, especially among the younger generation.

Today, the friendship between youths transcends political rhetoric and grand narratives. It is reflected in the pride and connection seen in the eyes of young scholars from Yanbian University and Kim Il Sung University as they exchange thoughts on each other's papers.

It's also found in a WeChat chat window of a trading partner in Dandong, in a simple, heartfelt message: "Thanks, and long live China-DPRK friendship".

These everyday moments vividly reflect the deep emotional bond between the peoples of China and the DPRK, forged through wartime sacrifice and continuously reaffirmed through sincere, respectful interactions today.

This bond also points to a friendship meant to be passed down to future generations, which forms the foundation on which China-DPRK ties have steadily advanced, growing stronger and more resilient over time.

The cross-border visits and interactions among the younger generation are creating a deep reservoir of friendship for the future. With the youth supporting each other in friendship, the future of China-DPRK relations looks vibrant and promising.

The author is a professor from Dalian Minzu University.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Lu Donghong

Forget chips, real bottleneck in AI is power

As artificial intelligence continues to expand, the real contest may no longer be about who builds the smartest models, but who can power them sustainably.

For years, the global conversation around artificial intelligence has centered on chips, algorithms and computing power. But the AI boom is exposing a more fundamental reality: AI ultimately runs on electricity, not just on code.

Without abundant, reliable and affordable power, computing capacity is merely a technical promise.

The explosive growth of AI and data centers is revealing the first hard physical constraint of the digital age — not capital, not software, but the capacity of energy systems.

This shift is quietly redefining national competitiveness. The International Energy Agency has warned that global electricity demand is entering a new phase of rapid expansion, increasingly driven by AI, cloud computing and data centers rather than traditional industrial growth.

Similarly, the World Economic Forum notes that access to power is becoming a decisive factor in the location of digital infrastructure.

In other words, the AI race is turning from a competition over algorithms and semiconductors into a contest over electricity systems.

This transition is producing sharply different outcomes across governance models. In parts of the United States, Big Tech's AI expansion is colliding with local power systems.

Massive data centers are coming up near communities that were never designed to absorb such concentrated electricity demand, leading to increased costs of upgrading grids and supporting infrastructure.

These costs often spill over to households and small businesses through electricity pricing mechanisms, resulting in higher energy bills and local resistance in several regions.

The problem extends beyond isolated disputes, reflecting a structural tension within market-led energy systems when faced with dense digital loads.

The gains from computing expansion are often concentrated within technology firms, while the infrastructure burden is distributed across society.

What begins as an AI story can quickly become a question of affordability, equity and public legitimacy.

China is attempting a different response. The 2026 Government Work Report emphasizes improving national coordination of computing power, and building hyper-scale intelligent computing clusters.

Computing infrastructure is no longer treated as a stand-alone technology sector, but is planned alongside power generation, grid capacity, transmission networks and long-term energy security.

This is important because electricity is increasingly becoming a strategic productive force rather than just an industrial input. In 2025, China's total electricity consumption surpassed 10 trillion kilowatt-hours, making it the first major economy to cross that threshold.

Meanwhile, power demand from internet data services is expanding dramatically, while electricity consumption in high-tech manufacturing continues to outpace traditional industries. These trends reflect a broader transformation.

Electricity is no longer only powering factories and households, but is also becoming the hidden foundation beneath digital expansion, industrial upgrading and AI deployment.

Seen through this lens, China's 5 trillion yuan ($739 billion) investment in grid infrastructure during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) is more than conventional stimulus spending. It amounts to a systemic redesign for the computing age.

Ultra-high-voltage transmission projects are increasing the ability to move electricity across regions, allowing energy resources to be allocated on a much larger scale.

That, in turn, is gradually reshaping the geography of computing itself.

As transmission improves, data infrastructure can migrate toward energy-rich regions rather than remaining confined to traditional urban technology hubs.

At the same time, the expansion of local distribution grids, microgrids and energy storage systems aims to absorb growing digital demand without ignoring residential consumption or smaller businesses.

China's broader ambition — to meet most new electricity demand with renewable energy before 2030 — reflects its efforts to expand computing power while keeping carbon and system risks under control.

The underlying challenge is not unique to China. It is global. Electricity is rapidly emerging as a new frontier of geopolitical competition. Energy infrastructure is increasingly vulnerable amid geopolitical tensions and regional conflicts, and energy pricing is frequently distorted by political shocks.

The line separating energy security from digital security is becoming harder to define.

In such an environment, power systems are no longer simply development tools. They have become components of national strategic capacity.

That reality has important implications for the future of AI competition. The decisive question may no longer be who possesses the most advanced chips or the largest models.

It may be who can build an electricity system capable of supporting digital growth without triggering social backlash, grid instability or unsustainable carbon costs.

The AI age is revealing a deeper truth often overlooked in technology discourse: technological breakthroughs require a physical foundation that is not only powerful, but also resilient, equitable and sustainable.

China's emphasis on integrating computing and electricity is ultimately an attempt to answer a larger governance question: how to pursue technological transformation without deepening social strains, and how to sustain rapid innovation without sacrificing systemic stability. It is a test of state capacity in the age of artificial intelligence.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Shen Zhixiong and Shao Jingjing

Asia wants peace and prosperity, not confrontation

At the recent 23rd Shangri-La Dialogue, a Chinese People's Liberation Army expert delegation shared China's perspectives on global dynamics and regional security. Their insights resonated with defense officials and academics alike. Most Asian countries desire for regional peace through dialogue and consultation, and expect China to be an anchor of stability in a turbulent world.

During their meeting last month, the heads of state of China and the United States agreed to build a constructive bilateral relationship of strategic stability, providing strategic guidance for China-US relations over the next three years and beyond. This agreement has been welcomed by people of both countries and the global community. Its positive impact was evident at this year's Shangri-La Dialogue.

US Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth's speech at the dialogue marked a shift from last year. While he continued to urge regional allies and partners to increase defense spending, Hegseth adopted a cautious tone on China-US ties and made no mention of the Taiwan region whatsoever in the speech.

In response, the head of the Chinese delegation emphasized that strategic stability underpins global security, and the Asia-Pacific should not become an arena for geopolitical rivalry. No country should pursue absolute security at the expense of others because this approach ultimately leaves everyone vulnerable. China and the US, in particular, must meet halfway, demonstrate strategic resolve through concrete actions, and foster healthy, stable and sustainable relations between the two countries and between the Chinese and the US military.

Conversations with defense officials from various countries revealed a widespread expectation for China and the US to uphold strategic stability and transform their leaders' consensus into tangible results.

Amid challenges from hegemonism and the threat of militarism, it is essential to recognize that Asia's security should be safeguarded by Asian countries, not by others.

Singaporean Defense Minister Chan Chun Sing expressed satisfaction with the positive outcome of the China-US summit. In fact, the ripple effects generated by the sound China-US engagement helped foster a less confrontational atmosphere at the dialogue, where most speakers voiced concerns over global and regional security risks, and called for proactive cooperation among major countries to ensure regional security, stability and prosperity.

However, there were a few discordant notes as well. Japanese Defense Minister Shinjiro Koizumi defended Japan's military buildup and Philippine Defense Secretary Gilberto Teodoro Jr stirred tensions over the South China Sea.

At a time when the "new militarism" poses mounting threats to regional security, Japanese delegates seized on Washington's call for allies to shoulder greater defense burdens, and depicted Japan as an active contributor to defense cooperation.

Koizumi attempted to put a spin on Japan's militaristic expansion by saying it should not be "labeled 'new militarism'". But he evaded questions about Japan's historical accountability and whether the country would apologize for its aggression during World War II.

Teodoro, meanwhile, portrayed the Philippines as a "victim", but dodged questions about Manila saying one thing and doing another over the South China Sea issue, even hinting at pulling out of negotiations on the Code of Conduct in the South China Sea.

Japan and the Philippines have ramped up coordination over the South China Sea and East China Sea issues. They recently issued a joint statement announcing their decision to launch "formal negotiations to delimit the maritime boundary of the exclusive economic zone and the continental shelf between the two countries". Such moves create confrontations and stoke tensions. They risk destabilizing the region and eroding the regional cooperation mechanism with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations at the center.

Any attempt to transplant extra-regional bloc confrontation into the Asia-Pacific runs counter to the shared aspiration of regional countries for peace, development and cooperation. Eng Kok Thay, a secretary of state of Cambodia's Council of Ministers, said Japan's accelerating military buildup deserves scrutiny, while a Malaysian think tank expert cautioned that ganging up under the pretext of "strengthening security" will heighten security anxieties in the region.

Amid challenges from hegemonism and the threat of militarism, it is essential to recognize that Asia's security should be safeguarded by Asian countries, not by others. The Asian security model, which emphasizes sharing weal and woe, seeking common ground while shelving differences, and prioritizing dialogue and consultation, was put forward at the Central Conference on Work Related to Neighboring Countries in April 2025.

The model is a distillation of Asia's decades-long experience in peaceful development. It rejects power politics and unilateralism, opposes the approach of enhancing one nation's security at the expense of others, and advocates common security through equal consultations and sustainable security via win-win cooperation. The logic gained broad resonance at this year's Shangri-La Dialogue.

As an ancient Chinese adage goes, "A single person struggles to rise alone, yet a crowd marches forward with ease". From the Treaty of Amity and Cooperation in Southeast Asia to negotiations on the South China Sea Code of Conduct, Asian countries have demonstrated that regional security can be effectively achieved through equal consultations and mutually beneficial cooperation without the need for military alliances.

Against the backdrop of global governance challenges, Asian countries should stand united, uphold the Asian security model, and embrace the trend of peace, development and win-win cooperation to jointly build a brighter future for the region.

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GLOBAL VIEWS



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

HE FANGYING

For the public good

The virtuous friendship of the classical era offers an ethical foundation for cooperation among nations, peoples and civilizations

The Second World Conference of Classics was held on Tuesday and Wednesday. More than 200 classical scholars from over 18 countries gathered in Athens, the cradle of Western civilization. With one of the sub-forums focusing on "Friendship and Community: The Ethical Community in the Transition from Ancient to Modern Times", the conference reflected on why we should return to the ancient ideals of friendship and community in an age of atomization, fragmentation and loneliness.



Looking back to the classical traditions of both East and West, we can clearly trace the intellectual trajectory by which personal affection gradually became the foundation of the civic order. The ancient Greek word *philia* had an exceptionally broad range of meanings: individual friendship, kinship ties, guest-host relations, military alliances and even erotic love. Its semantic reach far exceeds what we mean by "friendship" today. Not only is it difficult to find an exact equivalent in Chinese, but even in modern Western languages — friendship in English or *amitié* in French — the full resonance of *philia* is lost. In Modern Greek, the word *philia* has seen its meaning drastically narrowed due to profound grammatical and historical changes: from "civic friendship" as the bedrock of polis order, through the medieval period, when *agapi* (selfless love) gradually displaced *philia* as the core of religious ethics. Subsequently, *philia* was secularized into mere personal sentiment between friends, until in modern society it shrank into a private emotional bond between individuals.

Tracing this evolution of friendship in Western intellectual history reveals why revisiting classical friendship today is, first and foremost, a direct response to the modern "crisis of connection". Modernity's triumph is the liberation of the individual. It shattered the shackles of traditional families, villages and guilds, granting each soul unprecedented freedom and independence. Yet the price of this liberation has been a rupture of the primordial ethical bonds between people. The logic of the market economy has turned all relationships into transactions; human interactions are increasingly governed by utility and efficiency rather than by affection and care. Digital technology has further allowed virtual socializing to replace face-to-face, heart-to-heart conversation; the click of a "like" has supplanted deep resonance between souls. The more we "connect" online, the more alone we feel in reality — and the more we long for the ancient art of companionship.

We revisit classical friendship above all because it embodies ethical wisdom that modernity cannot provide. This conference invites scholars to explore in depth the essential differences between classical friendship and what modern people understand as "friendship". In other words, modern people regard friendship as a private sentiment — a relationship based on shared tastes or mutual exchange of interests, while from the perspective of classical thought, both Eastern and Western, friendship is first and foremost a means by which a person comes to know how to live.

As Socrates said in Plato's *Lysis*: Whom you choose to befriend means what way of life you choose. Plato's student Aristotle, in turn, distinguishes three kinds of friendship: friendship based on utility, pleasure and virtue. He makes it clear that the first two kinds are accidental and perishable; only virtue friendship — in which one wishes the good of the other for the other's own sake — is founded on mutual appreciation and respect for each other's character and does not depend on any external utilitarian end. A true friend is "another self", and the process of friendship is one in which two souls sharpen each other and together pursue a life of goodness.

Almost in the same period, Confucius in the East also proposed that true friends are those who can help one cultivate virtue and expand knowledge — companions who share the same path. Friends should admonish and encourage each other, for "the superior man seeks to perfect the admirable qualities of men, and does not seek to perfect their bad qualities".

What is especially important is that friendship in classical times, in both the East and the West, possessed a distinct public character. Aristotle wrote in his *Nicomachean Ethics:* "Friendship seems too to hold states together, and lawgivers to care more for it than for justice." It was a statement that remains thought-provoking to this day. Justice can only demarcate the boundaries of rights between people and resolve conflicts that have already arisen; friendship, however, can enable people to voluntarily consider others and actively care for the common good, preventing conflicts at their source. A society without friendship, even if it possesses the most perfect legal system, is nothing more than a cold alliance of interests, liable to disintegrate at any moment.

To revisit classical friendship is ultimately to seek an ethical foundation for building a community with a shared future for humanity. The world today is facing grave challenges including climate change, public health crises, wealth disparity and civilizational clashes. No single country can meet these challenges alone; they require the cooperation of all humanity. Yet the basis of modern international relations is too often interest and power, and alliances built on such interests are fragile and unstable. When interests collide, cooperation turns into confrontation.

Classical friendship, however, champions mutual respect, mutual flourishing and the pursuit of the common good — thus offering a deeper ethical foundation for cooperation among nations, peoples and civilizations. It reminds us that human beings are not rivals locked in endless competition, but rather a community with a shared future, bound together in weal and woe, for friendship is humanity's oldest common language, and its strongest force for unity.

The stone columns of the Athenian Acropolis have stood for more than 2,000 years, witnessing the rise and fall of countless civilizations. Today, as scholars from around the world gather once more upon this sacred ground to revisit the ancient question of friendship, they come not to retreat into the past, but to reach toward the future. In an age of deepening uncertainty, classical friendship shines as a beacon — lighting the way out of our atomized solitude and toward the rebuilding of human solidarity. The Second World Conference of Classics has convened precisely to let this ancient light burn anew in the 21st century, casting its glow upon the path of humanity yet to come.

Let us conclude by recalling the words of the Roman philosopher Cicero from 2,000 years ago: "But I hold this first: that friendship cannot exist except among the virtuous."

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WANG WEI

Moving tradition

Reinterpreting the visual code of Chinese opera through design can reconnect it with contemporary society

Traditional Chinese opera is one of the most sophisticated art forms in Chinese culture. Its value lies not only in the preservation of scripts, repertoires and stage traditions, but also in the rich visual language it has accumulated over centuries — costumes, colors, facial patterns, headpieces, gestures, rhythm and spatial order.



In today's cultural context, the challenge is no longer simply how to protect traditional opera as an inherited art form, but how to allow it to enter contemporary life, urban space and international communication. Cultural heritage can retain vitality only when it continues to generate new meanings in the present. Design offers one possible path. Through design, the visual codes of traditional opera can be translated into forms that are accessible to younger generations, urban audiences and global viewers.

For a long time, traditional Chinese opera has been understood mainly within the framework of intangible cultural heritage. This framework has played an important role in documentation, preservation, transmission and professional training. Yet if heritage is seen mainly as something to be protected, it may gradually become distant from contemporary lifestyles. It may be respected, but not necessarily embraced; admired, but not necessarily understood by new audiences.

The creative transformation and innovative development of traditional Chinese culture require a broader view. Tradition should not only be preserved in its original form, but also activated as a cultural resource. This does not mean simplifying tradition into decorative symbols. Rather, it means understanding the internal logic of traditional culture and translating it into contemporary visual systems, design practices and public experiences.

Traditional Chinese opera provides a particularly rich case for such transformation. It is not merely a performing art based on singing, recitation, acting and martial movement. It is also a complete visual culture. The colors of costumes, the symbolic meanings of facial makeup, the structure of headwear, the rhythm of movement and the arrangement of stage space together form a highly coded aesthetic system. These codes carry cultural memory, social values, character types and emotional expression.

When these visual codes are reinterpreted through contemporary design, opera can move beyond the theater stage and enter a wider cultural field. It can appear in fashion, product design, digital media, spatial installation, urban events, public education and international cultural exchange. In this process, opera is not weakened or diluted. Instead, its cultural energy is released in new forms.

A recent design-led cultural project developed at the Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology offers one example of this approach. Rather than reproducing a traditional opera performance, the project explored how the visual and aesthetic codes of opera could be transformed into contemporary design, spatial presentation and public cultural experience. It began within an academic context, but soon attracted wider public attention and entered broader cultural exchange settings.

The significance of such a project does not lie only in one runway presentation or one exhibition. More importantly, it reveals how traditional culture can be reconnected with contemporary society through design. The body, costumes, sound, image and space become new media for cultural translation. Opera's visual language is no longer confined to the stage; it becomes part of a contemporary cultural vocabulary.

This process reflects a shift in space. Traditional opera has historically been associated with theaters, professional troupes and specific performance venues. Today, through design and public cultural projects, it can enter universities, museums, commercial spaces, urban cultural landmarks and international platforms. This spatial shift changes the way audiences encounter opera. They may not first approach it through a complete performance, but through visual experience, atmosphere, movement, color or design.

It also reflects a shift in function. Traditional opera is no longer limited to aesthetic appreciation, education or heritage display. It can participate in the shaping of urban identity, cultural branding and cross-cultural communication. For a city seeking to present both historical depth and contemporary openness, traditional culture can become an important cultural resource. It helps create a recognizable image, build emotional connection and communicate values beyond language.

At the same time, the subject of cultural transmission is also changing. In the past, the transmission of opera was mainly understood as the responsibility of performers, masters, institutions and professional inheritors. Today, designers, educators, students, media practitioners, cultural organizations, cities and international partners can all become participants in the reactivation of traditional culture. This does not replace professional inheritance. Rather, it expands the ecology of cultural transmission.

Design plays a crucial role in this expanded ecology. Good design does not simply extract motifs from tradition and place them onto contemporary products. It studies the structure, meaning and aesthetic logic of tradition, and then reorganizes them for new contexts. In the case of opera, this means moving from the surface of costumes or patterns to a deeper understanding of character, rhythm, symbolism and spatial expression.

This is why the contemporary translation of opera's visual culture must be systematic. If traditional elements are used only as fashionable symbols, they may quickly become superficial. But when design engages with the inner logic of opera, it can create new cultural forms that are both contemporary and rooted. Such work allows tradition to be seen not as a fixed archive, but as a living system capable of renewal.

The international dimension of this transformation is equally important. In cross-cultural communication, traditional culture often faces a dilemma: It is rich in meaning, but not always easy for global audiences to understand. Visual language can help bridge this gap. Costumes, colors, gestures, digital imagery and spatial design can communicate cultural atmosphere and emotional resonance before words are fully understood.

In this sense, design becomes a form of cultural translation. It does not simply explain Chinese opera to the world; it creates new conditions for the world to experience it. Through contemporary visual language, opera can become more approachable to international audiences while retaining its cultural depth. It can participate in dialogue rather than remain an object of distant appreciation.

This also gives traditional culture a new role in urban development. Cities today are not defined only by infrastructure, commerce or technology. They are also shaped by cultural experience. Public cultural projects that draw from traditional heritage can enrich urban space, strengthen cultural identity and create opportunities for international exchange. They allow heritage to become visible in everyday urban life rather than remaining confined to specialized institutions.

The future of traditional Chinese opera therefore does not lie only in keeping it on the traditional stage, although the stage remains essential. Its future also lies in enabling its visual language to travel across design, cities, media and global cultural dialogue. When opera enters new cultural spaces, it does not leave tradition behind. It carries tradition into new relationships.

Cultural confidence is not about clinging to the past. It is about allowing tradition to continue evolving in the present. A living tradition must be able to speak to contemporary society, engage younger generations and participate in global conversations. Through design, traditional Chinese opera can become not only a heritage to be protected, but also a cultural language that continues to grow.

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MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

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CHINA MARVELS

KEY MILESTONES OF THE THREE GORGES PROJECT

1994 — **December** Construction of the Three Gorges Project (TGP) begins

1997 — **November** The project achieves river closure

2003 — **June, July** Impoundment begins; the two-way five-tier ship locks start trial operation; the first unit is connected to the grid

2004 — **July** The two-way five-tier ship locks open to navigation

2010 — **October** Experimental water level of the project reaches 175 m for the first time

2012 — **July** The hydropower station achieves full-load operation for the first time, with a total installed capacity of 22.5 million kW

2016 — **September** The ship lift begins trial operation

2020 — **November** TGP receives overall completion acceptance

06 THE THREE GORGES NEW WATERWAY PROJECT

The project started on June 8, 2026.

5-tier

Located to the north of the existing ship locks, a new two-way five-tier ship locks will be constructed.

336 million tons

Upon completion, the annual total navigation capacity at the Three Gorges will reach 336 million tons.



(This drawing is schematic only)

The Three Gorges Project, born from China's early 20th-century dream of national strength and rejuvenation, has become the world's largest water management and hydropower project after decades of deliberation and construction. Delivering integrated benefits in flood control, power generation, navigation and water resource management, it has profoundly reshaped the economic landscape of the Yangtze River — the world's third longest river — while providing robust support for the sustained advancement of Chinese modernization.

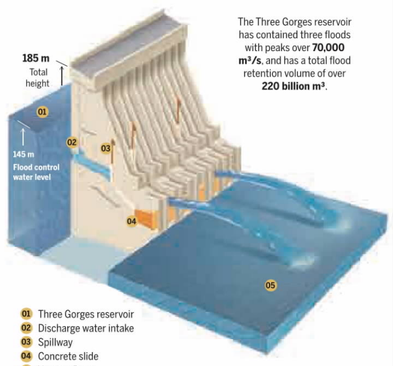
THREE GORGES PROJECT

POWERING THE YANGTZE'S GOLDEN WATERWAY



01 WATER RETAINING AND SPILLWAY STRUCTURES

The primary function of the Three Gorges Project (TGP) is flood control. Since the project's reservoir started impoundment, it has performed flood retention for more than 70 times.



The Three Gorges reservoir has contained three floods with peaks over **70,000 m³/s**, and has a total flood retention volume of over **220 billion m³**.

01 Three Gorges reservoir
02 Discharge water intake
03 Spillway
04 Concrete slide
05 Yangtze River

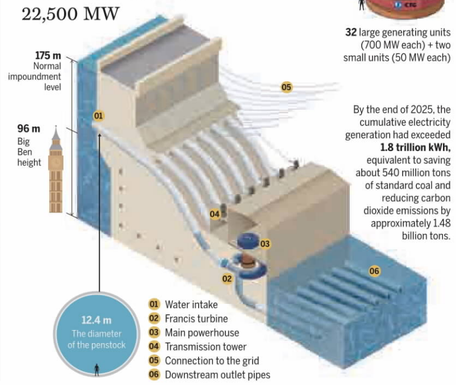
02 HYDROPOWER STRUCTURES

TGP is the world's largest water management and hydropower complex.

TOTAL INSTALLED CAPACITY:
22,500 MW



32 large generating units (700 MW each) + two small units (50 MW each)



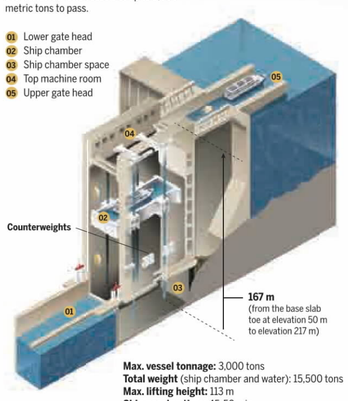
By the end of 2025, the cumulative electricity generation had exceeded **1.8 trillion kWh**, equivalent to saving about 540 million tons of standard coal and reducing carbon dioxide emissions by approximately 1.48 billion tons.

01 Water intake
02 Francis turbine
03 Main powerhouse
04 Transmission tower
05 Connection to the grid
06 Downstream outlet pipes

03 SHIP LIFT

TGP's ship lift is the largest of its kind in the world. It allows vessels of up to 3,000 metric tons to pass.

01 Lower gate head
02 Ship chamber
03 Ship chamber space
04 Top machine room
05 Upper gate head



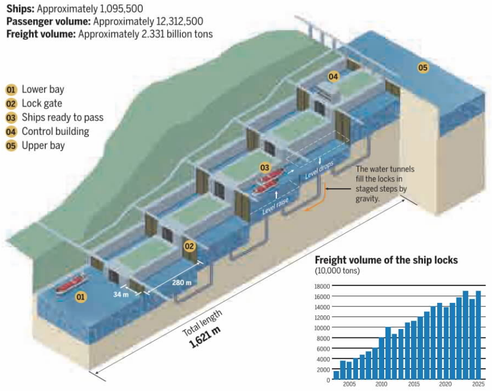
Max. vessel tonnage: 3,000 tons
Total weight (ship chamber and water): 15,500 tons
Max. lifting height: 113 m
Ship passing time: 45-50 min

04 SHIP LOCKS

Since the ship locks began operation in 2003, the annual cargo throughput at the Three Gorges has increased nearly tenfold, from 18 million tons to 173 million tons. The cumulative cargo volume passing through the locks has exceeded 2.33 billion tons.

Ships: Approximately 1,095,500
Passenger volume: Approximately 12,312,500
Freight volume: Approximately 2.331 billion tons

01 Lower bay
02 Lock gate
03 Ships ready to pass
04 Control building
05 Upper bay

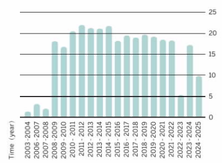


Freight volume of the ship locks
(10,000 tons)

05 THREE GORGES RESERVOIR

The reservoir is an essential freshwater regulation and storage hub of the Yangtze River Basin. From 2003 to 2025, the reservoir has supplied more than 370 billion cubic meters of supplementary water to the downstream area, effectively safeguarding water supply for industrial production, residential life and ecological conservation along the river.

REPLENISHMENT OF WATER
(Billion cubic meters)



BIODIVERSITY PROTECTION

While the Three Gorges Project (TGP) operates safely and delivers full benefits, biodiversity in TGP's reservoir area has been preserved. More than 2,160 rare plant species including Davidia involucrata are under conservation, over 120 rare Yangtze fish species, such as the Acipenser sinensis, have been protected and bred.

Acipenser sinensis

It has existed for about 140 million years. It is a large anadromous fish.



Davidia involucrata

Mainly distributed in Sichuan and Hubei provinces. It is hailed as a "living fossil" among plants.



All figures quoted are up to the end of 2025. Sources: China Three Gorges Corp, Chinese Academy of Sciences

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BUSINESS

Zero tariffs to boost biz ties with Morocco

Enhanced cooperation creating new opportunities for trade, investment

CHANGSHA/RABAT — The Morocco session of the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo (CAETE) is expected to bolster Sino-Moroccan economic ties, as China's zero-tariff policy for African countries and deepening industrial cooperation create new opportunities for trade, investment and supply-chain integration.

Jointly organized by the Secretariat of CAETE and Morocco's Ministry of Industry and Trade, the event in Casablanca runs from Wednesday through Friday, marking the first major overseas economic and trade activity organized by Central China's Hunan province in Africa since China fully implemented zero tariffs for the 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations.

Policy boost

Analysts and business leaders said the zero-tariff policy is expected to enhance bilateral trade and expand market access for African products in China.

Nasser Bouchiba, president of the Morocco-based Africa China Cooperation Association for Development, said the event comes at an opportune time and will enable premium Moroccan products to gain easier access to China's vast consumer market while enabling Chinese enterprises to expand their presence in North Africa and strengthen the integration of industrial and supply chains.

Bilateral trade between China and Morocco reached $10.96 billion in 2025, up from $9.04 billion in 2024. China has remained Morocco's third-largest trading partner globally and its largest trading partner in Asia for many consecutive years.

In 2025, China's exports to Morocco reached $9.88 billion, while imports from Morocco stood at $1.08 billion.

Industry observers said the zero-tariff policy will reduce export costs for Moroccan goods and enhance their competitiveness in the Chinese market.

Jawad Kerdoudi, president of the Moroccan Institute of International Relations, called the policy a mutually beneficial strategic move, saying it will help reduce Africa's trade deficit with China, attract more Chinese investment and bring capital, technology and jobs to the continent.

Driving cooperation

Hunan stands out as one of China's most proactive provinces in developing economic and trade relationships with Africa. Yang Yi, general manager of Hunan Yufei Industry Investment Co Ltd, said preparations for the Morocco session have been underway for months, with coordinated engagement between Chinese and Moroccan enterprises.

The company is promoting Moroccan specialty products, including argan oil and essential oils, through its "African Products" brand system.

During this year's May Day holiday, an African specialty products fair held in the provincial capital, Changsha, attracted nearly 100,000 visitors over six days.

"We hope to expand sourcing channels and strengthen supply chains so more high-quality Moroccan products can enter the Chinese market under African brands," Yang said.

Leveraging resources

Beyond trade, Sino-Moroccan ties are increasingly shifting toward industrial integration and supply-chain collaboration.

Mohammed VI Tangier Tech City is one example. As of March, it had signed agreements with 42 enterprises, including 34 Chinese companies, with planned investment totaling about $3.5 billion.

Chinese lithium battery materials producer BTR New Material Group is building cathode and anode material projects at the site and is expected to create more than 1,100 skilled jobs.

Morocco, the world's largest exporter of phosphate and rich in cobalt and lithium, is leveraging its resources base to develop a new energy industrial chain linking Moroccan resources, Chinese processing capacity and European markets.

Equipment from Zoomlion Heavy Industry Science and Technology Co Ltd has also been widely used in major infrastructure projects in Morocco, including venues for the 2030 FIFA World Cup.

Financial institutions such as Agricultural Bank of China's Hunan branch are also strengthening cross-border financial support for Chinese enterprises operating in Morocco.

Green growth

Green development has become another key pillar of China-Morocco cooperation. Moroccan business leader Imad Toumi, CEO of Managem group, cited several joint projects, including a battery-grade cobalt sulfate project in Marrakech and a seawater desalination project in Nador.

"These projects reflect a model that combines economic development with environmental protection," Toumi said.

The year 2026 marks the 10th anniversary of the establishment of the China-Morocco strategic partnership.

"China-Morocco cooperation is steadily advancing toward higher-quality and more sustainable development," said Xiao Hao, executive dean of the Institute of African Studies at Hunan University. "With the CAETE's Africa tour kicking off in Morocco, economic, cultural and academic exchanges between the two countries are poised to reach a new level."

XINHUA — CHINA DAILY

On-site lesson



Railway workers take part in a maintenance training program at Jiexiu Station, operated by China Railway Taiyuan Group, in Jiexiu, Shanxi province. Such on-site training is aimed at enhancing staff operational proficiency and reinforcing rigorous safety protocols for daily railway operations. As a first-class station and critical coal transport hub on the South Datong-Fenglingdu Railway, Jiexiu handles massive volumes of energy cargo, playing a vital role in safeguarding the nation's energy supply chain. QIN QI / FOR CHINA DAILY



Employees work at a Midea home appliance production facility in Ain Sokhna, Egypt, on Jan 19. XIN MENGCHEN / XINHUA

Midea helps ramp up go-global push

By **YANG WANLI**
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Midea Group, a Chinese home appliance giant, launched an initiative on Tuesday to help domestic manufacturers build and operate factories overseas through a comprehensive package of digital, artificial intelligence-powered and operational solutions.

The Go-Global Partner Program has been introduced at a time when a growing number of Chinese companies are accelerating overseas expansion amid shifting global supply chains and rising investment in overseas production, said Zhang Xiaoyi, vice-president and chief data officer of Midea Group.

The initiative seeks to address some of the most persistent challenges facing manufacturers venturing abroad, including fragmented cross-border supply chains, inconsistent quality standards, complex regulatory requirements and cross-cultural workforce management, Zhang said.

The program is built on lessons learned from Midea's operations in Thailand, where the company has transformed its air conditioner factory into an overseas Lighthouse Factory — a first for China's AC industry — in which multiple AI agents collaborate across production, logistics, quality control and management functions.

The factory, covering 208,000 square meters, produced more than 5 million AC units last year. Its AI platform integrates 13 specialized AI agents across 25 core business scenarios, enabling managers to monitor operations and access key performance indicators through simple voice or text commands, said Zhou Xiaoling, information technology director of Midea Group.

"Unlike conventional smart factories that primarily automate production processes, AI agents can understand information, learn from experience and provide analytical support. They can work independently, collaborate with people and generate operational insights based on real-time data, enabling intelligent decisionmaking throughout the entire production cycle," Zhou said.

The company's Kuka intelligent manufacturing solution, for example, integrates autonomous mobile robots, automated warehouses and production lines into a unified operational platform. A single production line can save approximately $30,000 annually in overseas labor costs.

To address such issues, Midea also developed an AI- and virtual reality-enabled global workforce training platform. "The results have been substantial. Employee training cycles have been shortened from eight days to three days while training efficiency has increased by 62.5 percent," said Li Peng, manager of Midea Air Conditioning Thailand factory.

Over the past two years, Midea Thailand has worked with more than 70 Chinese companies expanding overseas. Li said the factory's experience demonstrates the value of collaborative overseas expansion.

He revealed that Chinese enterprises have accelerated expansion into Southeast Asia via building entire ecosystems from the ground up in recent years. Thailand has been a priority destination due to its geographical advantage, preferential policies and cultural similarity.

According to the Thai Foreign Business Commission, 113 foreign investors were permitted to operate businesses in Thailand in the first month of this year, representing a 10 percent increase. China stood at the top with an investment of 5.39 billion baht ($164 million).

Chinese investment is driving a wave of high-value projects in Thailand's Eastern Economic Corridor, focusing on advanced technology sectors and fueling Thailand's ambition to become a crucial global export hub, marking a significant strategic shift away from traditional manufacturing, according to Preesan Rakwatin, executive vice-president of the Digital Economy Promotion Agency of Thailand.

Rakwatin said China is now a leading country in cutting-edge technologies, including AI, which has empowered the manufacturing sector in Thailand and will serve as an important driver for a tech evolution in the region.

"Many countries are entering an aging society and we need the help of technology. Thailand welcomes more investment from China and those enterprises with high-tech support. This will not only solve labor shortages in the future, but will also help strengthen our regional competitiveness," he added.

Zhang, Midea's vice-president, said Chinese companies should move beyond traditional capacity relocation toward a more integrated model of global industrial development.

"The future of globalization requires a systematic approach," he said. "Technology, operational experience and industrial ecosystems must work together. The next phase of globalization is defined not merely by where factories are built, but by how knowledge, technology and industrial expertise are shared across borders."

WeChat opens AI ecosystem to developers

By **CHENG YU**
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Tencent has started opening WeChat's artificial intelligence ecosystem to mini program developers, allowing companies to integrate AI agents into one of China's most widely used apps.

The move is one of Tencent's most ambitious attempts yet to embed AI across WeChat's vast ecosystem of messaging, payments, content and mini programs, which together serve more than 1 billion users.

The company published guidelines on Monday for developers seeking access to the WeChat AI ecosystem, introducing both automatic and developer modes for integration. The program remains in internal testing and requires authorization from participating developers.

Among the first batch of trial partners are some of China's largest internet companies.

E-commerce giant JD plans to deploy AI agents across shopping, food delivery and logistics services. Meituan is integrating AI into food delivery and local services, while KFC China will allow users to place orders using natural language, with the system automatically identifying nearby restaurants.

Travel platform Trip.com has completed integration for services such as flight bookings, hotel reservations and itinerary planning. Fashion marketplace Poizon will offer AI-powered product recommendations.

Hardware manufacturers are also joining the initiative. Chinese smartphone maker Honor has completed integration through an agent-to-agent protocol, while Huawei, Xiaomi, Oppo and Vivo are expected to follow, sources confirmed to China Daily.

Tencent views WeChat AI as a differentiated product designed to connect five of its core ecosystems: communications, social networking, content, mini programs and payments.

The initiative reflects a broader shift underway across China's AI industry as companies seek to move beyond standalone chatbots and turn AI into a practical service layer embedded within existing consumer platforms.

Rather than competing directly on model performance, Chinese internet companies are increasingly focused on integrating AI into everyday tasks such as ordering food, booking travel, shopping and making payments.

Yet questions remain about whether AI agents can generate sustainable revenue.

Fu Weigang, head of the SIFL Institute, said that China's AI industry is seeing rapid investment growth, but viable business models remain uncertain.

"Many companies have launched AI agent services, but users still have reservations about allowing AI to make decisions on their behalf," he said. "Outside of the initial attention generated by low prices, many automated functions have yet to prove their value in real-world use."

Cost is another challenge. Every AI interaction generates token costs, raising questions about who ultimately pays: WeChat, mini program operators or merchants.

"WeChat has roughly 1.4 billion users," Fu said. "If these capabilities are rolled out at scale, the overall cost burden could become significant."

United States-based AI companies have made progress in monetization. AI startup Anthropic said in April its annualized revenue run rate had exceeded $30 billion, while OpenAI has reported annualized revenue exceeding $10 billion, driven largely by subscriptions and enterprise services.

China's paid AI market remains at a much earlier stage of development, with only a handful of companies experimenting with tiered subscription models.

"Traditional internet platforms primarily generate revenue through advertising, but AI services function more like utilities, where consumers have historically shown less willingness to pay," Fu added.

SpaceX IPO curbs seen as baseless

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai and **ZHOU LANXU** in Beijing

SpaceX's decision to bar Chinese mainland and Hong Kong investors from its $75 billion IPO underscores a growing global trend of technology decoupling, which Chinese companies must heed without altering their global outreach, said experts on Tuesday.

Underwriters for SpaceX, the space exploration company founded by Elon Musk, said on Friday that they are instructed to reject any orders originating from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, according to people familiar with the matter.

It means that mutual funds, private equities, sovereign funds, family offices and high-net-worth individuals from the two jurisdictions will all be blocked from this highly anticipated IPO, which would rank among the world's largest technology listings in history.

Online access to the official website of SpaceX and its roadshow materials were inaccessible in the jurisdictions on Tuesday.

SpaceX has cited the US International Traffic in Arms Regulations for making the decision, indicating national security concerns.

But Dai Guanchun, a senior capital markets lawyer based in Beijing, said that there is no explicit restriction under US law. The subscription of shares does not pose any serious national security or technology leakage risks, he stressed.

"This reflects an excessive politicization of technological exchanges by the United States, disrupting the normal flow of international capital," he said.

"Chinese companies possess world-class innovation capabilities, and Chinese scientists play critical roles in nearly all areas of technological innovation. Excluding Chinese companies and Chinese capital is unjust, undermining long-standing international trust and collaboration," he added.

But Dai stressed that this could be an unavoidable trend. Not just the US but probably Europe as well may impose excessive politicization on technology and capital exchanges.

Against that backdrop, Chinese companies should not be conservative, but rather seek more cooperation in other markets, he added.

Excluding investors from the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong from this IPO is using military export controls as a pretext. It is a selective capital isolation driven by geopolitical competition, as explained by Liu Chunsheng, an associate professor of international economics at the Central University of Finance and Economics.

"It is a typical case of capital decoupling in cutting-edge technology sectors. The military export control regulations used to restrict only the flow of technical hardware, but now companies are using it to block all related capital. The US side is expanding national security concerns to the capital market in strategic sectors such as aerospace and semiconductors. Investment rights are being divided by nationality, creating a so-called 'layered' and partial decoupling," said Liu.

In the short run, this could lead to higher fundraising costs and fewer opportunities regarding commercial operations for US companies like SpaceX, as they will receive less Asian capital. If sustained for a longer term, it could impair the global capital supply, constraining the R&D expansion of capital-heavy aerospace projects, he said.

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BUSINESS

Tianjin develops sensors for embodied AI

Robots featuring multidimensional tactile devices can now perform tasks once only possible for human beings

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Tianjin
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A worker collects data simulating household scenarios at a super computing and AI facility in Tianjin on May 20. SUN FANYUE / XINHUA



A humanoid robot developed by PaXini Technology (Tianjin) Co is showcased for household application scenarios. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

On sorting lines in smart factories, at precision workstations in automobile manufacturing plants and even at home tending to household chores, a batch of robots equipped with multidimensional tactile sensors can dexterously grasp, operate and adaptively perform tasks, accomplishing movements that were once only possible for humans.

These robots, capable of sensing pressure, texture and posture, possess "tactile fingertips", enabling artificial intelligence to transition from virtual algorithms to the real world. This is the industrial transformation brought about by embodied intelligence, and the core "sensory organs" enabling it all originate from Tianjin.

"Robots are important carriers of AI, facilitating its transition from the virtual world to reality," said Yin Jihui, secretary of the Hexi district Party committee. As a national advanced manufacturing research and development base, Tianjin is focusing on core technology research and industrial implementation of embodied intelligence robots, cultivating a group of globally competitive industry leaders. PaXini Technology (Tianjin) Co is one such representative example.

"The key to these logistics robots lies in our independently developed multidimensional tactile sensors," Lin Tong, director of PaXini' s data collection center, said. Currently, 80 percent of humanoid robots worldwide utilize PaXini's sensors. Tactile sensors, known as the cornerstone of the intelligent cognition and information interaction industry, have also been listed by China as one of the key critical chokepoint technologies alongside lithography machines and chips.

"Five or six years ago, similar tactile sensor products cost as much as 100,000 yuan ($14,770) each, severely restricting the development of the entire robot industry," Nie Xiangru, co-founder of PaXini, recalled. The high import costs made tactile perception a luxury in the robotics field, making it difficult to be commercialized on a large scale.

To break the monopoly, the PaXini team spent four to five years in R&D, successfully creating the world's first 6D hall array multidimensional tactile sensor, transforming core technology from a heavy reliance on imports to 100 percent domestic self-sufficiency.

Today, PaXini's basic tactile sensor models are priced at only 199 yuan, just 0.2 percent of the price of equivalent products in overseas market. This has made tactile perception accessible from laboratories to various industries, turning a luxury into a basic hardware accessible to everyone.

The key to reducing costs lies in significant optimizations in chips, structure and algorithms with each product generation, Nie said. "The advancement of software algorithms enables us to reduce our reliance on hardware. Coupled with the growth of the industry, when prices become cheaper, the order volume increases, and with more orders, the costs can be further reduced. Naturally, the prices spiral downward."

PaXini's competitiveness lies not only in the independent R&D of core components, but also in its underlying data.

Last year, PaXini's Super EID Factory, officially commenced operations in the Kongtian digital industrial park in Hexi district. It is currently the world's largest embodied intelligence data collection and model training base.

"For robots to be deployed effectively, they require sufficient scenario-based data support," Nie said. The factory utilizes critical data from various vertical work scenarios to enable robots to learn how to work, thus enabling them to adapt to practical applications more quickly.

As the world's largest EID collection and model training base, this factory's daily collection capacity is equivalent to 1.02 to 1.52 times that of an entire worker's career. The factory encompasses thousands of tasks across full-chain embodied intelligence application environments, including automotive manufacturing, households, offices, catering, supermarkets, healthcare and medical services, aiming to simulate the complex scenarios robots may encounter in the real world.

The Super EID Factory will produce nearly 200 million pieces of high-quality and high-dimensional embodied intelligence training data annually. "This provides a revolutionary solution to the core problems faced by the current physical intelligence industry, such as the scarcity of data sets and the lack of tactile modal data," Lin said.

Tianjin, as a policy and industrial hub, offers a favorable environment for cross-border data transactions. This is why PaXini chose to establish its factory in Tianjin. "Choosing Hexi district was not only for its central urban location, but also for its market-oriented business environment and full-chain industrial services," Lin added.

The company was granted 12,000 square meters of usage area in Hexi district to create a "data intelligent manufacturing" scenario without noise or pollution.

> "Five or six years ago, similar tactile sensor products cost as much as 100,000 yuan ($14,770) each, severely restricting the development of the entire robot industry."
>
> **Nie Xiangru,** co-founder of PaXini Technology (Tianjin) Co

He added that as a free trade zone, Tianjin was the first to release enterprise data classification standards and data cleaning operation lists, forming a complete data policy system. Leveraging its diverse application scenarios and geographical advantages, Tianjin has become a core node for data collection and cross-border circulation.

Starting from Tianjin, PaXini plans to further expand its data collection bases and factory scale, ensuring data is not only produced locally, but also fully utilized, aiming to promote the internationalization of China's data standards and serve the global intelligent industry development.

In recent years, Tianjin has formed a complete robot industry chain from core components and complete machine manufacturing to system integration and application services. "In recent years, we have formed a relatively complete industrial ecosystem in the fields of industrial robots, specialized robots and service robots," said Zhai Lixin, vice-mayor of Tianjin.

In 2025, there were 104 robot industry chain enterprises in Tianjin and the industrial output value was 13.5 billion yuan, an increase of 18.9 percent year-on-year, while operating income was 27.8 billion yuan, an increase of 16.3 percent year-on-year.

This year, the Government Work Report proposed "creating a new form of intelligent economy", a novel economic form driven by AI while deeply empowering various industries through "AI+".

"Tianjin has a solid industrial foundation in areas such as automobiles, electronic information and aerospace. This determines that the development of local robots must first focus on serving production and meeting the actual process requirements," Zhao Fengjiao, secretary-general of the Tianjin Robot Industry Association, said.

Shiyun Technology (Tianjin) Co, a high-tech robot company specializing in special industries and high-risk operation scenarios, has achieved mass production and commercial deployment in various fields, including cultural and entertainment performances and industrial intelligent manufacturing.

In medical scenarios, Shiyun's intelligent hospital robot guides can provide guidance with consultations, full-process accompaniment and emergency assistance for patients, making healthcare safer and more efficient, an employee at Shiyun said.

This company has constructed a "body-cerebellum-brain" software and hardware full-stack technology layout, centered around a "one-body, three-intelligences" full-stack platform — using the embodied body as the hardware base and integrating interaction intelligence, motion intelligence and operational intelligence to achieve a complete closed loop from perception to action.

"Shiyun's greatest breakthrough is its focus on embodied intelligence solutions," he said. The company is accumulating high-quality data assets in the industry and has begun constructing and deploying data collection factories nationwide, enabling continuous iteration of "operating while labeling and training", making robots become smarter with each task.

"We will comprehensively establish R&D centers, production workshops and testing centers in Tianjin, building a full industry chain system integrating R&D, manufacturing, sales and services. This year, we will implement 10 standardized scenarios and expect to achieve mass product delivery by 2027," said Cao Keqian, chairman of Shiyun.

According to the "Tianjin Action Plan for Promoting Innovation and Development in Artificial Intelligence (2025-27)", Tianjin will focus on the field of embodied intelligence in the future, promoting the research and application of underwater robots, industrial robots and special-purpose robots.

"For each enterprise, we will adopt a customized approach for assistance, aiming to create a more competitive industrial ecosystem," Zhai said.

Chen Yijun contributed to this story.

AI's immersive experiences up close and personal

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Tianjin



A humanoid robot band plays music at the opening of the 2026 World Intelligence Expo in Tianjin on May 28. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY

The rapid advancement of large artificial intelligence models and embodied intelligence is fueling upgrades in hardware and scenario integration, injecting fresh vitality into the cultural and tourism sector, experts said.

At the recent Intelligent Robot Carnival, operators used virtual reality to remotely control humanoid robots from Shiyun Technology (Tianjin) Co for live boxing matches, winning warm applause from on-site spectators. The event took place in Hexi district from May 28 through May 31 in Tianjin, alongside the 2026 World Intelligence Expo.

"The entire experience was incredibly fulfilling and eye-opening. Having never joined tech or cultural tourism events before, I was fascinated by the mix of cutting-edge tech, robot shows and fun interactions," said Muhammed Radhiat Ibrahim, a Nigerian art student at Tiangong University, adding advanced technologies have become easy and fun for ordinary visitors.

A major highlight of the expo is its close-contact experience featuring indoor immersive displays plus outdoor live performances, enabling visitors to interact closely with robots, said Cui Wei, deputy secretary-general of the Tianjin Municipal Government.

"I'm most impressed by the robot welcoming squad. They wave and turn in precise unison and shift formations following music beats," said Anamaria Faasoesa Ranadi Visinia Tuala, a Samoan art student at Tiangong University.

Shiyun has rolled out a full lineup of humanoid robots capable of group choreography, delivering all-round robot performance solutions for scenic spots, museums and galas.

At the exhibition booth of the Unmanned Systems Interdisciplinary Center, Tianjin University, children got up close to cutting-edge AI technologies under staff guidance. On display were a six-rotor aircraft, self-balancing motorcycle, fire-fighting robotic dog and inspection robot, bringing the youngsters a fascinating experience.

"We host popular science activities at the cultural center to spark kids' interest in science and technology, and help the public understand our research goes beyond academics to tackle core industrial challenges," said Xie Hui, head of the center.

"Marking China's first large-scale all-outdoor comprehensive robot gala, the carnival abandons conventional indoor exhibition modes. Spanning 17,000 square meters at Tianjin Cultural Center, it forms an open, boundless tech venue," said Gong Kejia, director of the Hexi district bureau of science and technology.

"The outdoor format completely transformed how I interacted with technology," Ibrahim said. "Unlike indoor exhibitions, where visitors mostly watch from a distance, here I could stand right next to the robot calligraphy demonstration and observe every brushstroke up close."

"AI boasts great adaptability for large-scale conservation, inheritance, revitalization and utilization of cultural relics as well as natural and cultural resources," said Yu Haibo, an associate professor with the College of Tourism and Service Management at Nankai University.

"Every year we introduce cutting-edge robotic products, upgrade displays, competitions and performances, improve popular science programs and polish the city's IP with distinctive sci-tech tourism offerings to brand Tianjin as a renowned smart city," Gong added.

Hexi plans to institutionalize the carnival as Tianjin's landmark brand linking sci-tech, cultural tourism and industrial exchanges.

Chen Yijun contributed to this story.

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WORLD

Prudence urged on Iran nuclear issue

Ambassador Sun Lei calls for maintaining ceasefire and refraining from use of force

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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China's envoy to the United Nations on Tuesday called on the UN Security Council to exercise prudence and play a constructive role in addressing the Iranian nuclear issue, amid growing disagreement among Security Council members over the status of UN sanctions on Iran.

> Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be addressed alongside non-proliferation concerns."
>
> **Sun Lei,**
> China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations

"I want to reiterate that the Security Council has ceased its consideration of the Iranian nuclear issue," Sun Lei, China's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations, told the council.

He said the proper resolution of the issue bears on the authority and effectiveness of the international nuclear non-proliferation regime, long-term peace and stability in the Middle East, and global peace and security.

Ahead of the meeting, eight countries — France, Bahrain, Denmark, Greece, Latvia, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and the US — issued a joint statement urging all UN member states to fully implement the recently reimposed Security Council sanctions against Iran.

Speaking on behalf of the group, Jerome Bonnafont, French permanent representative to the UN, said Iran possesses more than 10 International Atomic Energy Agency significant quantities of highly enriched uranium, a level at which "the possibility of manufacturing a nuclear device cannot be excluded".

Sun stressed that "Iran's legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy should be addressed alongside non-proliferation concerns".

He noted "Iran's repeated commitment not to develop nuclear weapons", and said that, as a state party to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, "Iran enjoys the legitimate right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy."

The remarks were made during an open briefing of the Security Council on the work of the 1737 Committee, which was established to oversee sanctions on Iran prior to the 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA).

The committee had reported to the Security Council every three months before the adoption of the JCPOA in 2015, which suspended both the committee and its reporting requirements.

In August 2025, France, Germany and the United Kingdom, known as the E3 parties to the JCPOA, triggered the agreement's "snapback" mechanism to reimpose UN sanctions on Iran. In March this year, the United States, serving as Security Council president, sought to resume the committee's reporting by including its 90-day briefing in the council's program of work.

China and Russia challenged the legal and procedural basis for the move, saying that Security Council sanctions on Iran had been permanently lifted following the adoption of Resolution 2231 in 2015.

China and Russia had opposed the US proposal to include the committee briefing in the council's March agenda, as well as a draft report on the committee's activities proposed by the United States.

Sun said that the United States and Iran have reached a ceasefire and are exploring solutions through negotiations, and "the situation remains sensitive, complex and fragile".

"Under the current circumstances, the Security Council must stand on the side of peace and on the right side of history, and act with utmost caution when handling relevant issues," he said.

"China supports the US and Iran in resolving their differences through rational and pragmatic negotiations," Sun said, adding that such efforts could ensure Iran's orderly development of peaceful nuclear activities under the strict safeguards and monitoring of the IAEA while effectively reducing proliferation risks.

"Threats of force or the imposition of war will only push the Iranian nuclear issue and the situation in the Middle East into a dangerous abyss," he said.

Sun said the US withdrawal from the JCPOA and its two separate uses of force against Iran during the negotiation process "had severely undermined diplomatic efforts and contributed to the current difficulties".

He urged relevant parties to "abandon power politics, engage in sincere dialogue on an equal footing, commit to refraining from the use of force, and ensure the effective implementation of any future agreement".

"Maintaining the ceasefire is the overriding priority," Sun said, calling on all parties to work toward ending hostilities and reaching an agreement that serves the interests of those concerned.

"The world is an indivisible security community. One country's security should not come at the expense of another country's security," Sun said.

Triumph over tragedy



Palestinians who lost limbs during the Gaza conflict play soccer on a damaged pitch surrounded by rubble in Gaza City on Monday ahead of the start of the 2026 FIFA World Cup. BILAL OSAMA / POLARIS

Heytea opens first tea bar outside China

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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Heytea's new tea bar on New York's Upper East Side, the first location of its kind outside of China, attracted hundreds of people who patiently lined up on opening day just to get a taste of its tantalizing teas .

The store, located at 126 East 86th street in Manhattan, officially opened on June 5. Four days later, in the middle of a humid afternoon, the excitement over the tea bar had not died down, as a line of at least 100 people formed down the block.

Alexander Sherman, 19, traveled for nearly an hour from Brooklyn to the newly opened Upper East Side location just to try a cup of tea. He is enjoying the emergence of Chinese tea and coffee brands in the US.

"I feel like Heytea ... can be likened to Starbucks at this point," Sherman told China Daily. "I know there is Luckin coffee too, but I haven't tried that yet. That's more of a newer establishment here in America. I put Heytea in the same bracket as drinks from Starbucks as it's like a high, upper drink, where you're paying a little bit more of a premium."

"I've been to another Heytea but this Heytea tea bar concept is so cool," he added. "Heytea is pretty big, as bubble teas have been popular in the US for a while. I want to order a Deep Matcha and Chocolate tea or a King Jasmine Guava tea —both look good."



People wait to get a taste of tantalizing products at Heytea's new tea bar on New York's Upper East Side on Monday. BELINDA ROBINSON / CHINA DAILY

The tea bar is designed to have a slower pace, allowing customers to savor the flavor of the tea — setting it apart from its other locations.

Inside, the decor includes wooden seating allowing people to sit and ponder. Tote bags and tea were also available for sale.

The menu boasts over 30 beverages, with a special emphasis on premium tea. Some of the new products include Mountain Oolong Yuzu Apple, Deep Matcha, and Chocolate.

There are also ice creams such as Pistachio Gardenia and Salted Cheese Chocolate.

"I love Heytea, and this is the first time that I'm seeing something this beautiful that they made on the inside. So, I can't wait to get inside," Brianna, 26, from Queens New York, said while in the line. She described Heytea as tasting different to similar US offerings.

"It has a different taste to me than Starbucks or other American places. It has a more natural sweet taste; however, it does not taste too artificial, even the teas, they're just brewed straight. And I like that part about it."

A doorman, who wanted to remain anonymous due to his job, stood outside of the building next door to the tea bar to observe the long line of people.

He revealed that on opening day, the line went back two blocks to East 84th street. He said that it had remained long over the weekend and into the start of the new week.

Founded in 2012, Heytea (originally called Royal Tea) started in a small alley in Jiangmen, Guangdong province, in a shop of less than 30 square meters. It later rebranded to its current name.

Just three years later, its founder, 21-year-old entrepreneur Nie Yunchen, expanded to Guangzhou and Shenzhen. By 2017, it opened in Shanghai. A year later, it branched out to Hong Kong.

In 2023, it opened its first US store in New York. By January 2025, Heytea had 15 locations in the city. The US now has at least 40 stores.

From those humble beginnings in China, Heytea has grown into a worldwide brand with more than 3,500 locations across 330 cities worldwide in the US, UK, Australia, Canada, Singapore, Malaysia, South Korea and more.

Abigail, 20, works on the Upper East Side just a few minutes away from the tea bar. She left work excited to try it.

"I'm not really a coffee person, and I think that's probably like a broad thing you can find among Gen Z," she said. "Like Gen Z's, in terms of where they're getting their caffeine from, it's not as much coffee as it is, like, energy drinks or like matcha and tea and stuff.

"I like the flavors of the drinks, that's probably one factor. And these are supposed to be drinks that you can't get in a regular Heytea. So, I think that's part of the appeal."

She liked the 'buy one get one free' promotion on offer. She said that the long line would not deter her, even though the wait was at least 45 minutes to an hour.

"I guess it shows that people are excited and willing to wait," she said.

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US slammed for putting Chinese firms on blacklist

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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Beijing has criticized Washington for adding several Chinese companies to a list of entities allegedly supporting China's military, urging the United States to "correct its erroneous practices".

On Monday, the US Defense Department added several major Chinese companies, including Alibaba, Baidu and BYD, to the list, according to US media.

Responding at a daily news briefing in Beijing on Tuesday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said," China has consistently and firmly opposed the US overstretching the concept of national security and formulating various types of discriminatory lists to go after Chinese businesses.

"We urge the US to correct its erroneous practices and stop its unwarranted suppression of Chinese enterprises," Lin said.

China will take necessary measures to firmly safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese enterprises, he added.

According to leading IT news portal TechCrunch, the list — known as the 1260H list, after the specific section of the 2021 National Defense Authorization Act that created it — "is just one tool that the US has used to place restrictions on Chinese tech".

The updated list, which supersedes an earlier 2025 version, now includes a broad swathe of China's top technology companies, according to Reuters.

It also reported that other companies added include biotech enterprise WuXi AppTec, artificial intelligence-driven robotics company RoboSense Technology Co and Unitree, a leading Chinese maker of humanoid and quadruped robots.

Baidu said in a statement to TechCrunch that "the suggestion that Baidu is a military company is entirely baseless. We will not hesitate to use all options available to us to have the company removed from the list".

Alibaba told TechCrunch that it "is not a Chinese military company nor part of any military-civil fusion strategy", adding that it will take all available legal action against attempts to misrepresent the company.

Symphony in motion



Performers from the China National Acrobatic Troupe compete at the World Circus Art Festival "IDOL-2026" in Moscow on Sunday. The performance earned the troupe the Gold Idol Award. XINHUA

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

Hubei opens doors for Taiwan youths

Face-to-face exchanges allow young people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait to see shared culture and daily life up close.



Taiwan participants wearing *hanfu* pose for a group photo with student volunteers from South-Central Minzu University during a cross-Strait youth exchange event in Wuhan, Hubei province, on May 18. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **MENG WENJIE** and **LIU KUN** in Wuhan

On the evening of May 18, a dazzling light show lit up both banks of the Yangtze River in Wuhan, Hubei province. In a gentle drizzle, a sightseeing boat slowly departed the dock. Chen Yuting stood on the open-air deck, letting the river breeze brush across her face as she took in the night scenery.

"The view reminds me of the Love River in my hometown of Kaohsiung, Taiwan," she said. "But the Love River feels more delicate, while the Yangtze River has a far grander presence."

The cruise was one of a series of youth exchange activities held in Hubei to promote communication and mutual understanding among young people from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

More than 400 young participants and guests joined the cruise. On board, student volunteers from South-Central Minzu University in Wuhan had set up booths featuring handmade bookmarks, traditional Chinese knots, round fans and paper-cutting art.

"The essence of youth exchanges across the Strait lies in face-to-face interaction," said Wu Ying-chieh, an associate professor at the university. "It's not about reading news reports or scrolling through online comment sections, but about seeing each other's lives up close."

Originally from Yilan in Taiwan, Wu has spent two decades promoting cross-Strait youth engagement. He often brings visitors from Taiwan to the university's Ethnology Museum, where they explore ethnic cultures through exhibits of traditional garments, handicrafts and everyday artifacts.

"For many, it is the first time they realize how diverse the ethnic cultures are on the Chinese mainland," Wu said. "They are often surprised to find similarities with Taiwan's indigenous traditions."

That sense of cultural connection was echoed by Chen Xin, a 22-year-old journalism student at the university and a member of the Xibe ethnic group from Northeast China's Heilongjiang province. At a campus gathering later during the exchange activities, she wore the traditional attire of the Amis people — an indigenous group in Taiwan — and introduced the university's cross-Strait cultural studies program.

After the gathering, an Amis woman approached her and offered to gift her a traditional set of Amis clothing.

"There was a real sense of warmth," Chen Xin said. "It felt less like a formal exchange and more like a natural connection."

> "It's not about reading news reports or scrolling through online comment sections, but about seeing each other's lives up close."
>
> **Wu Ying-chieh,** an associate professor at South-Central Minzu University

> "As long as we work hard and develop professional skills, we can find opportunities to build our future here."
>
> **Kan Chia-hua,** a doctor at the Central Hospital of Wuhan

From visitors to residents

For some participants, Hubei is no longer simply a stop on an exchange itinerary. It has become a place to study, work and build a life.

Lee Yi-hsuan, a 20-year-old from Taoyuan, Taiwan, shared at the gathering how she came to study at Central China Normal University in Wuhan. With her mother originally from Hunan province, Lee decided after high school to pursue higher education on the Chinese mainland.

She had previously visited Wuhan as a tourist and was impressed by its large student population and the number of universities in the city. "It felt inclusive and full of vitality," she recalled.

After enrolling at the university in 2024, Lee gradually grew from a hesitant freshman into a confident student who now helps other young people from Taiwan adjust to campus life.

She also shares her study and daily-life experiences on Xiaohongshu, offering practical advice to those considering studying on the mainland.

Kan Chia-hua, 35, a urologist at the Central Hospital of Wuhan, has followed a longer path.

Originally from Hsinchu, Taiwan, he came to Wuhan in 2011 to study at Huazhong University of Science and Technology and stayed after completing his doctoral studies.

"When I first arrived, I could not understand the Wuhan dialect at all," he said.

More than a decade later, Kan can not only understand the dialect but also speak some of it himself. Even the way he addresses patients has changed. Instead of using the more formal terms common in Taiwan, such as "sir" or "miss", he has gradually adopted warmer local expressions.

Kan said policies supporting Taiwan residents on the mainland have opened broader professional opportunities. In Hubei, he was able to take medical licensing exams and complete standardized residency training under the same requirements as mainland doctors.

"I've grown together with Wuhan," he said. "Over the years, I've witnessed the city's rapid development while also improving myself."

Beyond his clinical work, Kan regularly joins volunteer medical outreach programs in rural Hubei, where he helps promote disease prevention and health awareness. This year, he received the Hubei Youth May Fourth Medal.

"The award is not only a personal honor, but also a form of encouragement for young people from Taiwan living on the mainland," he said. "As long as we work hard and develop professional skills, we can find opportunities to build our future here."

Chen Yuting has also established her life in Hubei — in a different city and through a very different passion.

A cycling enthusiast, she opened Let's Go Coffee in Xiangyang in May 2025, creating a space where local riders could rest, gather and connect. The cafe has since expanded to a second location in the city.

Chen Yuting had long been fascinated by Xiangyang as depicted in the martial arts novels of Hong Kong writer Jin Yong, also known as Louis Cha Leung-yung (1924-2018). When she first arrived in 2024, she found a city that combined a rich historical legacy with the energy of modern life.

Supportive policies for Taiwan entrepreneurs helped, she said. But what ultimately convinced her to settle in a new place in her 40s was the warmth of the residents.

"People here treat others with sincerity," she said. "I feel like a seed that has taken root and is growing here."

When she first opened the cafe, the owner of a local bicycle shop helped her find renovation workers and communicate with craftsmen who spoke only the Xiangyang dialect.

The owner of a nearby beef noodle shop would also add extra noodles to her order and offer her a complimentary bowl of *huangjiu*, a traditional rice wine.

At her cafe, flavors from both sides of the Strait have gradually come together. This year, she introduced "huangjiu coffee", a drink that combines the local rice wine with preserved plums from Taiwan.

"People in Xiangyang like to pair beef noodles with *huangjiu*," Chen Yuting said. "So I thought, why not bring that local flavor into coffee, along with a taste of Taiwan? For me, this drink is another way of becoming part of the city."

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Social Media Digest

Countryside wanderlust

Scroll through TikTok or YouTube, and "China Travel" posts are no longer all neon-lit skylines and crowded landmarks. Instead, rice fields, local food markets and mountain homestays are drawing growing attention on Western social media.

The phenomenon, often described as "country walk", marks the latest shift in the "China Travel" trend: after exploring the country's megacities, more foreign travelers are venturing off the beaten path in search of slower, more authentic experiences.

Many are not just sightseeing. They are learning to make tofu, joining traditional festivals and spending time with residents, turning rural travel into a more personal encounter with Chinese culture.

Several factors have fueled the trend. In recent years, China's countryside has undergone a remarkable transformation, with improved infrastructure, better connectivity and upgraded public services making rural areas more accessible and attractive to visitors. Expanded visa-free entry policies and streamlined transit procedures have also made it easier for foreign travelers to explore destinations beyond the country's major cities.

"When overseas content creators cycle along clean village roads, stay in courtyard-style boutique homestays, and interact with farmers livestreaming on smartphones, the impact of what they see and experience firsthand cannot be offset by any biased written reporting," commented Global Times.



Traveling in China's countryside has become a growing trend among foreign visitors. VCG

Digital nostalgia

In a world dominated by AI playlists and algorithmic song recommendations, one relic refuses to be replaced: the iPod.

Though Apple discontinued the iPod line in 2022, the iconic music player has resurfaced online, sparking a wave of nostalgia on TikTok, Reddit and resale platforms. Young fans proudly showcase second-hand iPod Classic devices, organize massive downloaded libraries and don classic 2000s wired earbuds.

Its enduring appeal comes from a blend of sleek design, portability and premium sound quality. As one Xiaohongshu (RedNote) user noted, the iPod Shuffle provides a unique listening experience: a simple slide of the power switch starts instant playback, and its shuffle mode turns every song into a delightful surprise.

Beyond hardware, the iPod's minimalist nature is at the heart of its revival. Unlike smartphones brimming with notifications, autoplay videos, and algorithmic feeds, the iPod exists solely for music — an oasis of focus in a distracted digital age.

For Gen Z, it's also a time machine. The device evokes memories of school commutes, carefully curated playlists, and the satisfaction of choosing songs without an algorithm deciding for you. In a fast-moving world, the iPod offers a rare chance to slow down, enjoy music intentionally, and reconnect with a simpler era.

GUO JIATONG



A classic iPod holds timeless appeal amid today's algorithm-driven music world. VCG

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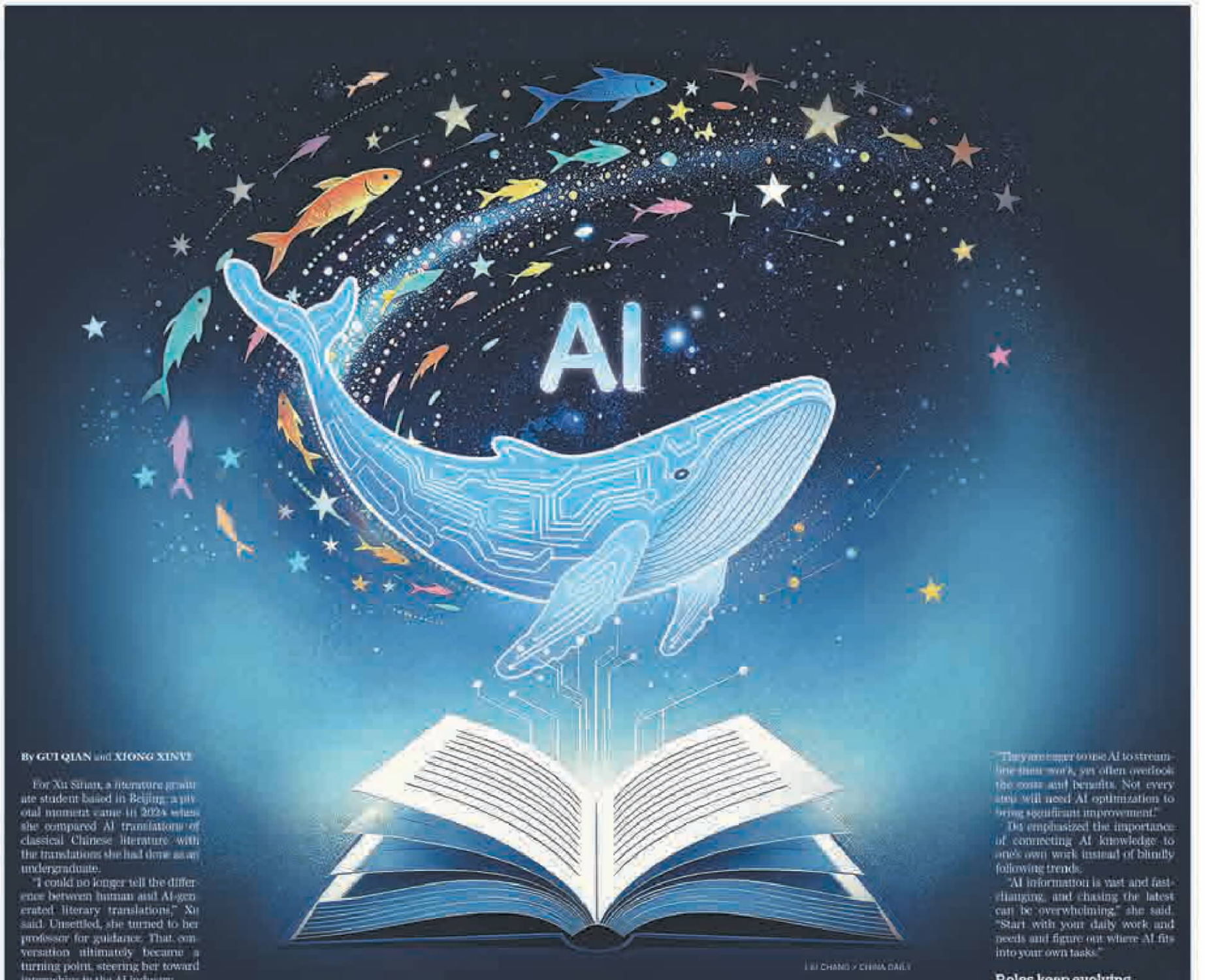

[LI CHANG / CHINA DAILY]

Humanities students embrace AI

As artificial intelligence expands across industries, liberal arts graduates are discovering fresh opportunities in product, content and ethical design.

By **GUI QIAN** and **XIONG XINYI**

For Xu Sihan, a literature graduate student based in Beijing, a pivotal moment came in 2024 when she compared AI translations of classical Chinese literature with the translations she had done as an undergraduate.

"I could no longer tell the difference between human and AI-generated literary translations," Xu said. Unsettled, she turned to her professor for guidance. That conversation ultimately became a turning point, steering her toward internships in the AI industry.

When Xu asked how the humanities could remain relevant in the age of AI, her professor told her that human writing is rooted in unspoken emotions and personal stories — things that resonate with others even when the writer cannot fully explain them. What makes human expression unique is the writer's lived experience.

That insight strengthened Xu's belief that the humanities and AI need not be at odds. When applying for internships, she began prioritizing AI-related roles. In 2025, after sending out numerous applications and receiving only one offer, she became a public relations intern working on AI-related projects at a major tech company. She has since moved into an AI product role at another tech firm.

Looking back on her first internship, Xu said the greatest benefit, as someone from a liberal arts background, was gaining a deeper understanding of the AI ecosystem.

"Before I entered the industry, I followed AI news casually, but once I was in it, I was exposed to at least five times as much information," she recalled. Being surrounded by people who constantly discussed AI made it impossible to remain a casual observer.

"You can no longer tell yourself it is enough to be interested from afar. You must get in the game," she said. The most valuable part, she added, was seeing firsthand how the industry evolved and how professionals responded to each technological shift.

As Xu shared her journey online, she began receiving messages from other liberal arts students asking how they could move into AI-related work. Many worried about missing out, being replaced, or not knowing which roles to pursue.

Those questions pushed Xu to think more concretely about where liberal arts students can fit into the AI industry. She pointed to two possible directions.

The first is to identify real-world needs and focus on practical applications. Xu gave an example of a conversation with a friend working in human resources.

Through that discussion, she realized that job seekers needed an AI agent, or automated assistant, capable of matching job seekers with suitable openings.

For Xu, that unmet need became a product opportunity — one where liberal arts students can contribute by understanding people's needs and translating them into useful applications.

The second direction is to focus on the human and ethical sides of AI. Tasks such as shaping AI personas or helping AI communicate more warmly and empathetically, she said, draw directly on the strengths of liberal arts students.

Xu also noted that the job market in 2026 has become even more competitive. Liberal arts students seeking AI-related positions, she said, may need to demonstrate their abilities through tangible work, such as creating a demo with AI coding tools.

Fortunately, as more people enter the AI field, learning resources have become increasingly abundant. Even students without a computer science background can now begin to understand the basic logic of how AI systems work through online courses.

Above all, Xu stressed the importance of not setting limits on oneself.

"I never set limits on myself because of my identity as a liberal arts student," she said. "That's why I ended up doing work that doesn't look like a typical liberal arts job."



"You can no longer tell yourself it is enough to be interested from afar. You must get in the game."

Xu Sihan, a literature graduate student based in Beijing



"For non-tech people, including liberal arts students, the opportunities far outweigh the challenges."

Liu Dingding, a Beijing-based internet analyst

Finding new paths

If Xu's story shows how students are beginning to find their place in AI, Du Xinqian's path reveals how that shift can unfold after several years in the tech industry.

Du, who studied media in graduate school, moved into tech in 2020, drawn by the rapid growth of the internet industry. She began pursuing internships and roles in the field, eventually landing her first job as a data product manager at Chinese services platform Meituan. She has since pivoted again and is now building her own AI startup.

Before ChatGPT-style generative AI models took off, Du said, the tech industry was largely dominated by major companies, leaving limited room for individuals and small teams. AI, she believes, has created more opportunities for smaller organizations and solo entrepreneurs.

Today, Du shares practical, hands-on experience with AI on social media under the handle "Haihadu". She describes her approach as "pragmatic AI": using AI to solve real workplace problems, rather than chasing flashy effects or treating the technology as a status symbol.

For instance, she uses AI to create content for e-commerce operations, repurpose livestreams into short clips and analyze product performance data.

Du recalled a designer friend who had spent tens of thousands of yuan learning AI but still struggled to use the tools in his own work.

"I walked him through his workflow and pointed out that only the design stage was worth improving with AI," she said. "If he could master that step and scale it up, he would actually make a profit."

"People love learning new AI knowledge but struggle to connect it to their own work," she said. "They are eager to use AI to streamline their work, yet often overlook the costs and benefits. Not every step will need AI optimization to bring significant improvement."

Du emphasized the importance of connecting AI knowledge to one's own work instead of blindly following trends.

"AI information is vast and fast-changing, and chasing the latest can be overwhelming," she said. "Start with your daily work and needs and figure out where AI fits into your own tasks."

Roles keep evolving

Taken together, Xu and Du's experiences suggest that AI is not only creating technical jobs but also redefining what non-technical workers can contribute. Analysts say this reflects a broader shift in the industry.

Wang Peng, an associate research fellow at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences (BASS), has observed a fundamental change in AI hiring.

"The industry is moving from being purely technology-driven to being application-driven," he said. Non-technical roles, he noted, have evolved from basic data labeling to positions such as AI product managers, prompt engineers, and domain specialists.

The barrier to entry has also changed. It is no longer only about coding ability, but also about business knowledge and proficiency with AI tools.

"It is not an easy fallback option, but a field that emphasizes real cross-disciplinary competence," Wang said.

Liu Dingding, a Beijing-based internet analyst, placed the shift in a broader context.

"In the past, programming was only for tech people who understood code," he said. "Now liberal arts students with ideas can use AI to generate code, articles, images, and short videos."

AI, he believes, is less about replacing people than amplifying their creativity. "For non-tech people, including liberal arts students, the opportunities far outweigh the challenges," Liu said.

As Xu and Du's stories show, AI presents real opportunities for liberal arts students. But those opportunities are not automatic. They require a proactive mindset, practical learning, and the willingness to apply new tools to one's own field.

For Xu, the uncertainty that once made AI feel threatening is now part of what makes the field exciting.

As she put it, "This field is so new that everyone starts from zero."

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Z WEEKLY

Finding beauty in darkness

Award-winning photographer Cai Jialing dives into darkness to reveal the tiny, luminous lives most people will never see.



Cai Jialing prepares to descend for a blackwater dive in Anilao, the Philippines, in June 2025. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Blackwater creatures photographed by Cai Jialing. The image at the top right, *Snowy Night*, earned her the title of Ocean Photographer of the Year 2023. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By **GUI QIAN** and **WANG JINGYAO**

As night fell, the sea looked like a vast sheet of black silk.

With a backward roll from the edge of the boat, Cai Jialing slipped into the water and began her descent. Around her was endless darkness: no seabed in sight, no shoreline — only a surface buoy above, with a faintly glowing line dropping into the black below.

The creatures she had come to find were gathering around that thin column of light: sea butterflies, salps, transparent octopus larvae — some no bigger than a fingernail, yet so delicate and strange they seemed almost extraterrestrial.

Suspended almost weightlessly in the dark, Cai raised her camera and followed these tiny lives as they rose from the deep — hundreds of meters below.

This is blackwater photography: the art of capturing drifting marine life at night in the open ocean. Only a handful of people in the world do it well. Cai, 28, is one of the youngest.

Before finding her way into blackwater photography, Cai knew almost nothing about diving. She grew up in Chongqing, an inland city in Southwest China, and had no formal training in photography. Yet she had always had "a restless, adventurous spirit" — an instinct that eventually led her to the sea.

In 2016, while studying biology and environmental science at the University of Virginia, she took a highly specialized course in marine biology. Her professor introduced the class to diel vertical migration — the nightly ascent of zooplankton from the deep ocean toward the surface. By day, these animals stay hundreds of meters below to hide from predators; at night, they rise to feed.

This daily movement, often described as the greatest migration on Earth, left Cai in awe. "It felt like a summons from the sea," she recalled.

After the course, she began learning to dive, starting with recreational scuba before gradually moving into the far more demanding world of blackwater diving.

"Blackwater diving is completely different from diving at a typical resort site," Cai explained. "There's no visible seafloor. If you lose control of your buoyancy, you can rise too fast or sink rapidly — either can be life-threatening."

In 2018, Cai tried blackwater photography for the first time in the Philippines, home to one of the world's most experienced blackwater diving communities. Whenever she encountered something she did not understand, there was always someone she could turn to for advice. She would take those ideas underwater, test them on a dive, and come back with new questions.

"Through trial and error, and a lot of practice, I slowly figured it out," she said, and her work began reaching wider audiences.

Rethinking the frame

In 2023, one photograph changed Cai's career. The image, *Snowy Night*, earned her the title of Ocean Photographer of the Year 2023, awarded by Oceanographic Magazine, an international competition recognizing the world's best ocean imagery. It captures a female paper nautilus, or argonaut, riding a drifting wooden stick through dark water, surrounded by countless fine particles that scatter like snow.

The photograph was taken in the Philippines after a nearby volcano erupted, stirring sediment into the water.

While many photographers might have seen the poor visibility as reason enough to abandon the dive, Cai saw something different. For years, she had focused on perfecting her lighting to keep her backgrounds clean. This time, however, she embraced the tiny organisms and particles suspended in the water. The "snow" in *Snowy Night* — volcanic ash, plankton, and the ocean's own dust — became part of the image.

The award brought new opportunities. In January, Cai boarded an expedition vessel bound for Antarctica as a special correspondent for a citizen science project. Over the next two weeks, she completed seven dives in Antarctic waters, encountering penguins, leopard seals, and the plankton she loves most.

Few people knew, however, how anxious she had been before the trip. She had never used a dry suit — the insulated suit divers wear in freezing water — could barely lift the heavy scuba tanks and didn't even know how to assemble her own gear, because in Southeast Asia, there had always been someone to do it for her.

"I was spoiled by those days in 27 C Southeast Asian waters," she admitted.

She managed to fast-track her polar diving training and returned from the expedition with the photographs she had hoped to capture. Later, on her own website, she posted a detailed Antarctic diving guide titled "From 27 C to -1 C", documenting every step of her preparation.

Cai rarely uses lofty terms like "environmental protection" or "conservation" to describe her relationship with the sea. She acknowledges the damage humans have done to the ocean, but she hopes her photographs evoke not guilt, but love, curiosity and awe.

Through her lens, the ocean is alive with tiny, fragile, transparent beings — many of them unnamed, and almost never seen by the public. She wants to make these overlooked creatures visible. For her, the vertical migration of plankton is "one of nature's gifts to explorers", allowing divers to glimpse worlds the human body could never otherwise reach.

Today, Cai continues to dive at blackwater sites around the globe. She has "graduated" from tropical waters, as she puts it, and now seeks out deeper, colder realms.

Eight years after her first blackwater dive, her ocean adventure may still be just beginning.

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Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

Deep Dive

The second World Conference of Classics is being held from June 9 to 10 in Athens, Greece, bringing together scholars from around the world to discuss the preservation of classical civilizations, explore their contemporary relevance and foster cross-cultural dialogue at a time of growing global exchange and renewed interest in humanity's shared cultural roots.

Ahead of the event, China Daily surveyed 352 young people across six continents, more than 96 percent of whom belong to Generation Z. The findings offer a snapshot of how young people today encounter, interpret and connect with classical traditions from both the East and the West.

World classics gain new life in digital age

By **MENG WENJIE**
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In the digital age, technology has changed how people experience classical culture. Films, video games and short videos have made ancient civilizations more familiar and accessible than ever before. But this wider reach also raises a question: how can classical culture be popularized without losing its depth?

According to China Daily's findings, 54.5 percent of respondents engage with classical culture primarily through popular media, while only 13.9 percent pursue systematic academic study. This gap may seem striking, but Huang Weiwei, a professor at the Center for Greek Studies of Beijing International Studies University (BISU), sees the figure in a more positive light.

"In fact, 13.9 percent is a high proportion for rigorous classical study," Huang explained. She noted that classical studies often require years of training in ancient languages — such as Greek, Latin, Sanskrit, or classical Chinese — as well as training in textual criticism and interpretation.

For most young people, digital media are often their first gateway to classical culture.

Huang described this trend as "an inevitable product of today's media environment" and emphasized that creative, audience-friendly formats can help make classical culture more approachable for younger generations. But she also cautioned that accessibility should not come at the cost of depth.

"Entertainment satisfies instant gratification, whereas classical studies pursue truth — these aims are fundamentally different," she said.

The survey also showed which parts of classical culture resonate most with young people. Among Chinese cultural elements, "martial arts, myths and Eastern fantasy stories" ranked first, attracting 31.3 percent of respondents. By contrast, only 10.8 percent chose "the wisdom of ancient thinkers such as Confucius".



Huang Weiwei

Huang said the results reflect a long-standing discussion in classical studies: narrative versus abstract thought.

"Stories engage the emotions, while philosophy appeals to the rational mind," she explained. "It's natural that most people are drawn to narrative rather than abstract reasoning."

Yet Huang stressed that the two should not be treated as opposites. Literary works can also convey profound ideas, and philosophy can be brought to life through imagination and storytelling. For her, keeping classical culture alive means combining intellectual depth with a compelling narrative.

"Many great thinkers communicated complex ideas through allegory," she said. "Zhuangzi in China and Plato in the West both used stories to express sophisticated concepts."

The survey also pointed to another encouraging trend: young people's openness to comparing civilizations. About 38 percent of respondents said they were most intrigued by "discovering that two distant civilizations can share similar philosophical views" while 32.4 percent were impressed by "completely different solutions to the same problem".

Huang describes this mindset as "mature pluralism".

"Today's youth can appreciate shared human concerns while respecting cultural differences," she said. "It's not about ranking civilizations or assuming everyone is the same. It's about finding common ground without erasing diversity."

Meanwhile, young people are increasingly aware that classical heritage is more than physical relics. While 21 percent of respondents expressed concern about damage to artifacts and historic sites, 30.7 percent worried about the loss of language and philosophical understanding.

This awareness raises a deeper question: what relevance does classical study hold for young people today?

Huang said many students at BISU struggle with Greek or Latin and sometimes wonder whether such difficult study is worth it. Her answer is that classical education provides a long-term perspective, offering a form of "immunity" against the fragmentation and distractions of modern life.

"When we read the classics, we see that challenges faced thousands of years ago are not so different from our own," she said. "This perspective strengthens us, helping us face today's problems without feeling isolated or powerless. We study the classics to live more consciously in the present — and to meet the future with hope."

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SPORTS

WORLD CUP 2026

Small country has big soccer dreams

Players hope to put Cape Verde on the map







Clockwise from above: Cape Verde players pose for a team photo before an Africa Cup of Nations qualifier against Egypt on Sept 6, 2024; Cape Verde fans offer enthusiastic support to their team during World Cup qualification; Cape Verde shirts hang alongside souvenirs featuring Cesaria Evora, the late folk-singing superstar, at the airport on the island of Sao Vicente, Cape Verde. REUTERS

Cape Verde sways to the sound of morna, a homegrown folk music laced with melancholy, longing and soul. Morna's most famous song, *Sodade*, remembers the tens of thousands of emigres who have left these 10 islands sprinkled off the coast of West Africa for work and opportunities abroad.

"If you write me, I'll write you," the song's lyrics go. "If you forget me, I'll forget you."

In the next few weeks, Cape Verdeans hope their sense of nostalgia will turn to celebration. Their eyes are on the national soccer team, which is packed full of stars whose parents, or even grandparents, left Cape Verde years ago, but who still consider the islands home.

The team, known as the Blue Sharks, is one of the surprise qualifiers for the 2026 World Cup. With fewer than 600,000 inhabitants, Cape Verde is the third smallest country by population to ever reach the world's biggest sporting event (after Iceland in 2018 and Curacao, also in 2026).

Cape Verde's national team combines local talent with a raft of foreign-born players, including centerback Roberto Lopes, who was born in Ireland to an Irish mother and Cape Verdean father, and Logan Costa, who was born in France to Cape Verdean parents and plays for Villarreal in Spain.

The combination of local and international talent has proven magically effective. Cape Verde won seven of its 10 World Cup qualifiers, losing just once and claiming a huge upset victory at home over African heavyweight Cameroon.

The World Cup will be another level. Ranked 69th in the world, the Blue Sharks will face tournament favorite Spain, two-time World Cup winner Uruguay and Saudi Arabia (a relative minnow, but still ranked higher at 61st) in the group stage.

But locals have faith.

"I'm very proud," said Anton Delgado, 25, after spending a recent Sunday afternoon with friends in a bar in Mindelo, a city on the island of Sao Vicente.

"It's a marvel. I've been waiting years for this. We have real hope that we can win a game or even two."

Rhode Island links

That sense of hope is widely shared across Cape Verde. The tiny nation's restaurants, bars and cafes are normally packed with singers and bands playing morna for tourists and locals alike. Now they are gearing up for the World Cup.

At the Cafe Royal, a hotel and restaurant in Mindelo, staff are planning for big crowds. The Royal features a large mural of morna superstar Cesaria Evora, who, even 15 years after her death, remains the most famous Cape Verdean in the world. But it is the country's soccer stars that everyone wants to talk about now.

Noaela Delgardo, 22, who works behind the bar at the Royal, said the World Cup is a rare opportunity for other Cape Verdeans to shine and for the country to gain "more visibility in the world".

Despite the growth of tourism, it is hard not to feel the archipelago's isolation and distance from bigger centers. There are flights from Europe, but the only direct flight to the United States lands in Providence, Rhode Island — a legacy of 19th-century whaling ties between the two places and the large Cape Verdean community that lives in Providence today.

The World Cup is a chance to close that distance, said pensioner Jorge Goncales, 69, while sitting with friends in a tree-filled Mindelo square.

"The whole world comes to us. Now we go out to the world."

Head coach Pedro Leitao Brito — who was named Africa's Coach of the Year last year and is better known by his nickname, Bubista — also sees a chance to put Cape Verde on the map.

"We want to make an impact on the tournament for our people," he told CNN a few weeks ago. "We want to show everyone watching that, yes, we're a small country, but we can play against the big teams. We know it's hard but we want to show that nothing is impossible."

REUTERS



People play a soccer match in the town of Ponta do Sol on the island of Santo Antao, Cape Verde, on March 7. REUTERS

Saudi has spent billions to build a sporting pedigree with World Cup at its heart

Saudi Arabia pulled off one of the biggest upsets in World Cup history by beating mighty Argentina in Qatar four years ago.

That stunning victory against Lionel Messi and the eventual champion turned out to be just the start of its campaign to disrupt soccer. Perhaps no nation has done more to shake up the world's most popular sport.

Within weeks, Cristiano Ronaldo became the first of a slew of superstars to swap Europe for the Saudi league, with the five-time Ballon d'Or winner declaring: "In Europe my work is done. This is a new challenge."

Karim Benzema was lured away from Real Madrid. Brazilian icon Neymar also made the move to the oil-rich kingdom. While attempts to land Messi and Kylian Mbappe were unsuccessful, Saudi Arabia did secure its biggest win of all: The right to host the 2034 World Cup.

It was all part of the country's attempt to pivot away from its heavy reliance on oil and explore other revenue-generating sectors.

Billions of dollars have been spent to secure world championship boxing, Formula One racing and tennis. The Saudi-backed, big-money LIV Golf enticed major winners to defect from the PGA.





Left: Saudi Arabia head coach Georgios Donis gestures during an international friendly against Ecuador on May 30. **Above:** Salem Al-Dawsari of Saudi Arabia reacts after scoring a goal during a friendly match against Puerto Rico on June 5. REUTERS / AFP

It recently announced it would be pulling funding from that venture, but its commitment to soccer remains strong. A number of its top teams are owned by the country's sovereign wealth fund.

2026 expectations

This year's tournament will be a test of how far the Saudi national team has come against the backdrop of such spectacular spending.

"We cannot promise miracles, but we promise you that we will give our all to achieve our goals," newly appointed coach Georgios Donis said.

An influx of top overseas talent does not necessarily translate to improved performance of homegrown players on the international stage.

There was the disappointingly early elimination from the Asian Cup in 2024 in the round of 16. Saudi Arabia's most memorable contribution to that tournament — a little over 12 months after the landmark win against Argentina — was Italian coach Roberto Mancini walking off during his team's losing penalty shootout against South Korea. Months later, Mancini was out of a job.

Frenchman Herve Renard, who had led the team in Qatar in 2022, returned to the helm, and the team promptly secured qualification for this year's tournament. But in April, less than two months before Saudi Arabia kicks off its World Cup campaign, Renard was replaced by Greek coach Donis.

Late arrival

Donis has coached several teams in the Saudi league and has also worked with a number of the players who will be going to the World Cup. Among them is striker Firas Al-Buraikan, a back-to-back Asian Champions League winner with Al-Ahli.

His appointment at such short notice appears to have been based on his specific knowledge and experience of Saudi soccer, with the Saudi Football Federation saying he was "expected to support a seamless transition".

"The advantage for us is that I have spent many years in Saudi Arabia and I know the culture of the country and the players. Therefore, we want to be very competitive and fight hard," Donis said when announcing his squad last month.

Homegrown players

While star signings from overseas have slowed, with big names also departing — including Neymar — the governing body of Saudi soccer has made moves to develop its own players.

In May, Matt Crocker was lured away from his role as US Soccer's sporting director to head up talent development in Saudi Arabia.

Youth investment has doubled over the past three years to $26.7 million, with an expansion of regional training centers, all with a view to successfully contesting the 2034 World Cup on home soil.

Before all that is this year's tournament and the chance to shock the world again.

"I believe all the players have the ability and passion required to commit to our plan, which will enable us, step-by-step, to build a strong and united team," Donis said. "I believe in their abilities, so my priority now is for them to believe in their abilities, to be convinced of the plan, and to know what is required of them."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Booming business

China's openness spurs surge in Thai exports

BUSINESS, PAGE 9



Coffee meets tea, opera at Shanghai festival

LIFE, PAGE 14



Soccer frenzy

World Cup opens amid soaring ticket prices, political tensions

SPORTS, PAGE 16

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, JUNE 11, 2026

China-DPRK ties gain impetus

Significance of Xi's visit goes beyond bilateral scope with regional, global view, observers say

By **MO JINGXI**
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President Xi Jinping's visit to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has opened new prospects for China-DPRK relations and added positive energy to regional and global peace and development, a senior official and analysts said.

Coming at a critical moment, the visit was rooted in the development of bilateral ties, yet its significance extended far beyond the bilateral scope, demonstrating China's sense of responsibility as a major country and its growing international influence, they said.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, concluded a successful two-day state visit to the neighboring country on Tuesday, his first visit to the DPRK in seven years and his first overseas trip this year.

Inside
Views, **page 7**

Briefing reporters at the end of the visit, Liu Haixing, head of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, said that as this year marks the 65th anniversary of the China-DPRK Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance, and amid accelerating changes unseen in a century in a turbulent world, the top leaders of the two sides took a broad and long-term view, built on past achievements and opened up a new future. They also jointly charted the course for development and worked together to promote peace, Liu added.

He said the visit injected new contemporary connotations and strong impetus into the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, marking an important milestone in the history of bilateral relations.

During Xi's stay in Pyongyang, the DPRK capital, Kim Jong-un, general secretary of the Workers' Party of Korea and president of the State Affairs of the DPRK, greeted Xi at the airport in person, held a grand welcoming ceremony at Kim Il-sung Square, and accompanied Xi throughout the two-day visit. The DPRK also arranged a carefully prepared artistic performance.

Wherever Xi went, crowds of local people applauded and cheered, while people along the streets stopped and waved at the passing motorcade. Liu said those scenes and the smiling faces fully showed the great importance that the DPRK attached to Xi's visit and the thoughtful arrangements it had made for the visit.

They also reflected the sincere friendship of the DPRK's people toward the Chinese people, as well as the deep foundation and solid roots of the traditional friendship between China and the DPRK, he said.

According to Liu, Xi and Kim had long and in-depth communication during the visit. Their exchanges included formal talks, relaxed walks and warm interactions in a family-like atmosphere.

Stressing that China and the DPRK are both socialist countries led by communist parties, Xi said during talks with Kim that the traditional friendship between the two countries is rooted in their shared ideals and beliefs as well as their common goals, and is backed by a profound historical foundation, a solid political basis and strong emotional bonds.

Xi noted that friendship passed down from generation to generation, a shared future and mutual support have always been defining features of China-DPRK relations.

See ***Visit,*** *page 3*

Ebola response



Workers transport Ebola prevention supplies in Mongbwalu, Ituri Province, Democratic Republic of Congo, on Tuesday. The country's public health authorities said that as of Monday, the number of confirmed Ebola cases in the current outbreak in the DRC had risen to 598, including 115 deaths. XINHUA

Producer prices point to better supply-demand dynamics

By **ZHANG CHENXU**
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China's factory-gate inflation grew in May at the fastest year-on-year rate since July 2022, even as consumer inflation remained moderate, adding to signs of strengthening reflation momentum and improving supply-demand dynamics across the industrial sector, experts said on Wednesday.

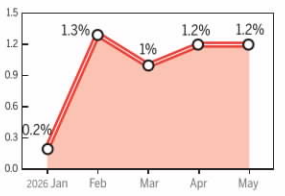
The latest readings came as fluctuations in global energy prices and a surge of investment in artificial intelligence continued to feed through to the world's second-largest economy, they added.

Looking ahead, experts said that such momentum could underpin a more positive price outlook in the coming months.

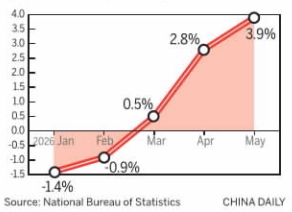
Their comments came after data from the National Bureau of Statistics showed that China's producer price index, which measures factory-gate prices, rose 3.9 percent year-on-year in May, accelerating from a 2.8 percent increase in April and marking the third straight month of recovery.

Dong Lijuan, a statistician at the bureau, said the increase in factory-gate inflation in May reflected stronger demand in certain domestic industries and the pass-through effect of fluctuations in international commodity prices.

Consumer price index (CPI) growth rate year-on-year



Producer price index (PPI) growth rate year-on-year



Source: National Bureau of Statistics CHINA DAILY

"The deeper integration of AI with various industries and growing demand for computing power helped push up prices in sectors such as computer-related manufacturing, electrical machinery and nonferrous metals," Dong said.

Echoing that view, Lu Ting, chief China economist at Nomura Securities, said that AI-related fixed-asset investment is expected to contribute 0.3 percentage points to China's GDP growth in 2026.

However, on a month-on-month basis, the PPI edged up 0.5 percent in May, slowing from a 1.7 percent increase in April.

"The slowdown was mainly due to moderating oil price gains," said Feng Lin, executive director of research at Orient Golden Credit Rating International.

At the same time, consumer inflation remained moderate. China's consumer price index, the main gauge of inflation, rose 1.2 percent from a year earlier in May, matching the increase in April, the NBS said.

Lynn Song, chief economist for China at Dutch bank ING, said that China's inflation has stayed at or above 1 percent for four consecutive months and remained in positive territory for eight straight months, suggesting that the trend of reflation, the restoration of deflated prices to a desirable level, is solidifying.

NBS data showed that the core CPI, which excludes food and energy prices and is considered a more accurate indicator of supply and demand conditions, increased by 1.1 percent year-on-year in May.

Despite the improving trend in prices, analysts said that the widening gap between factory-gate and consumer inflation could put pressure on the margins of downstream firms, underscoring the need for more targeted policy support.

"A sustained recovery in prices still hinges on stronger domestic demand," said Mao Zhenhua, chief economist at China Chengxin International Credit Rating Co.

He added that stronger efforts are needed to boost household purchasing power, especially for lower-income groups, and to further tap into services consumption.

Looking ahead, Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, said that China's price trend is expected to improve further as domestic demand potential continues to be released and a lower comparison base comes into play.

The improving price outlook has further bolstered confidence among global executives.

Pascal Daloz, chairman and CEO of French industrial software company Dassault Systemes, said that the company is seeking to strengthen its industrial AI ecosystem in China.

"China has become one of the places where innovation is moving fastest," he said.

Ancient thought can help avoid Thucydides Trap

WORLD WATCH
By Tom Watkins

In rereading the book *Lure the Tiger Out of the Mountains: The 36 Stratagems of Ancient China,* by Gao Yuan, I pondered how thinking like an ancient Chinese might help the world avoid the Thucydides Trap.

The Thucydides Trap, a term coined by Harvard academic Graham Allison, is a hypothesis in international relations that is summarized from historical experience. It holds that when a rising power challenges the dominance of an established power, structural fear — rather than malicious intent — greatly raises the risk of confrontation and full-scale war.

The Thucydides Trap entered global discourse again recently when President Xi Jinping asked US President Donald Trump, during their recent summit in Beijing, "Can China and the United States transcend the Thucydides Trap and forge a new paradigm for major-country relations?"

Although some in the West hold a narrow view that Western thought is the sole source of wisdom, how ancient Chinese pursued challenges has an impact on current Chinese thinking and should not be overlooked by the US administration.

While thought and theory in Western international relations often focus on zero-sum power struggles, ancient Chinese philosophy prioritizes patience, indirect action and the preservation of relationships.

Here is how concepts from *Lure the Tiger Out of the Mountains* and classical Chinese philosophy can help the two nations avoid the Thucydides Trap, which, if fallen into, would have deadly consequences for both countries as well as for all of humanity.

The stratagem "lure the tiger out of the mountains" advises against attacking an enemy where they are strongest. Instead, it suggests changing the environment or context to make them vulnerable.

Avoiding the Thucydides Trap in modern diplomacy means shifting competition away from military flashpoints. Instead, nations can channel their rivalry into constructive arenas like green energy, space exploration, fixing trade barriers, or global health. By changing the "mountain" — the context of the competition — the risk of direct and accidental military conflict can drop significantly.

In Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*, the ultimate achievement is "to win without fighting".

Western deterrence theory often relies on visible, overwhelming military buildup, which can trigger a "security dilemma" in which both sides keep arming out of fear. The Cold War between the US and the Soviet Union makes this point clearly. The Chinese strategic tradition views open warfare as a failure of strategy.

See ***Thought,*** *page 3*

SICHUAN RAILWAY MAKES SONG AND DANCE OF SILK ROAD EXPERIENCE

Panda train embarks on maiden voyage across Northwest China to Xinjiang

By **PENG CHAO** in Chengdu
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At Anjing Station in Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, the departure gate opened onto a scene reminiscent of a festival. Women in flowing *hanfu* glided forward, palace lanterns in hand. Lion dancers threaded their way through the crowd, panda mascots wobbled with open arms, and the air hummed with the sound of traditional instruments.

China Vibes

Tan Kar Meng, a 60-year-old from Malaysia, couldn't resist stepping up to a lion. "This experience is amazing," he said, laughing. "I never expected anything like this."

He was one of the 92 passengers on the debut journey of the Jinxiu Tianfu, the latest in the Panda Train portfolio — a boutique rail tourism brand launched in 2021.

Its destination was the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. The train promised to take passengers across the vast expanse of northwestern China in the style of the Song Dynasty (960-1279).

Xinjiang has always been a land of long journeys and logistical challenges. At more than 1.66 million square kilometers, covering both its northern grasslands and southern Silk Road cities usually means days of bone-wearying bus rides. The Jinxiu Tianfu changes that: Travel by night and wake up to a new horizon.

The 18 train cars contain 46 private rooms, each equipped with a bathroom, smart controls and a minibar. The observation car provides the vantage point to enjoy the natural beauty of lakes, snow-capped peaks and desert canyons.

See ***Train,*** *page 3*



Passengers board a Panda Train at Anjing Station in Chengdu, Sichuan province, on May 19. HAN XUGANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

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INDEPTH





Left: Du Bo (holding a smartphone on a selfie stick), then director of the Culture and Tourism Bureau in Tahe county, Heilongjiang province, films a promotional video on tourism with her team in 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Right: Hu Yuming (left), the first Party secretary stationed in Hejiaxin, a village in Tieling, Liaoning province, promotes local food during a livestreaming event in 2024. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

RURAL VITALIZATION: LIVE AND EMPOWERING

Grassroots Party workers go the extra mile online to turn around fortunes of villages across nation

By **ZHOU HUIYING** in Harbin and **WU YONG** in Shenyang

From the ancient Liaohe River in Tieling, Liaoning province, to the beautiful villages in Jiangxi province, from the harmonious countryside by the Yangtze and Huaihe rivers to the snowy forests beneath the Greater Xing'an Mountains, grassroots Party workers are using mobile phones as new tools, the internet as a new platform and livestreaming as a new means of communication.

They are bringing agricultural fields into livestreaming rooms, sending local cultures onto cloud platforms and connecting policies that benefit the people to thousands of households.

Every afternoon, Hu Yuming, 44, appears on time for his livestream, interacting with netizens from across the country to promote the unique charm of Hejiaxin village in Tieling. He highlights the village's lush grasslands, vibrant wetlands, rich ecological foundation, profound revolutionary heritage and distinctive folk culture.

Hu, the first Party secretary stationed in Hejiaxin, has broken new ground with an integrated model of new media, cultural tourism and public welfare. In collaboration with the countywide first secretary alliance in Tieling, he uses dedication and innovation to paint a real, new-era picture of prosperous industries, beautiful countryside and wealthy villagers.

In September 2021, Hu, who was selected by the Liaoning Police and Judicial Management Cadre College, came to Hejiaxin to serve as its first Party secretary. When his two-year term ended in 2023, he resolutely applied for continuing work in the countryside.

"At that time, the village was seeing some progress in terms of rural development, such as the emerging revolutionary tourism. I hoped to help make it better, so I decided to stay," he said.

In March 2024, authorities in Tieling organized a series of training sessions for over 100 village-level first secretaries on topics such as new media technology and livestreaming, aiming to encourage them to promote local economic development through online platforms.

"The training helped me a lot. While I picked up technical skills, I also realized that the internet can drive economic growth and benefit the local people," Hu said.

In May last year, Hu did his first livestream on Hejiaxin's vast grasslands. "The two-hour session attracted some viewers," he said. "I kept talking as I wanted, introducing the beautiful scenery and local specialties of the village."

There has been no turning back. Hu continues to livestream from the grasslands, and has added memorial halls and farms to his location list. To date, he has helped villagers sell agricultural produce, such as sweet potatoes, corn and garlic sprouts, worth over 50,000 yuan ($7,375).

Hu often has his livestream audiences riveted to the screen with stories about the ancient river, the revolutionary history of Hejiaxin and the village's grassland customs, striving to create a characteristic cultural tourism IP.

In June last year, he planned and organized a grassland kite festival, featuring big displays, parent-child DIY sessions, folk experiences and internet celebrity check-ins.

Through livestreaming, short-videos and a comprehensive network matrix, Hejiaxin attracted over 30,000 tourists during the three-day festival, transforming the once sleepy village into a popular rural tourism spot in northern Liaoning.





Above: Du Bo (center) and her team hold watermelons while filming a promotional video for local agricultural produce, as well as tourism, in 2022. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Left: Chen Jianguo (front), Party secretary of Beishan village in Shangrao, Jiangxi province, livestreams to promote and sell farm produce to boost villagers' incomes. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Right: Zhu Xiaofei, an inheritor of the Qiangan folk dance form and a village committee director in Mingguang, Anhui province, performs during a livestreaming session on policy benefits. YANG YANG / FOR CHINA DAILY



Tieling has many first secretaries like Hu, who have dedicated themselves to front-line work and are empowering the countryside with the help of the internet.

The Tieling Municipal Party Committee's Organization Department has led the establishment of platforms and resource integration, forming 42 first secretary professional alliances, strengthening bonds among villages and achieving resource-sharing. Such collaboration has formed a comprehensive service system that uses livestreaming to promote agricultural produce and improve villagers' lives.

"As a member of the first secretary e-commerce alliance, I have participated in numerous cooperation and communication activities," said Hu. "We have supported each other, exchanged information and provided assistance for livestreams, achieving very good results."

Chen Jianguo, 46, Party secretary of Beishan village in Shangrao, Jiangxi, has revitalized the village using just a mobile phone and a livestreaming room.

A typical livestream starts with Chen adjusting his collar, placing a product — such as a jar of homemade preserved vegetables — on the table in front of the camera, and greeting viewers in his signature style: "Good evening, dear friends, and welcome to Beishan Secretary Chen's livestream".

With his professional demeanor, he has already become a local internet celebrity, driving annual agricultural sales worth more than 25 million yuan.

The economic transformation of Beishan is striking, given that the village was struggling to keep its head above water a few years ago.

Chen, who had left Beishan as a young man in 2004 to seek better opportunities in Zhejiang province, returned to his village after the Hefei-Fuzhou high-speed railway opened in June 2015.

"The convenience of high-speed transportation helped take Beishan's agricultural products outside, and brought Beishan's youth back home," said Chen, who closed his digital products store in Wenzhou, Zhejiang, and became a Party cadre in his village.

At a rural e-commerce training session organized by the government of Guangxin district, where Beishan is located, Chen chanced upon a whole new world. "The teacher talked about online programs that are helping drive rural vitalization, and I thought we could integrate resources to promote our agricultural products outside," he said.

In 2018, Chen was elected Beishan village secretary, and a year later, he opened an account on short video platform Douyin.

The start of his online journey wasn't smooth. "Villagers said that all I did was make videos with my phone. Some even went to higher authorities to complain that I was neglecting my duties," Chen said.

Instead of being demotivated by such skepticism, Chen engaged other villagers in making short videos and organized fun sports for farmers, giving everyone the opportunity to share the joy and experience the novelty of video-making through participation.

On May 26, 2023, Chen started his first livestream channel to help villagers sell their agricultural produce and other products. "I received 130 orders, although more than half were from my acquaintances," he said.

With policy support for agricultural e-commerce, Beishan started making big strides through livestreaming. Last year, the village's collective economy reached 500,000 yuan.

Today, Chen has more than 20,300 followers on Douyin, and the village has developed an effective sales and production cycle. It has also built a livestreaming base where villagers get 15 yuan per hour from packing and shipping work.

Over 330 livestreams throughout the year have linked the small village with outside markets and have reconnected villagers who had left home. Primary agricultural products have been developed into branded goods and cultural tourism items with increased value.

"When I returned to Beishan years ago, what I wanted to see most was young people serving their parents tea and tutoring their children at home," Chen said. "That dream is slowly becoming a reality."

Ding Jun, 42, deputy village Party secretary of Hehua in Mingguang, Anhui province, has transformed a small livestreaming room from an initial sales platform into a policy briefing platform to serve the community.

"I started livestreaming in October 2024, when my intention was to help villagers sell local agricultural produce such as gorgon fruit and water chestnuts," he said. "However, as my program began, the most frequently asked questions were about healthcare, pensions, social assistance and homestead issues."

Ding immediately readjusted his focus, interpreting official documents for villagers and breaking down complex procedures into simple steps.

"It is not an easy task, as I first need to thoroughly understand the relevant information," he said. "The most challenging part is when many followers from other places ask me about their local livelihood policies."

To help these people, Ding jots down their questions, seeks details from relevant local departments and then shares the information during his next livestreaming session.

He has held over 300 livestreaming sessions to date, attracting 34,000 followers, with the total number of views exceeding 1.6 million. He has also mediated disputes and gathered public opinion on various local issues.

Hehua village is a microcosm of Mingguang. Since 2024, the city has organized village cadres and Party members to enter livestreaming rooms and bring their lectures to the fields. Using local dialects, they explain in a familiar way policies that benefit farmers.

Agricultural experts and sci-tech assistants have also joined some livestreaming sessions, teaching techniques step by step and solving farmers' problems.

This year, Mingguang launched 121 short videos on theoretical lectures, garnering 620,000 views. The city also livestreamed over 180 theoretical lectures, each of which attracted more than 1,000 views.

In early 2020, Du Bo crafted a vibrant story of cultural tourism revitalization in Northeast China, as she created a short video on epidemic prevention in the local dialect.

As the video garnered 750,000 views, Du, who was then director of the Culture and Tourism Bureau in Tahe county, Heilongjiang province, encountered the powerful reach of new media for the first time.

"The success inspired me to form my own new media team," she said. "In my spare time, we filmed short videos or livestreamed to promote the icy landscapes, forest ecology and ethnic culture of Tahe."

In early 2023, when temperatures in the county hit a harsh -20 C, Du donned traditional Oroqen attire to film a short video in a birch forest, titled *White Deer Fairy*. It went viral overnight.

"Our endeavor coincided with the 70th anniversary of the Oroqen people settling down since they moved out of the mountains," she said. "We went to see their ethnic costumes and cultural products, and those were exquisite. After getting the owner's consent, I borrowed the costumes for filming."

As the director of the tourism bureau, Du's job was to promote local tourism resources. "I not only promoted tourism, but also planned and built a large number of scenic routes and cultural projects each year," she said.

In 2024, Du became deputy director of the Enterprise Investment and Service Bureau of Hulan district in Harbin, the capital of Heilongjiang. However, her efforts to promote local tourism and economic development continued.

Du and her team have released more than 1,000 videos to date, with total views exceeding 4 billion and the number of followers across all platforms reaching over 2 million.

Zhu Lixin in Hefei and Zhao Ruinan in Nanchang contributed to this story.

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TOP NEWS

Harnessing of classical wisdom highlighted

Initiative issued at Athens conference calls for 'promoting friendship and coexistence'

By **WANG HUAZHONG** and **ZHENG WANYIN** in Athens

Inside
Views, **page 7**

Classical wisdom should illuminate humanity's path forward and address key questions of our time, including how to keep our world in peace and order, according to an initiative announced at the closing ceremony of the Second World Conference of Classics in Athens, Greece, on Wednesday.

Surrounded by stunning frescoes depicting Prometheus stealing the fire to enlighten the human world at the Academy of Athens, over 200 scholars from Asia, Europe, America and Africa engaged in in-depth discussions to reach the consensus regarding the role of classical studies in safeguarding the future of humanity.

"Only by knowing where we come from can we understand where we stand today and where we are heading," said the initiative.

It urged "harnessing the power of virtues in classical wisdom" to remain steadfast on the right course of civilization, "promoting friendship and coexistence" to build a home for our shared future of humanity, "safeguarding peace and order" to strengthen the foundations of future security, and "cultivating humanistic values in the digital age" to guide technological progress.

"We are confident that classical studies will provide an inexhaustible source of wisdom and strength for humanity's peace, development and shared future," it said.

Scholars told China Daily that it was the right time for Chinese and Greek academies to co-host the conference in Athens, which is also a symbolic city of dialogue in ancient history, as the world experiences fundamental changes and rising conflicts of interests and ideologies.

Roger Ames, humanities chair professor at Peking University and vice-president of the International Confucian Association, said the world should congratulate China for helping to shift the world's conversation from geopolitics to civilization.

"What China has been doing for the last 20 years is promoting a civilizational dialogue where we talk not about money and military power, but about family, values, shared histories, and what we want for our grandchildren."

Amphilochios Papathomas, a professor of ancient Greek literature and papyrology at the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, said the escalation of conflicts can be avoided through dialogue.

"What we have learned from classical authors, like Thucydides, is that we have to be very cautious to avoid a military and political escalation," he said. He added that the peaceful shift in the balance of power between the United Kingdom and the United States in the early 20th century showed it was possible to avoid the "Thucydides Trap" of military conflict because the two countries had mutual respect.

Hu Yujuan, a senior researcher from the Institute of World History at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, added that war cannot be ended by war but by love and benevolence.

She said that the ancient Roman Empire once revered Mars, the god of war, and achieved only a temporary form of "peace through war". However, after turning to worship Venus, the goddess of love, it entered a period of lasting stability known as the "Pax Romana". "Classical wisdom tells us violence cannot resolve all conflicts. Only the power of love can eliminate conflict," she added.

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Members of a military engineering team stand beside an Iranian missile that fell in a field near Damascus, Syria, on Tuesday. KHALIL ASHAWI / REUTERS

Tensions rise after US helicopter downed

By **JAN YUMUL** in Hong Kong and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

Tensions between Iran and the United States reignited after Washington blamed Tehran for the downing of a US military helicopter, prompting retaliation from Iran and likely adding obstacles to ending the war amid weeks of deadlock.

US President Donald Trump in a social media post said the Iranians shot down a highly sophisticated Apache helicopter while it was patrolling the Strait of Hormuz.

"There were two pilots involved, both are safe and uninjured. Nevertheless, the United States must, of necessity, respond to this attack," said Trump.

The US Central Command, or CENTCOM, said in a post on social media platform X that forces began launching "self-defense strikes" against Iran at 5 pm on Tuesday at the commander-in-chief's direction.

"CENTCOM forces struck Iranian air defense, ground control stations, and surveillance radar sites near the Strait of Hormuz with precision munitions from US Air Force and Navy fighter jets. The operation was a proportional response to recent attacks on US forces and international commercial ships transiting regional waters," it said.

It added that the US forces remain vigilant and postured to defend against "unjustified Iranian aggression".

Iranian Foreign Minister Abbas Araghchi said in a post on X that despite its "defeats on the battlefield", the "US opted to test our determination" as he warned that Iran's armed forces "will leave no attack or threat unanswered".

"Leave our region if you want to be safe. History of the Persian Gulf has many chapters on dire fates of intruding outsiders," said Araghchi.

Araghchi also held separate phone calls with his Turkish and Saudi counterparts, reviewing the latest regional developments in the wake of US military strikes against areas in southern Iran.

The calls, in the early hours of Wednesday, covered the rapidly evolving security situation following US aggression against Iranian territory, Iranian media reported.

Araghchi condemned the US military strikes as a violation of Iranian sovereignty and territorial integrity. He underscored Iran's right to self-defense and affirmed the legitimacy of the retaliatory response carried out by Iran's armed forces.

Iran's Foreign Ministry condemned US strikes on southern Iran as a violation of the United Nations Charter.

The Iranian Foreign Ministry also reminded regional countries, particularly those on the southern shores, of the Gulf of their legal and moral responsibility to prevent the US military and Israel from using their territory, facilities or infrastructure to plan, organize, execute or support aggressive operations against Iran.

The Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps said it struck a US air base in Jordan on Wednesday, hitting four key targets, including F-35 fighter shelters. It also said that it attacked the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain.

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China, EU discuss consultation mechanism

By **WANG KEJU**
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China and the European Union have held "in-depth and comprehensive" discussions on the establishment of a trade and investment consultation mechanism, signaling a willingness from both Beijing and Brussels to manage differences through equal-footed dialogue, experts said.

A structured consultation framework, they added, will help to prevent spiraling frictions and provide the certainty that businesses on both sides need.

The discussions took place during a Tuesday meeting in Brussels, Belgium, between Chinese Vice-Minister of Commerce Ling Ji and Ditte Juul Jorgensen, director-general of the European Commission's Directorate-General for Trade and Economic Security, the ministry said in a statement on Wednesday.

The two sides agreed to work toward pragmatic outcomes from the first meeting of the China-EU trade and investment consultation mechanism, with the aim of stabilizing bilateral economic and trade relations and promoting their sustainable development, according to the statement.

"China and the EU are far more complementary than competitive," said Cui Fan, a professor of international trade at the University of International Business and Economics.

Cui noted that every minute, trade between China and the EU exceeds 10 million yuan ($1.47 million), citing last year's trade data. "The consultation mechanism is an essential step toward properly handling frictions and finding the right way to resolve problems, which serves the interests of business communities on both sides," he added.

Since the beginning of this year, Brussels has broadened its trade defense tool kit, rolling out a series of restrictive measures aimed at Chinese companies and products.

Most recently, its efforts to compel European businesses to diversify their suppliers, under the proposed revision of the EU's Cybersecurity Act, have added yet another layer of investment barriers and institutional discrimination, with China bearing the brunt.

"The EU's increasingly closed internal market is hindering its ability to learn from and absorb cutting-edge technologies, thereby constraining potential pathways for industrial catch-up," said Sun Yawen, an assistant research fellow at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences' Institute of European Studies.

The continuous escalation of protectionist measures is unlikely to stimulate innovation among EU companies, trapping the EU in a vicious cycle, Sun added.

Despite the EU's "de-risking" agenda, European companies are doubling down on manufacturing in China, according to a survey by the EU Chamber of Commerce in China last month.

"We are seeing EU companies actively adapting to China's dynamic business environment, as China is not only a market full of opportunities but has also become an indispensable source of innovation for their global operations," said Denis Depoux, global managing director of consultancy company Roland Berger.

Visit: Talks deepened practical cooperation

From page 1

Zheng Jiyong, dean of the Institute of Regional Studies at Tianjin Foreign Studies University, said the development of China-DPRK ties is not merely a continuation of long-standing friendship, but an effort to give traditional friendship new relevance under changing circumstances.

"Under the new circumstances, it requires the integration of political mutual trust, pragmatic cooperation, people-to-people bonds and strategic coordination into a comprehensive framework of relationship that serves both the development interests of the two countries and regional stability," Zheng said in an opinion piece published on the website of the China Global Television Network.

Liu said the strategic guidance of the top leaders is the greatest strength and fundamental guarantee of China-DPRK relations.

Xi's visit came less than a year after Kim visited China, marking another round of close interaction between the top leaders of the two parties and the two countries. Last year, Kim attended commemorative activities in China marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1931-45) and the World Anti-Fascist War.

According to Liu, the visit deepened practical cooperation and friendly exchanges in various fields to inject new impetus into the socialist cause of China and the DPRK. During the visit, the two leaders made concrete plans for the next stage of practical cooperation and friendly exchanges between the two countries.

On the second day of his visit, Xi paid homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower. Xi, accompanied by Kim, also visited the Central Cadres Training School of the WPK in Pyongyang.

Liu, the senior official, said that Xi congratulated the DPRK on the successful convening of the Ninth Congress of the WPK and the 15th Supreme People's Assembly, and spoke highly of the progress that the WPK and the DPRK people, led by Kim, have made in strengthening party building, developing the economy and improving people's well-being.

Liu said that Xi called for the two parties to actively carry out more friendly exchanges at all levels, deepen exchanges of experience in party and state governance, and continuously consolidate the political and public support foundation for bilateral relations and the development of the socialist causes of the two countries.

According to Liu, during the visit, Xi and Kim had an in-depth exchange of views on the current international and regional situation. Xi emphasized that China and the DPRK should strengthen strategic communication and coordination, firmly safeguard their respective sovereignty, security and development interests, jointly uphold regional peace and development, and create a better external environment for the two countries' socialist cause.

In response, Kim said that the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and the four China-proposed major global initiatives carry profound significance for promoting world peace and development, and have won the support and appreciation of people around the world.

Wang Junsheng, director of the Department of China's Regional Strategy at the National Institute of International Strategy of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, said the world is undergoing profound transformations, bringing significant changes to the geopolitical landscape of Northeast Asia.

"China and the DPRK play important roles in shaping the region's future. Strengthening bilateral cooperation not only helps maintain the sound development of their relations, but also contributes to peace and security across Northeast Asia," Wang said.

Xinhua contributed to this story.

Displaced by disaster



Residents carry their belongings as they evacuate on Wednesday following a landslide triggered by a magnitude 7.8 earthquake in Barangay Kapatan on the southern coast of Mindanao, the Philippines. Authorities said Monday's earthquake affected more than 33,000 households, leaving at least 45 people dead, 17 missing and 487 injured. NOEL CELIS / REUTERS

Train: A moving tribute to Sichuan's textile history

From page 1

The dining car serves Sichuan flavors alongside Silk Road specialties. Bilingual guides, butlers, round-the-clock luggage service and an onboard medical team ensure the journey is seamless.

Panda motifs adorn the walls, while plush toys and even desserts provide a tender nod to Sichuan, the homeland of these beloved creatures. However, the deeper design language belongs to the Song Dynasty, the aesthetic of which is widely considered the pinnacle of ancient Chinese refinement: simplicity, restraint and a profound reverence for nature.

Passengers are invited into the four refined arts of the Song: whisking tea, appreciating incense, arranging flowers and hanging painted scrolls.

Shu brocade and Shu embroidery, each an intangible cultural heritage item, grace seats, fans and ornaments. It's a moving tribute to Sichuan's 2,000-year history of producing the textile that gave the Silk Road its name.

The 16-day debut journey departed on May 19, visiting Urumqi, Tianshan Tianchi, Kanas, Sayram Lake, Kashgar and Turpan. The days were filled with workshops on cultural heritage, visits to Tajik households and Silk Road-themed concerts. Nights belonged to the train.

Lian Hua, vice-chairman and general manager of Sichuan Tourism Investment Group, noted that over 80 percent of tour packages had already been booked — 90 percent by inbound tourists. It seems that the hunger for such experiences stretches far beyond China's borders.

Thought: Collective intellect called for

From page 1

If both ruling and rising powers adopt the mindset that actual warfare represents a mutual strategic defeat, they are more likely to seek diplomatic solutions.

While both approaches are examples of deterrence, the US-China economic reliance makes their relationship one of deep mutual dependency rather than strict ideological confrontation. This unique interconnectedness creates another layer of complexity.

Western political systems operate on short election cycles (two to four years), which often forces leaders to take aggressive, short-term stances to appease domestic voters. Ancient Chinese thought emphasizes generational timelines.

The Thucydides Trap is fueled by the fear of imminent displacement. If a rising power utilizes profound strategic patience — growing its influence incrementally without forcing a sudden, dramatic pivot in the global order — the ruling power has time to adapt. This slow, structural accommodation lowers the friction that typically sparks rapid, panicky escalations.

Traditional Western geopolitics often seeks a "balance of power" through opposing alliances (like NATO versus the Warsaw Pact), which draws hard lines in the sand. Chinese philosophy relies on the concept of yin and yang — the idea that opposing forces are interconnected, interdependent and necessary for harmony.

Instead of viewing a rival as an existential enemy that must be defeated, this mindset views the rival as a permanent, necessary counterweight. It shifts the goal from complete dominance to coexistence. Nations can fiercely compete in economics while simultaneously acknowledging that they need each other to maintain global financial stability.

The world is hoping that the inevitability of the Thucydides Trap can be avoided.

There are positive ways the US and China can shape the world. Let's spend our collective intellect working toward that end.

The author was former deputy chief of staff to former Michigan governor James Blanchard and was president and CEO of the Economic Council of Palm Beach County, Florida. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD

Respect for diversity of civilizations emphasized

By **ZHANG YUNBI**
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All parties should "uphold respect for the diversity of civilizations as the foundation to consolidate global consensus on mutual learning among civilizations", said a Chinese think tank report released on Wednesday in Beijing.

On the occasion of the second International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations, the China Institute of International Studies, or CIIS, released the report titled "China's Actions for Advancing Global Dialogue Among Civilizations".

"More than ever, the power of civilization must be harnessed to address the challenges of the times and promote world peace and development," the report said.

It urged various parties to "break down cultural barriers by seeking harmony without uniformity, connect hearts and minds through openness and inclusiveness, and eliminate misunderstandings through dialogue and exchanges".

China first proposed the Global Civilization Initiative, or GCI, in 2023. The report said the country "stands ready to join hands with the international community to fully implement the Global Civilization Initiative and pool civilizational strength for building a community with a shared future for humanity".

In 2024, the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution proposed by China and 82 other countries, designating June 10 every year as the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations.

The CIIS report aims to further review and summarize China's experience, practices and major achievements in promoting the implementation of the GCI and facilitating global dialogue among civilizations.

The report introduces the historical background and profound implications of the GCI, and it systematically reviews China's concepts, policies and practical achievements in promoting dialogue among civilizations from five aspects.

China has been pooling broad international consensus on exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations, supporting the UN in playing its role as the primary platform for dialogue among civilizations, and deepening bilateral and regional dialogue among civilizations, the report said.

Also, the country has been advancing multilateral cooperation on dialogue among civilizations, and integrating dialogue among civilizations into exchanges and cooperation across various fields. It also looks ahead to China's next steps in promoting dialogue among civilizations, according to the report.

Seeking safety



Displaced foreign nationals stand in a line to give their information to volunteers at a park in Durban, South Africa, on Wednesday, after fleeing their homes amid fears of xenophobic attacks. Ghana, Mozambique and Malawi are among the countries to which South Africa has repatriated their nationals this month, most of whom South Africa says do not have the correct documentation. RAJESH JANTILAL / AFP

The family history that lies beneath

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston, Texas
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In a talk following the screening of her first feature documentary film, *May the Soil Be Everywhere*, at the recent Houston Asian American Pacific Islander Film Festival, director Zhao Yehui discussed how she discovered a family history, and how that shaped the film's development.

Zhao's grandmother migrated from a village to a small town, her mother moved to a big city, and she moved to the US — so she had in mind to explore the story of migration across the generations of women.

The journey took her to an abandoned village tucked deep in the mountainous Loess Plateau in Central China. There, she discovered their ancestral home carved out of a hillside built by her great-grandfather.

The film ended up being about tracing family roots, the change of time and landscape, and along the way, a journey to renew herself.

Zhao, an artist, filmmaker and adjunct professor who teaches film, media and performance arts at New York's Hunter College, came to the US to study in 2015.

In her initial years in the US, Zhao put in a lot of effort to assimilate and acculturate herself.

"Part of that process also involves othering myself. So there is a certain sense of self that I give up," she said. By making this film, she intended to find strength by being back with her family and the land.

During initial interviews with her grandma by phone from New York during the COVID-19 pandemic, Zhao first heard of her great-grandfather, who didn't even leave behind a photo of himself.

"I became very interested in this idea of searching for somebody who doesn't exist in the visual imagery," Zhao said. "I'm thinking about what other elements I can bring to illustrate a person who doesn't exist in imagery. That's how the story started."

A significant portion of the film concerns the search for and return to the ancestral cave dwelling that Zhao's great-grandfather had built in a rural mountain valley.



Zhao Yehui

The dwelling had been abandoned for over five decades.

With help from local residents, traversing hills, and bashing through bushes to make a path along the way, Zhao finally found the site.

The roof had collapsed the previous summer from rainstorms, and although the inside was inaccessible, the dwelling's facade remained largely intact. The scene moved her.

"It's just built so beautifully," Zhao said. "I drew this arc tracing the cave and did a very improvised performance of deep listening. That was not planned at all. That happened spontaneously at the moment."

Beautiful memory

Her grandma has beautiful memories of the cave dwelling where she lived until the age of 15. She spoke fondly of fruit trees in the yard — the scent of the flowers, the sweet taste of the fruit.

The cave sparked a family discussion. "How come nobody ever shared about this story that we have this cave my great-grandfather built in the wilderness?"

Her mother replied: "Our family story is not interesting."

But Zhao said her family story was interesting that everyone's family story was interesting. Despite the lack of drama — nobody got killed, nobody's life got turned upside down — Zhao said the filming process led her to feel regenerated.

"I felt this deeper connection with them. I felt like I would get to know more and now have a different perspective."

Near the end, Zhao's family was paying tribute to her great-grandfather by his tomb. Nearby, a high-speed railway loomed overhead.

This reflected Zhao's critical thinking on urban development all over the world, another theme her film explored.

"We're experiencing lots of urban supremacy. We see ourselves being further and further from the earth because of the apartment buildings," she said.

"I wanted to talk about this relationship between people and land and how we can still find strength in our intimate connection with earth."

She later brought her family back to the cave, including her then 88-year-old grandmother, reuniting with family roots deeply connected to the land.

Zhao's film, made with a grant from the International Documentary Association, debuted last year at True/False film festival. It was featured at various events and received a special mention jury award at DokuFest in Kosovo.

Zhao found the practice of oral history that's part of her film very beautiful.

"People have experienced so many changes throughout their lives. They might not remember the years and dates correctly, their personal stories might not directly fit into the grand history narratives, their memories might deviate a little from truth, but their stories represented their true experiences."

Fiji sees Chinese market as key source of travelers

By **ALEXIS HOOI** in Sydney
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Fiji's pillar tourism sector is riding high amid record visitor numbers, with the Chinese market growing in importance as a key source of travelers for the island destination that promises high-quality experiences.

Fiji's annual visitor arrival numbers recorded a new peak of 986,367 last year, up from 982,938 in 2024, figures from the country's bureau of statistics showed.

The bulk of visitors last year were from Australia, New Zealand, North America, Europe and China, according to Tourism Fiji, with travelers from China to the archipelagic country numbering 28,602.

Paresh Pant, CEO of Tourism Fiji, which is the Fijian government's tourism marketing arm, told China Daily that the country's "unique combination of natural beauty, genuine hospitality and strong cultural identity continues to resonate with Chinese travelers who are increasingly seeking quality travel experiences rather than traditional sightseeing holidays".

Tourism Fiji has significantly strengthened its engagement with the Chinese market through measures such as enhanced partnerships with leading travel platforms, cooperation with key trade partners, and social media links, he said.

"These efforts are translating into tangible results," Pant said, adding that from January to April 2026, visitor arrivals from China grew by nearly 9 percent year-on-year.

"China is one of Fiji's most important strategic growth markets ... it remains one of the markets with the strongest long-term growth potential for Fiji," Pant said.

The value of the Chinese market extends beyond visitor numbers alone, he said, as Spring Festival and other major Chinese travel periods "help complement Fiji's traditional demand cycles and support more balanced year-round visitation".

"This provides important benefits across the tourism sector, including airlines, hotels, resorts, tour operators, and local communities," he said.

Fantasha Lockington, chief executive of the Fiji Hotel and Tourism Association, or FHTA, the industry body representing hotels, resorts and other tourism stakeholders in Fiji, told China Daily that the strong visitor numbers "reflect a few things coming together at the right time".

Chinese travelers are part of that growth, Lockington said, with a visa-free policy, improved connectivity through Hong Kong, and renewed interest in long-haul travel all helping.

"China is important because it helps Fiji diversify its visitor markets. Australia and New Zealand remain our largest and closest markets, but China gives us room to grow in areas such as weddings, honeymoons, diving, wellness, family holidays and incentive travel," she said.

Tourism businesses are also working through Tourism Fiji's China-focused programs, including support in Mandarin-language information, familiar guest amenities and tailored services, she said.

Challenges remain

Lockington said considerable challenges to the industry, such as disruptions to global travel and resources due to tensions in the Middle East, remain.

"Tourism is doing well, but operators are still working in a very unpredictable global environment. For a destination like Fiji, anything that affects fuel prices, aviation, freight, insurance, supply chains or traveler confidence can quickly affect the cost of doing business," she said.

The Fiji government, in response to the global uncertainty, has reactivated a tourism action group to safeguard the pillar sector that accounts for more than 40 percent of the nation's GDP, according to local media.

"The Middle East conflict has disrupted aviation routes. Fuel costs are rising," broadcaster FBC cited Tourism Minister Viliame Gavoka as saying.

The tourism action group's priority is to sustain confidence in current bookings for the peak travel period and to prepare for the 2026-27 season, he said.

Lockington from FHTA said the focus is on helping create the right environment for tourism businesses to keep growing sustainably, as well as supporting industry readiness for the Chinese market.

Pant from Tourism Fiji said the country "continues to operate within a complex global environment shaped by economic uncertainty, aviation pressures and geopolitical developments".

The strategy "remains focused on sustainable, high-value tourism growth rather than purely volume-driven expansion".

"China will continue to play a central role in this strategy," he said, as it "aligns strongly with several key travel trends that are shaping the future of tourism, including premium experiences, family travel, wellness tourism and digitally influenced travel planning".

Tariff threats spark global resistance

New US trade proposal faces firm pushback around the world: Experts

By **YANG RAN**
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The US government's latest tariff threats have met with strong global opposition. Experts said that Washington's protectionist policies will only hasten the decline of its global influence.

This latest tariff offensive, announced by the Office of the US Trade Representative last week, targets imports from 60 economies, including allies such as the European Union and Australia, as well as major trading partners such as China and India.

The US proposed tariffs of up to 12.5 percent, citing investigations that showed these nations failed to curb trade in goods made with "forced labor".

Experts said this proposal represents the US government's latest attempt to rebuild its tariff system, following a significant legal setback in February when the US Supreme Court invalidated broad tariffs imposed by the federal government under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act.

However, unlike the more compromising or wait-and-see stance adopted by countries previously regarding unilateral US tariffs, the international community's pushback this time is firmer.

Bernd Lange, who chairs the European Parliament's Committee on International Trade, rejected US claims that the EU was not curbing trade in forced labor goods as "utterly absurd".

"It appears that every conceivable pretext is now being used to justify existing tariffs or prepare new ones," Lange stated.

Similar sentiments were echoed across the globe. Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese called the newly proposed rates "unjustified", adding that "there is an ideological disagreement where the United States administration has broken with what was a decades-long understanding that tariffs are not positive for the country that is imposing them".

Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva also declared that Brazil would "stand and not bow to the pressure of the latest US trade offensive".

According to Tu Xinquan, dean of the China Institute for WTO Studies at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, the shift in global posture is largely driven by a changing rationale for the tariffs and a clearer understanding of the legal vulnerabilities in the US tariff policy.

The US justification for the tariffs, in particular, has changed and weakened, said Tu. "Previously, the US used 'national security' as its rationale, which is hard to refute. But now it's citing 'forced labor'," he explained.

"Once a country accepts that framing, it effectively admits to having forced labor problems domestically. That is absolutely unacceptable for economies worldwide. That's why this round has met with such strong resistance."

Complementing this, the Supreme Court ruling has exposed the legal fragility of US tariff policy. "Countries now realize that the legal basis for US tariffs is shaky," Tu said.

> "Because Washington has weaponized interdependence among nations, a globalization without the US may well be taking shape."
>
> **Wang Yiwei,** director of the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University of China

"And China's firm countermeasures — which have proven effective — have shown the world that capitulation does not pay. These two developments have prompted many nations to recalibrate their strategies."

'Paper tiger'

Wang Yiwei, director of the Institute of International Affairs at Renmin University of China, argued that the deterrent value of US tariffs is rapidly diminishing and that strong responses from other nations will become the new norm.

"The Supreme Court's ruling, the midterm election dynamics and the lessons from US-China tariff standoffs have all exposed the 'paper tiger' nature of US tariff policy."

Beyond the immediate diplomatic pushback, experts warn that Washington's relentless use of tariff threats is accelerating a long-term trend: global trade is moving on with less US involvement.

This year alone, the EU has signed separate free trade agreements with Mercosur, a South American trade bloc, and India, collectively covering almost 2 billion people. Meanwhile, the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership, the world's largest free trade bloc, continues to deepen integration. Reports show that intra-RCEP trade volume rose steadily from $5.67 trillion in 2023 to $6.09 trillion in 2025.

Wang Yong, a professor at Peking University's School of International Studies, said that the frequent use of tariff threats is not only destabilizing the rules-based international trade system but also isolating the US economically. "Tariff policies can be a high-risk strategy that proves to be self-defeating in the end," he said.

According to an analysis by the Cato Institute, the US share of global merchandise trade (imports plus exports) in the third quarter of 2025 was the lowest for that period of the year since 2014, and the drop from 2024 was larger than the cumulative loss between 2015 and 2024.

"Because Washington has weaponized interdependence among nations, a globalization without the US may well be taking shape," Wang Yiwei said.

Agencies contributed to this story.



A view of a container ship at the Port of Los Angeles in California on May 28. MARIO TAMA / AFP

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WORLD

Ghana on track for a 24-hour economy

By **EDITH MUTETHYA**
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Factories running through the night, markets operating around the clock and expanded logistics networks are at the heart of Ghana's drive to build a 24-hour export-driven economy, a flagship government initiative aimed at boosting production, increasing exports and creating millions of jobs across the country.

Launched in July, the 24-Hour Economy and Accelerated Export Development Programme, or 24H+, seeks to promote round-the-clock economic activity by encouraging businesses, industries and public services to operate beyond traditional daytime hours.

Under the initiative, the government plans to build modern markets across all 261 districts. The rollout is underway, with the facilities expected to include storage centers, banking services, clinics, childcare centers, police posts and fire stations to support continuous trading activities.

Speaking at the 2026 Ghana-UK Investment Summit held last week, Augustus Goosie Tanoh, presidential adviser on the 24H+, said the program is on track to create 1.7 million productive jobs by 2028.

He said four agreements signed in the past 90 days are expected to generate more than 160,000 jobs, putting the program firmly on course to meet its employment target. The projects include a solar farm and a bioenergy project.

Chinese companies are also major participants in the initiative. In April, the Hunan Architectural Design Institute Group signed an agreement with the 24-Hour Economy Secretariat to support technical and industrial planning for the Volta Economic Corridor and related infrastructure projects.

The corridor is a spatial-industrial development plan aimed at transforming the Volta River Basin into a logistics and production backbone. It is expected to anchor agroecological parks, industrial hubs and inland water transport systems to facilitate low-cost north-south economic integration.

Tanoh said the initiative currently has a pipeline of 18 bankable projects open for private sector participation and leadership.

"24H+ will be implemented by the private sector through private financing, not by central government agencies drawing down on the consolidated fund or deploying sovereign debt," he said.

"Government will make policy, facilitate, coordinate, incentivize, strictly regulate, backstop (where necessary) and tax appropriately but not deliver."

Policy analysts say the concept holds promise but will require careful implementation to achieve its intended outcomes.

According to Paul Frimpong, the executive director and senior research fellow at the Africa-China Centre for Policy and Advisory in Ghana, the policy is directionally strong, but its impact is likely to vary depending on location.

Despite the potential benefits, Frimpong warned that significant logistical and infrastructure challenges must be addressed to sustain a 24-hour market system.

Security remains a major concern, particularly for traders operating at night. Adequate lighting, enhanced policing and organized market-level security systems will be necessary to ensure safety, especially for women traders.

Emmanuel Amoah-Darkwah, an economist and partner at C-KADD Global, a Ghana-based consultancy firm, said the initiative is feasible but substantial work remains to ensure its successful implementation.



People watch as a vehicle burns during a protest in Belfast following a stabbing incident in Belfast, on Tuesday. PETER MORRISON / AP

Protests break out after Belfast street stabbing

By **EARLE GALE** in London
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Politicians and law enforcement officials in Northern Ireland appealed for calm on Wednesday after a night of anti-immigrant rioting forced people from their homes.

The unrest, which mainly affected the city of Belfast, followed a knife attack on Monday evening in which a 30-year-old Sudanese man who had entered the country illegally and claimed asylum appeared to have tried to cut someone's head off. The suspect has since been charged with attempted murder and other offenses, and police have said they do not think the incident was terror-related.

On Tuesday, peaceful protests against knife crime were hijacked by people carrying clubs and blazing torches who entered streets where immigrants were known to live, apparently intent on revenge.

Deputy First Minister of Northern Ireland Emma Little-Pengelly told *Good Morning Ulster* she condemned "any and all violence or thuggery that we witnessed on the streets in places across Northern Ireland last night".

She said Northern Ireland, which is part of the United Kingdom, had been appalled by the stabbing incident and that "this violence, this thuggery, this intimidation, it is absolutely unacceptable".

The BBC reported mobs had set fire to houses, cars, and a bus during Tuesday night's unrest and quoted a pastor from North Belfast as saying the property of black people had been targeted. Unrest also broke out in other communities, with a police car torched in Portadown and a Turkish barbershop damaged in Ballyclare.

Claire Hanna, leader of the opposition Social Democratic and Labour Party, told Reuters the violence looked to have been a "race-based pogrom", with hundreds of masked men carrying bottles and bricks starting fires and chanting "foreigners out".

Northern Ireland's fire service said it responded to 62 incidents on Tuesday night in the Belfast area, prompting Michelle O'Neill, Northern Ireland's first minister, to say mobs had been "burning families out of their homes".

Jon Boutcher, chief constable of the Police Service of Northern Ireland, said the violence was a "huge act of self-harm by mindless idiots who are actually only damaging their own futures".

"Last night's policing operation was about protecting life and trying to protect properties," he added, saying officers will locate and charge those responsible.

Naomi Long, Northern Ireland's minister of justice and leader of the Alliance Party, told Radio 4's *Today* program that "bad faith actors" had incited the riots through online posts.

"What distresses and disturbs me is there are those that prior to yesterday would have struggled to find Belfast on a map who are online, who are sharing incitement and encouragement for people and weaponizing the fear that people genuinely have about what happened to try to turn this into some kind of anti-immigration issue or a racist protest," she said.

Security concerns shadow World Cup preparations

By **RENA LI** in Los Angeles
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A member of Mexico's National Guard remains outside the hotel where Iran's national football team is staying in Tijuana, Mexico, on Monday, ahead of the FIFA 2026 World Cup football tournament. GUILLERMO ARIAS / AFP

As millions of fans prepare for the 2026 FIFA World Cup that begins on Thursday, security officials across North America are confronting a complex mix of challenges ranging from organized crime and civil unrest to emerging drone threats, underscoring the unprecedented scale of the tournament.

The expanded World Cup, jointly hosted by the United States, Canada and Mexico, is expected to be the largest in the tournament's history. While organizers have emphasized readiness and coordination among host cities, recent developments in Mexico and the United States have highlighted the increasingly complicated security environment surrounding major international sporting events.

In Mexico, authorities have significantly increased security deployments ahead of matches in Mexico City, Guadalajara and Monterrey. More than 100,000 soldiers, marines, National Guard members and police officers are expected to participate in security operations across host cities and major tourist destinations during the tournament. Anti-drone units, surveillance systems and crowd-management teams have also been deployed in coordination with FIFA.

Particular attention has focused on Guadalajara, capital of Jalisco state, which was shaken earlier this year by a surge in cartel-related violence following a military operation targeting organized crime leaders. According to local authorities, nearly 15,000 security personnel have been assigned to the region as the city prepares to host four World Cup matches.

"It's important to remember that normalcy returned to the state in less than 48 hours after what happened in February," Alfonso Briseno, Jalisco's security coordinator, told The Associated Press. "The Mexican government and the state of Jalisco guarantee their safety."

At the same time, Mexico City has experienced large-scale demonstrations ahead of the tournament's opening match. Teachers' groups, families of missing persons and other civil-society organizations have staged protests in the capital, drawing attention to social and economic issues while taking advantage of the global spotlight surrounding the World Cup.

In the United States, officials and industry experts have identified drones as one of the most significant emerging risks facing tournament organizers.

Speaking to Reuters, Melissa Swisher, chief revenue officer of drone-detection company SkySafe, said low-cost drones have fundamentally changed security planning for major sporting events because they can enter restricted areas in a matter of minutes.

"A thousand-dollar drone that's going 40 to 45 miles per hour could cross two miles in under three minutes," Swisher said. "By the time somebody sees it, that's already over."

Experts say drones could potentially be used for unauthorized surveillance, monitoring team movements or gathering footage inside restricted areas.

Tom Adams, director of public safety at DroneShield and a retired FBI agent, warned that drones can bypass many traditional security measures.

"You have something that can overcome all those traditional security measures and get right over everything," Adams said.

To address the threat, law-enforcement agencies and technology companies are deploying detection networks around tournament venues. The Federal Emergency Management Agency has provided approximately $250 million to support drone-threat mitigation efforts in World Cup host jurisdictions, while the Federal Aviation Administration plans to impose temporary flight restrictions around stadiums during matches.

The preparations also offer an indication of the security planning required for the 2028 Los Angeles Olympics, another major international sporting event expected to rely on advanced surveillance, cybersecurity and counter-drone technologies.

Despite the challenges, officials in the host countries have expressed confidence in their preparations. Security measures have been strengthened at stadiums, airports, fan zones, team facilities and transportation hubs, with authorities deploying additional personnel and technology to address potential risks ranging from public demonstrations and organized crime activity to unauthorized drone operations and other disruptions.

Agencies contributed to the story.

Renewables to safeguard Asia from oil shocks

Region urged to reduce dependence on imported energy amid Mideast tensions

By **PRIME SARMIENTO**
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The development of renewable energy sources will help shield Asian economies from the harsh impact of soaring oil prices, a regional forum heard on Tuesday.

As the conflict in the Middle East entered its 100th day, record-high prices of oil and gas continued to drive up inflation across the Asia-Pacific and exposed the region's dependence on imported fossil fuels.

However, energy industry experts said the Middle East crisis also offers an opportunity for Asian countries to transform their energy systems, harnessing indigenous sources like solar and wind to reduce their dependence on imported oil.

The disruption in the Strait of Hormuz has confirmed what Asian economies long feared — that their energy security hangs on a waterway that they do not control, said Sara Jane Ahmed, finance adviser to The Vulnerable Twenty Group of Finance Ministers, or V20.

In a webinar organized by the United States-based think tank Global Energy Monitor, Ahmed said that even before the Middle East war started, Asia was already developing clean technology.

As an "electrotech superpower", Asia makes over 95 percent of the world's solar panels, 85 percent of its batteries, and 75 percent of its turbines, she said.

Ahmed said the region has yet to fully tap its abundant resources, noting that solar and wind power have the potential to supply about 14 times Asia's total energy demand.

"Asia needs a new energy playbook, and we can already see what it looks like. Leaning into electrotech and winning back our energy sovereignty is critical," Ahmed said. This, she said, is "shared prosperity and multilateralism in its truest sense".

Brenda Valerio, the Philippines country director at the global network New Energy Nexus, said the high oil prices that drove up local fuel and transport costs have also pushed Filipino consumers to shift to solar energy.

"People are no longer viewing rooftop solar panels as an environmental choice but as protection — protection against volatile electricity prices," she added.

Valerio said New Energy Nexus has a network of about 300 micro and small solar installers all over the Philippines. Its recent survey showed that customer inquiries for solar panels had jumped following the rise in fuel prices.

"They're no longer waiting for perfect conditions. They are responding directly to high electricity prices and fuel insecurity," she said.

Customer interest

However, Valerio noted that actual installations lagged behind the surge in customer interest. This is because installers are facing shortages of solar components, rising logistics costs, workforce shortages, financing bottlenecks, and a slow permitting process.

"The Philippines is not failing to generate demand for renewable energy; we are failing to convert that demand into deployment," Valerio said.

She said that for archipelagos like Indonesia and the Philippines, it is important to establish distributed solar storage, microgrids, and localized energy systems. This would entail diversifying beyond centralized energy systems. Valerio noted that for decades, most energy systems had been designed around large power plants and long transmission networks.

For Muhammad Mustafa Amjad, cofounder of the Pakistan-based energy think tank Renewables First, batteries and a more robust grid system are important for energy transition.

Japan's ex-LDP leader Yohei Kono dies at 89

By **ZHAO JIA**
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Yohei Kono, former speaker of Japan's House of Representatives and former president of the Liberal Democratic Party, died on Monday at the age of 89, Japanese media reported on Wednesday.

Kono, born in 1937, was first elected to the House of Representatives in 1967 and served in such posts as chief cabinet secretary, foreign minister and deputy prime minister. In 1993, while serving as chief cabinet secretary, he issued the Kono Statement.

The statement acknowledged the Japanese military's direct involvement in setting up "comfort stations" and forcibly recruiting women on the Korean Peninsula, in China and elsewhere, offering an apology and reflecting on these actions.

Kono was known in China for his long-standing support for China-Japan friendship. He visited China many times, with his most recent trip taking place in June 2025, according to official Chinese releases. Leading a delegation of the Japanese Association for the Promotion of International Trade, Kono met with senior Chinese officials, including the country's top diplomat Wang Yi, in Beijing during the visit.

Wang said Kono had long been committed to the cause of China-Japan friendship and had remained steadfast in promoting friendly exchanges between the two countries even in the face of difficulties and challenges, which China highly appreciated.

Kono told Wang that history should not be forgotten, nor should it be denied, adding that the past cannot be changed, but the future can be shaped through effort.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Platform of meaningful exchanges to help enhance global human rights governance

Bringing together more than 400 Chinese and foreign guests from nearly 100 countries and international and regional organizations, the 2026 Forum on Global Human Rights Governance is being held in Beijing from Thursday to Friday. The event aims to help build a fairer, more equitable and inclusive global human rights governance system.

Under the theme "Joint Development, Shared Human Rights: The 40th Anniversary of the Adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development and a New Vision for Global Human Rights Governance", the forum underscores China's commitment to development as the fundamental guarantee for human rights.

This perspective is deeply rooted in China's own achievements. A report evaluating the National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2021-25), which defined the objectives and tasks for promoting human rights in China during the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, has concluded that all 181 tasks have been completed and 20 of the 44 binding targets were fulfilled ahead of schedule or exceeded the specified requirements.

China looks forward to sharing its insights on promoting human rights through better development at the forum "to turn the vision of the Declaration on the Right to Development into reality", as Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Monday.

China has built the world's largest education, social security and healthcare systems. Solid progress toward common prosperity for all has strengthened the foundation for advancing human rights, while the development of whole-process people's democracy has enhanced the protection of the rights and interests of all groups.

The forum's five sub-forums cover topics that are highly relevant to both China's practice and global needs. They address, respectively: the human rights implications of the Global Governance Initiative; the role and significance of the right to development; safeguarding the right to development in the age of AI; green development and the protection of human rights; and the relationship between modernization and the free, comprehensive development of individuals.

International human rights governance is indeed confronting multifaceted challenges. Polarization is eroding the foundation of multilateral cooperation across many regions, as geopolitical competition increasingly politicizes and weaponizes human rights issues. Meanwhile, some countries apply double standards and withdraw from international agreements, further undermining collective efforts. All this has shaken the global human rights governance system centered on the United Nations.

Not to mention that armed conflicts and humanitarian crises are worsening in some regions. A large number of civilians are direct victims of violent conflicts, and the red lines of international humanitarian law are frequently crossed.

Development imbalances and inequality are growing, marginalizing the right to development and hindering progress on the Sustainable Development Goals — a call to action adopted by all UN member states in 2015 to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that by 2030 all people enjoy peace and prosperity.

Meanwhile, climate change threatens the survival of vulnerable groups, and rapid technological advances, such as AI, are creating tensions between innovation and human rights protection, posing new governance challenges.

China is no exception to many of these challenges. The evaluation report notes that China still faces imbalanced and insufficient development, while scientific and technological development and industrial transformation give rise to new demands for rights. Notwithstanding these challenges, the country has effectively integrated human rights development with its national conditions providing a practical reference for other nations.

Unlike the Western-centric human rights narrative, China adopts a people-centered approach, fostering dialogue and promoting an inclusive, cooperative human rights paradigm through initiatives aimed at shared development. As the world confronts persistent inequality, poverty and underdevelopment, China's approach provides valuable insights for nations seeking to safeguard basic human rights and improve global human rights governance while pursuing their own paths to prosperity and progress.

China's trade data provide food for thought

China's exports rose by 19.4 percent in May from a year earlier, accelerating from April's already impressive 14.1 percent growth. Imports grew even faster, jumping 27.4 percent after April's 25.3 percent increase. Total trade expanded by 16.9 percent in yuan terms, pushing monthly trade above 4 trillion yuan ($587 billion) for the third consecutive month and bringing the cumulative trade growth for the first five months of the year to 15.3 percent.

Some Western critics have portrayed China as an economy dependent on "dumping overcapacity" with low value added. The data point to a different reality. The composition of the growth is even more notable than the quantity.

The strongest momentum is increasingly concentrated in technology-intensive sectors, including integrated circuits, advanced manufacturing equipment, electric vehicles and artificial intelligence-related products. Semiconductor exports reportedly surged by more than 100 percent year-on-year, while high-tech exports continued to outperform overall trade growth.

This is not merely a story about China exporting more goods. It is a story about China moving higher up the value chain at a time when much of the developed world is struggling to do the same.

Over the past several years, a conventional narrative has prevailed in some Western countries — that tariffs, export controls and "de-risking" would gradually diminish China's position in global supply chains while strengthening their own. However, reality has not borne this out.

Instead of being contained, China's manufacturers have adapted. Faced with external pressure, they have accelerated technological upgrading. Export growth is increasingly being driven by sectors linked to digitalization, electrification and AI.

The strong trade performance was registered amid global turbulence. The conflict in the Middle East has disrupted energy markets, raised transportation costs, and increased uncertainty across the global economy. Yet, thanks to its increasingly diversified trade portfolios, China's trade has not only remained resilient but also accelerated.

Part of the explanation lies in a phenomenon visible far beyond China. Around the world, demand for AI infrastructure, semiconductors, data centers, power equipment and green technologies is surging. Exports of economies, such as the Republic of Korea, driven by AI-related demand, soared in May. China is not operating outside this trend; rather, it is both a major contributor and a principal beneficiary, owing to its key position in global supply chains, particularly in high-tech sectors.

The "China Shock 2.0" peddled by some China-bashers in the West simply does not hold water. What truly drives global trade is the robust demand for China's performance-cost advantaged exports — not the exports of "overcapacity" as they claim.

The increase in both China's exports and imports with developed and developing economies in recent months demonstrates the win-win nature of China's trade with its trading partners, belying "decoupling" or "trade imbalance" claims.

Compared with other major economies, what makes China distinctive is its efficiency, innovation and scale. Few economies possess the combination of manufacturing depth, engineering talent, logistics capacity and industrial ecosystems needed to meet rapidly growing global demand in advanced sectors. Whether one is discussing batteries, electric vehicles, solar technologies, industrial machinery or increasingly sophisticated semiconductors, China has built production networks that are difficult to replicate quickly elsewhere.

It is an exercise in absurdity for certain Western armchair strategists to assume that political coercion will enable some developed countries to restructure global supply chains in accordance with the personal preferences of select politicians.

Notably, China's imports growing faster than exports challenges the caricature of China as simply "an export machine". Strong import growth suggests robust demand for components, raw materials, machinery and intermediate goods needed to support the country's industrial upgrading. It also reflects the deepening integration of China within global manufacturing networks.

None of this means China is immune to challenges. The huge potential of domestic consumption remains untapped. Geopolitical risks are unlikely to disappear. Trade frictions with major economies are likely to continue. But the long-term trade data of China have a habit of revealing how the world's second-largest economy has made the most of what it has to keep its economy and trade developing on the right track. By doing its own things well, China is contributing to the common good of the world.

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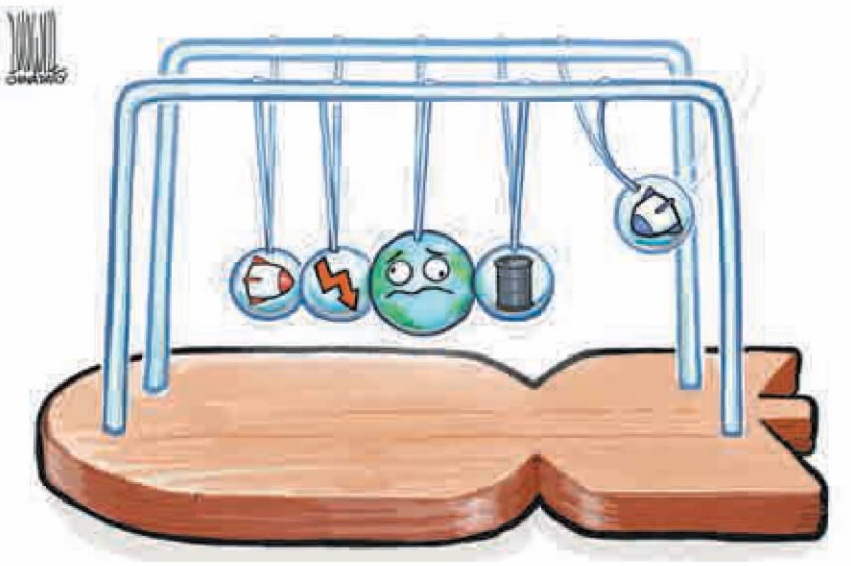

Opinion Line

Transforming 'golden waterway' into powerful growth engine

The beginning of construction this week on the Three Gorges new waterway project — which includes what is expected to become the world's largest inland ship lock, a system that uses watertight chambers and gravity to raise and lower vessels, allowing them to bypass sharp changes in elevation along the waterway — marks another step toward advancing the high-quality development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt.

As the world's third-longest river and China's most important inland waterway, the more than 6,300-kilometer Yangtze River has long served as a vital artery linking the country's vast western hinterland with its dynamic eastern coast. The Yangtze River Economic Belt spans 11 provincial-level regions, is home to roughly 40 percent of the country's population, and consistently generates around 47.3 percent of the country's economic output. It is also one of the country's major hubs for foreign trade.

The waterway project comes in response to a practical need. The existing Three Gorges ship lock, designed for an annual cargo throughput of 100 million metric tons, surpassed that capacity as early as 2011. By 2025, cargo throughput had exceeded 170 million tons. The bottleneck has increased waiting times and logistics costs.

Once completed, the new waterway will raise the annual cargo-handling capacity of the Three Gorges hub to 336 million tons, nearly double its current level. It will help facilitate the smoother flow of goods, strengthen industry and supply chains, and inject new momentum into the development of the economic belt.

Beyond its economic significance, the project once again highlights China's world-class capabilities in infrastructure construction and engineering innovation. With a total investment of 77.2 billion yuan ($11.39 billion), the project is expected to set multiple world records in inland ship lock construction, including vessel dimensions, lock chamber size and excavation scale. Building such a massive hydraulic structure under complex geological and hydrological conditions represents a formidable engineering challenge.

As the first major project to break ground during China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, it demonstrates the country's strong capacity to plan, design and execute mega infrastructure projects that serve long-term national development goals. From the Three Gorges Dam to the Hong Kong-Zhuhai-Macao Bridge and now the Three Gorges new waterway, China continues to transform ambitious visions into reality through technological innovation, scientific planning and efficient implementation.

Equally noteworthy is the project's commitment to ecological protection. The Yangtze River is one of China's most important ecological treasures. The project reflects the principle that development and environmental protection can advance hand in hand.

Ecological considerations have been incorporated from the earliest stages of the project's planning and design. Dedicated fish passages will help maintain aquatic biodiversity, while construction methods have been carefully selected to minimize disturbances to river ecosystems. Particularly striking is the decision to modify the original design to avoid disturbing the spawning grounds of the Chinese sturgeon, a national first-class protected aquatic wild animal and a flagship species of the Yangtze River. Although this increased project costs by approximately 2 billion yuan, it underscores China's determination to prioritize ecological conservation alongside development.

The Three Gorges new waterway project is therefore an epitome of China's pursuit of innovation-driven, green and high-quality development. By easing a critical transportation bottleneck while safeguarding the ecological health of the Yangtze River, the project will help transform the nation's "golden waterway" into an even more powerful engine of sustainable growth.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

'Made in Yiwu' upgrading reflects move up value chain

Editor's note: *As the 2026 FIFA World Cup prepares to kick off, Yiwu, the global hub for commodities in East China's Zhejiang province, has been in World Cup mode for months. China News Service spoke to Wu Xiaoming, head of the Yiwu sporting goods association, about the transformation of "Made in Yiwu" products. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

In preparation for the World Cup, businesses in Yiwu have meticulously adjusted their product lines and production schedules to meet market demand. This year, in response to specific requests from overseas buyers, many suppliers are offering personalized products featuring specific colors, patterns and jersey numbers.

Many merchants have noted that this time the order cycle for World Cup-related products began much earlier than in previous tournaments. Some companies started building inventory as early as last summer, with most shipments completed before this year's Spring Festival in February.

As one of China's important gateways for the international commodity trade, Yiwu has gained extensive experience in foreign commerce and earned the reputation of being the "world's supermarket". Its competitiveness in global markets has been strengthened by a continuously improving multimodal logistics network that integrates postal services with sea, road, air and rail transport. Efficient trade routes have helped reduce both delivery times and logistics costs, a major advantage in global market competitiveness.

At the same time, "Made in Yiwu" benefits from a well-developed local supply chain. Raw materials, components and packaging materials are sourced locally, reducing both production time and costs.

Unlike traditional large-scale standardized manufacturing, Yiwu's economy is increasingly built around small and medium-sized enterprises with highly specialized divisions of labor and a vast range of product categories. Buyers can source footballs, jerseys, horns, flags, decorative items and many other products in a single market and consolidate shipments, further lowering procurement costs.

By participating in major international sporting events, Yiwu merchants have developed a mature business model around the sports event economy. They have built a loyal customer base and continue to gain recognition and visibility in international markets.

In recent years, Yiwu's sports goods industry has gradually shifted from competing primarily on price to competing on creativity and intellectual property — a challenging but necessary transition.

In the past, the Yiwu commodities market relied heavily on high-volume, low-margin sales, with low entry barriers leading to excessive competition. This model is not sustainable in the long term. Instead of focusing on short-term profits from individual transactions, businesses are increasingly aiming for enduring customer relationships and sustainable growth.

Today, "Made in Yiwu" is undergoing a transformation from labor-intensive manufacturing to technology-driven production. Businesses are embracing intelligent manufacturing, digitalization and greener development practices.

After years of growth and development, the "Made in Yiwu" label is increasingly combining "bringing in" and "going global" to fill market gaps and seize new opportunities. Its development path has evolved from contract manufacturing and low-cost production toward original design, licensed products and standards-setting. This transformation mirrors the broader upgrading of Chinese manufacturing as it moves from the lower end of global value chains toward higher-value segments.

With the advantages of a vast domestic market, a complete industrial ecosystem and strong policy support, China is gradually evolving from a passive participant in global value chains into a more active contributor to international standards. Over time, "Made in China" will become synonymous with high quality, high-tech and high value.

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VIEWS

Theodoros Papanghelis

A path forward for the Classics

The idea that classical wisdom nourishes the life of the spirit took shape during the Renaissance period — the transitional movement in Europe between medieval and modern times, beginning in the 14th century in Italy and lasting into the 17th century, when Greek and Latin authors were restored to prominence by leading humanists.

As they conceived it, the *studia humanitatis* — which originated in the 15th century and refers to a course of classical studies including grammar, poetry, rhetoric, history, and moral philosophy — required sustained engagement with the ideas and values enshrined in the great works of antiquity, which were seen as the best guides to two related aims: stylistic excellence and moral improvement.

This humanistic project showed little interest in vocational concerns and tended to sideline the natural sciences, treating them as largely irrelevant to the formation of character.

Its educational program — elitist insofar as it hailed from the notion that the *studia humanitatis* were intended for the freeborn — placed overwhelming emphasis on the study of the past as the primary means of intellectual, moral, and aesthetic self-cultivation.

The humanistic model of education long held a dominant position, with the sciences initially slow to challenge its authority.

From the 17th century onward, however, this began to change.

The natural sciences not only questioned the epistemological foundations of a traditional, historically oriented educational philosophy — while also claiming equal, if not superior, curricular status — but also exerted a more "insidious" influence in that a positivistic tendency rubbed off onto the humanities themselves, shifting attention away from broad pedagogical and ethical concerns toward a more neutral preoccupation with particular philological questions posed by the texts.

This development was further boosted by the professionalization of the humanities in the 18th-century German university.

Although the emergence of *Altertumswissenschaft*, a German concept emphasizing the unity of the various disciplines the study of the ancient world comprises, did not entirely displace earlier humanist ideals, it significantly diluted them by replacing their integrative, value-oriented approach with more technical and specialized forms of inquiry while scientific utilitarians became more vocal.

So, as one of that ilk put it, knowing the position of the liver became more useful than knowing the Greek and Latin words for it.

It was now hard for the humanities to claim the high moral ground they had once possessed and the "particularists" who, as Irving Babbitt once quipped, devoted study to ancient horse bridles and Roman doorknobs, were not much help.

Global Lens

At the same time, however, it was also refreshing, insofar as it seemed, to revive something of the optimistic spirit of Renaissance humanism, albeit reframed through a distinctly cross-civilizational perspective.

Another challenge to the ideals of early humanism came with structuralism and its subsequent developments, which shifted attention from textual content to the deep structural patterns that generate it.

Later intellectual trends associated with postmodernism, along with debates surrounding political correctness and so-called "woke" culture — defined as awareness of important facts and issues, especially issues of racial and social justice — contributed further to the gradual repositioning of the study of classical texts.

More recently, in the prevailing intellectual climate in the West, traditional claims about the enduring authority and relevance of the "classics" have also been increasingly questioned.

Antiquity is nowadays approached less as a repository of intrinsic value and more as a historically situated system of meanings and values — inviting the question "value for whom?" — with which modern readers are expected to engage critically rather than reverently.

Meanwhile, as institutional classics go down their various paths, debates about their place in contemporary curricula flare up from time to time.

Notably, an international conference on this quandary, entitled "The 'Future of the Past': Why Classical Studies Still Matter", was held at the Academy of Athens in November 2022, reflecting the continuing urgency of this question.

Two years later, the inaugural World Conference on Classics, themed "Classical Civilizations and the Modern World", was co-organized in Beijing by, among others, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the Academy of Athens.

When I participated in this event, together with other Greek academics and scholars, I had in mind an article published in 2021 in Asia Times by David Goldman, in which he contrasted the relative decline of classical studies in the United States with their growing prominence in China.

The conference "concept note", as circulated by the Chinese organizers, adopted an optimistic tone.

It suggested that scholarly exchanges among participants would help highlight "the modern value of classical civilizations" and contribute "wisdom and strength to tackle problems facing the development of human society," while also fostering mutual learning and international understanding.

For a Western scholar accustomed, as I am, to conferences, colloquia, and workshops focused on the finer points of narratology, gender, sexuality, meta-scholarship, deixis, and a wide range of other specialized concerns, this framing initially appeared rather broad and somewhat imprecise.

At the same time, however, it was also refreshing, insofar as it seemed, to revive something of the optimistic spirit of Renaissance humanism, albeit reframed through a distinctly cross-civilizational perspective.

Indeed, a number of the papers presented were informed by such an orientation.

The second World Conference of Classics, held in Athens from June 9 to 10, appears to confirm the organizers' intention to develop an ongoing dialogue between Beijing and Athens in pursuit of these aims.

This initiative will be welcomed by those who remain convinced that the comparative study of the core values of classical civilizations continues to offer one of the more promising paths for reflection on our shared humanity.

The author is a member of the Academy of Athens.
The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Stefan Szymanski

Networks are the secret sauce for footballing nations

The joy of sport is its unpredictability. As the FIFA World Cup approaches, everyone wants to know who is going to win it.

Statisticians, economists, sociologists and various other experts are attempting to uncover the hidden patterns that might reveal the outcome.

While no one can predict what exactly will happen, social science offers valuable insights into the dynamics at play.

In international sports, the factors determining success are not different from those for economic development.

Success depends on the resources that each side brings to a match. Those resources correspond to the inputs in what economists call a production function.

We can think of sporting competition in the same way as we think about national output, or GDP. In both cases the key inputs are labor, capital and "total factor productivity". The first two are easy to understand. The bigger your national population, the greater the chance that there are superstars to be uncovered. Finding and developing those superstars requires capital for establishing talent scouting networks and training facilities.

Total factor productivity, a concept that explains variations in economic output across countries, often hinges on a nation's innovative capacity.

This in turn is closely tied to human capital — the knowledge and experience accumulated by individuals and shared across society, what one might call the wisdom of the crowd.

This framework works pretty well for football too. More than 200 nations participated in the qualifying rounds of the World Cup, a number that has been pretty stable over the past eight editions of the competition. But only eight countries have ever won the World Cup. Six of those eight have won it more than once, and in the 14 World Cups since 1966, only three countries have entered the elite group — Argentina in 1978, France in 1998 and Spain in 2010.

Global Lens

We can think of sporting competition in the same way as we think about national output, or GDP. In both cases the key inputs are labor, capital and "total factor productivity". The first two are easy to understand.

The pattern is not going to be any different this year. Spain and France are the favorites with outside chances for Argentina, England and Brazil. The most highly favored "outsider" is Portugal, a country with an impressive football pedigree.

All of these countries were at the forefront of football's development more than 100 years ago. This also means football is not like manufacturing.

Many onetime "developing" nations have caught up with countries that were once at the forefront of manufacturing and even outstripped them.

Manufacturing is relatively easy to copy, and therefore does not remain a consistent advantage over the very long term.

A more likely comparator might be universities. The US, Britain and Germany housed the most prestigious universities in the world 100 years ago, and this is still largely true. New universities have come up in other parts of the world and become leaders in some fields, but for consistent excellence, the older universities usually have an edge.

This suggests that there is something in the transition of know-how from one generation to another that gives an advantage — a consensus about best practices and their preservation, even if those best practices evolve over time.

This might well be the process that enabled the same countries to dominate the World Cup for so long.

The dominant soccer nations are tied together in a shared network. In Europe, these countries all border each other, and ideas move freely across national boundaries.

Innovations that emerge in one part of Europe quickly spread to the rest of it. Brazil and Argentina have a similar networked relationship, as well as being plugged into Europe through historical connections with Portugal, Spain and Italy.

Not that these networks imply a friendly sharing of ideas — the relationships are driven by intense rivalries and the desire to win. But it is very hard to keep any secrets in football — your ideas are visible on the pitch.

This network effect, then, may be the "secret sauce" — the source of total factor productivity that explains the dominance of the same national teams.

It is striking that both the US and China, which now vie to be the world's important players in almost everything else, have not dented the pre-eminence of the old nations in football. The US has devoted far greater resources to the effort, but even as hosts, they have a very slim chance of winning this year's World Cup.

When it comes to football, the difference between US men's and women's teams is very striking. The US women's team has been the best in the world since the women's game started to spread. For European and South American women, there were no historical networks to fall back on, and in fact the US created the dominant network. Chinese women too have fared much better than the men.

For countries like China and the US, there are two pathways for competing at the highest level in men's football. One is to join the existing network — which is a strain in terms of geography. The other is to create their own networks. While this is the most likely path, so far it has proved to be a mountain too high to climb.

The author is a professor of sports management at the University of Michigan. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Chen Xiangyang

China-DPRK friendship steadfast in a turbulent world

In international politics, some relationships are fleeting because they are driven by temporary interests. Others endure because they are rooted in shared history, strategic necessity and long-term national interests. The relationship between China and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea belongs to the second category.

In today's rapidly shifting global landscape, the traditional friendship and cooperation between the two countries is a vital anchor of regional stability. Formally established on Oct 6, 1949, this enduring bond was founded on shared revolutionary ideals. Over the decades, successive generations of leaders have nurtured this relationship, ensuring that it continually adapts to serve the fundamental interests of both nations.

In recent years, exchanges between President Xi Jinping and DPRK top leader Kim Jong-un have provided renewed strategic guidance for bilateral relations. Both sides have consistently stressed that regardless of changes in the international landscape, maintaining, consolidating and developing China-DPRK relations remains a firm commitment.

At the core of this revitalized relationship is a deep reservoir of strategic mutual trust, which has become particularly vital as both nations navigate critical phases in their respective domestic development.

China has embarked on a decisive phase of its modernization journey, guided by the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which aims to drive its transition toward high-quality development. Simultaneously, the 9th Congress of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) rolled out its own Five-Year Plan (2026-30) in February to steer the country into a phase of comprehensive socialist construction through a dual strategic focus on defense building and economic development.

Against this backdrop, safeguarding sovereignty, security and development interests has become a more pressing task for many countries.

This high-level engagement serves two crucial functions. First, it ensures that communication channels remain uninterrupted. When volatility ripples through the Korean Peninsula, direct and reliable baseline channels lower the risk of strategic miscalculation. Second, it facilitates deep institutional learning.

As socialist states led by Communist parties, exchanging practical insights on grassroots governance, livelihood security and risk mitigation transforms a historical friendship into tangible, domestic governance assets.

This dimension is particularly significant at a time when the international environment is becoming more volatile.

The world is witnessing rising geopolitical conflicts, growing protectionism, intensified major-power competition and mounting pressure on the global order.

Against this backdrop, safeguarding sovereignty, security and development interests has become a more pressing task for many countries. For China and the DPRK, closer coordination in regional and international affairs can contribute to a more stable strategic environment.

Moreover, the DPRK's recent initiatives, such as inviting Chinese diplomats to visit the Wonsan-Kalma Coastal Tourist Area in February, underscore a mutual desire to deepen tourism and personnel exchanges, directly elevating the living standards of both populations.

Ultimately, the relationship rests on a bedrock of profound public goodwill and cultural proximity. Rooted in the ethos that "good neighbors wish each other well", the bond between the two societies remains uniquely resilient. This emotional connection has been continually nurtured by the highest echelons of leadership.

President Xi's paying homage to the China-DPRK Friendship Tower in Pyongyang during the visit that just concluded, alongside DPRK leader Kim's frequent visits to the cemetery of martyrs of the Chinese People's Volunteers in Hoechang County, symbolizes a shared history written in solidarity.

By continually expanding exchanges across education, sports, healthcare, media, and youth cohorts, both countries are ensuring that this historical legacy is passed down to future generations.

As a classic Chinese poem aptly observes, "Tide at full, two shores stretch vast and wide; Wind in fair, one sail hangs full with pride." China and the DPRK are bound as good comrades and steadfast neighbors.

No matter how the winds of international politics shift, the resolve to protect, consolidate, and advance this relationship will remain unshakable.

Buttressed by the strategic vision of their top leadership, the towering tree of China-DPRK friendship will continue to flourish, remaining evergreen for generations to come.

The author is the deputy director of the Institute of Northeast Asian Studies, China Institutes of Contemporary International Relations. The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

HUSSEIN ASKARY

More than goods

The Belt and Road Initiative is not just a vehicle for trade but a promoter of development and civilizational dialogue



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

It is a common mistake to view the Belt and Road Initiative simply as a vehicle for trade promotion on a global scale. While trade is important, there is a deeper and more important concept — the "economic belt" or the "development corridor". Economic belts or development corridors feature basic infrastructure — railways, roads, riparian navigation, power lines, oil and gas pipelines, telecommunication cables and water management systems — that produces new agricultural, industrial and urban clusters, as they bring technology and resources to areas that were previously isolated. China's Yangtze River Belt is the best example of this concept, stretching for thousands of kilometers with new industrial, agricultural, science and technology centers popping up all around it in the past three decades or so. Cities such as Chengdu, Chongqing, Changsha and Wuhan have become world-renowned thanks to this corridor. Therefore, all the BRI corridors stretching from Asia to Europe and from Central Asia to West Asia and Africa should be seen in this light. This is the scientific implementation of the Chinese traditional saying "if you want to get rich, first build a road".



Africa is a continent with enormous potential, and this is something the Chinese understand very well. Africa had a population of some 1.4 billion by the end of 2024, with a median age ranging from 20 to 30. According to the United Nations projections, the population will increase to almost 3 billion by 2050 and will still be the youngest group in the world. Europe will decline dramatically in demographic terms while the Americas and Asia will stagnate, then decline after 2050. The European way of looking at this is with alarm that projects Africa to be forever poor and that a great number of youth will try to immigrate to Europe.

But these young people will be a great source of wealth if Africa overcomes the "three bottlenecks of development" — the lack of credit, infrastructure and skilled labor. China has embarked on filling the gaps in these three areas in its cooperation with African nations. In this sense, China believes that by making its partners prosperous, China itself will benefit in the long term. This is the essence of the win-win philosophy embedded in China's Global Development Initiative, as expressed in the saying "China will only do well when the world is doing well. And when China is doing well, the world will do even better." This is the lesson Europe and the United States need to learn to peacefully co-exist with Africa, Latin America, and Asia and prosper together.

The sheer scale of Africa's foundational needs — in transport, energy, water security and technological capacity — demands a development strategy of vision and precision. Therefore, a sustainable and transformative partnership under the BRI must consciously pursue a dual-track approach.

The first track is the large-scale infrastructure dimension: the financing and construction of strategic infrastructure that redefines the continent's economic geography. These are the flagship projects — the grand hydroelectric dams that power national grids, the transcontinental railways that link landlocked nations to ports, the massive water management systems that safeguard regions against drought, and the industrial parks that serve as hubs for technology transfer. These projects build the backbone for pan-African integration and African countries' long-term industrial take-off.

However, to be truly durable and legitimate, this large-scale infrastructure track must be deliberately coupled with a second, connective track: a focus on targeted, smaller-scale projects that directly oxygenate the local economy and improve daily life. This includes rural feeder roads connecting farmers to markets, village-level solar micro-grids, community irrigation schemes, and vocational training centers. These projects ensure that the macro-framework does not operate in isolation but is rooted in and responsive to on-the-ground needs.

The essential insight is that neither track can succeed in isolation. Megaprojects without grassroots connectivity risk becoming "cathedrals in the desert" — impressive but isolated assets with limited diffuse economic benefit. Conversely, small-scale projects alone, without the enabling national infrastructure, cannot catalyze the structural transformation Africa seeks. The genius of a mature BRI partnership lies in consciously braiding these two strands together, ensuring that the continental arteries feed the local capillaries, and that local vitality, in turn, gives purpose and sustainability to the grand vision. This synergy is the true hallmark of a community with a shared future.

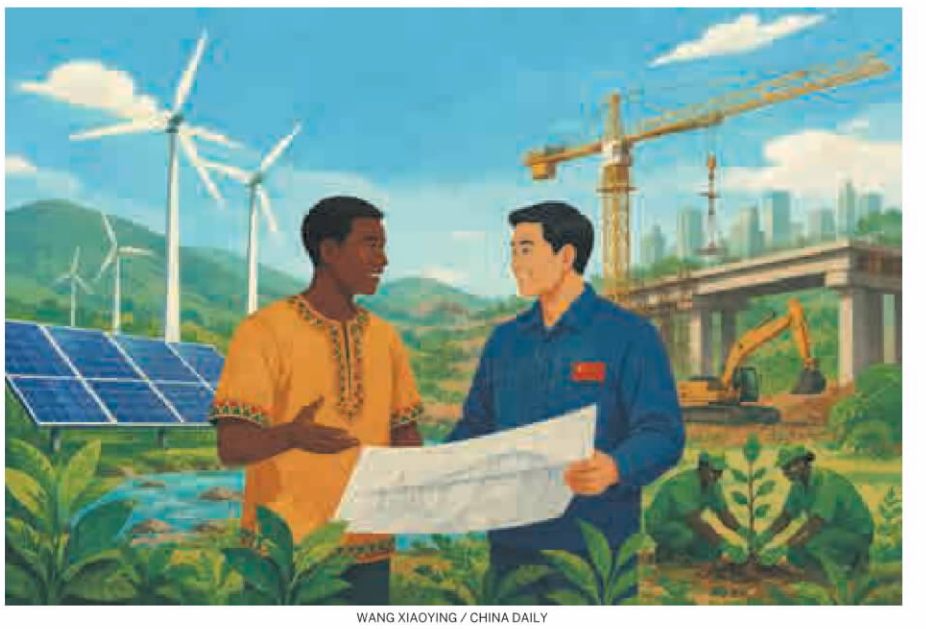
Ultimately, the BRI, like the ancient Silk Road, is a vehicle for the dialogue of civilizations — the exchange of cultural, scientific and philosophical ideas. People-to-people communication through tourism, business and educational exchanges will bring great benefit to the nations of the world as infrastructure and technology do. Through civilizational dialogue we better appreciate how diverse we are as nation-states and cultures, and how similar we are in the aspirations and dreams of a better future. This will be the most important instrument for generating common understanding and avoiding conflicts. Harmonious co-existence does not mean uniform and one-dimensional cultures, political and social systems across all nations. As the saying goes, one flower does not make a garden. The notion of a community with a shared future, advocated by the Chinese leadership, will become a reality when we embrace both diversity and common goals, and this will be the greatest gift we leave to future generations.

The author is the vice-president of the Belt and Road Institute in Sweden. Some of the views in this article are drawn from the author's lecture at the Chongyang Institute for Financial Studies, Renmin University of China. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

EHIZUELEN MICHAEL MITCHELL OMORUYI

Sustainable partnership

Africa-China green cooperation is demonstrating that the gap between development imperatives and environmental sustainability can be bridged



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

The defining development challenge of the 21st century is no longer whether countries can grow, but whether they can grow sustainably in an era of accelerating climate change and ecological uncertainty. Climate change, biodiversity loss, land degradation, pollution and growing energy demands are no longer future concerns; they are present realities shaping development trajectories across the world. For developing countries, particularly those in the Global South, the challenge is not whether development should be green, but how economic transformation can be achieved while protecting the environment, creating jobs and improving livelihoods. In this regard, Africa-China green cooperation offers an increasingly important example of how international partnerships can help bridge the gap between development imperatives and environmental sustainability.



The stakes are particularly high for Africa. Despite contributing less than 4 percent of global carbon emissions, the continent remains among the most vulnerable regions to climate change. According to the African Development Bank, climate-related shocks cost African economies between 5 and 15 percent of GDP growth annually, while droughts, floods and extreme weather events continue to threaten food security, infrastructure and livelihoods. Yet Africa holds plentiful solar resources, vast hydropower potential, substantial wind corridors and abundant geothermal energy reserves. These assets position Africa not merely as a victim of climate change but as a potential leader in the global green transition.

Unlocking this potential, however, requires investment, technology, infrastructure and institutional capacity. The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development estimates that developing countries face a substantial financing gap in achieving climate and sustainable development objectives. For many African countries, the challenge is compounded by limited fiscal space, high borrowing costs and inadequate access to green finance. This is where international cooperation becomes indispensable.

China's own development experience demonstrates that economic growth and environmental protection can reinforce rather than undermine one another. Over the past decade, China has emerged as a global leader in renewable energy deployment, accounting for a significant share of global investments in solar power, wind energy, battery technologies, electric vehicles and green infrastructure. According to the International Energy Agency, China has become the world's largest investor in clean energy technologies and now plays a pivotal role in reducing the costs of renewable energy globally. This transformation has not only supported China's domestic green transition but also created opportunities for international cooperation in sustainable development.

As part of its commitment to building an ecological civilization and promoting a community with a shared future for humanity, China has increasingly integrated green development into its international cooperation agenda. This policy orientation has helped position sustainability as a central pillar of China's engagement with developing countries and has created new opportunities for partnerships that support both economic growth and environmental protection.

Increasingly, green development has become an important pillar of China's engagement with Africa. Across the continent, Chinese-supported renewable energy projects are helping expand electricity access, strengthen energy security and support low-carbon development pathways. Solar power plants in countries such as Kenya, South Africa and Egypt, hydropower projects in Ethiopia and elsewhere, and investments in clean transportation and green industrial infrastructure demonstrate a growing emphasis on sustainability within Africa-China cooperation.

Beyond physical infrastructure, Africa-China green cooperation is evolving into a broader partnership focused on technology transfer, skills development, agricultural modernization, environmental governance and industrial upgrading. Such cooperation recognizes that green development is not solely about generating clean energy. It is equally about creating productive capacity, enhancing resilience, fostering innovation and supporting long-term economic transformation.

This is particularly important because the green transition is increasingly becoming an economic opportunity. For Africa, the transition to clean energy offers opportunities to develop new industries, expand manufacturing capabilities, create employment for its rapidly growing youth population, and strengthen regional value chains. Green industrialization, sustainable agriculture, climate-smart infrastructure and circular economy initiatives can all contribute to a more diversified and resilient economic future.

Africa-China cooperation also highlights the growing importance of South-South cooperation in addressing global challenges. Traditional development models often present environmental protection and economic growth as competing objectives. However, emerging partnerships across the Global South increasingly demonstrate that sustainability can serve as a driver of development rather than a constraint upon it. By combining investment, technology, policy learning and local adaptation, countries can pursue pathways that simultaneously advance economic growth and environmental stewardship.

This approach is particularly relevant at a time when developing countries are seeking greater representation in global climate governance. While industrialized countries remain responsible for the majority of historical greenhouse gas emissions, many developing countries are being asked to pursue ambitious climate objectives despite facing pressing development challenges. A just and effective global green transition therefore requires industrialized countries to provide stronger support for technology sharing, concessional finance, capacity building and infrastructure investment. Partnerships such as those between Africa and China can help demonstrate practical mechanisms for translating these principles into tangible outcomes.

At the same time, the future of Africa-China green cooperation should move beyond infrastructure alone. Greater emphasis should be placed on supporting local innovation ecosystems, green entrepreneurship, research collaboration, vocational training, sustainable urban development, and climate-resilient agricultural systems. Expanding cooperation in emerging sectors such as green hydrogen, battery manufacturing, electric mobility, digital technologies and sustainable supply chains could further strengthen Africa's role within the global green economy.

The future will not be shaped by isolated national efforts but by partnerships capable of mobilizing resources, sharing knowledge and fostering collective action. Africa-China green cooperation illustrates how countries can work together to pursue modernization that is environmentally sustainable, economically inclusive and socially beneficial.

For the Global South, the lesson is clear. Green development is not a luxury to be pursued after growth has been achieved; it is increasingly becoming the foundation of future prosperity. By deepening cooperation in renewable energy, sustainable infrastructure, green finance, technology transfer and capacity building, Africa and China are helping to demonstrate that a greener future is not only possible but essential. In an era defined by shared environmental challenges, global partnerships will determine whether sustainable development remains an aspiration or becomes a reality. Africa-China cooperation offers one of the most promising examples of how that reality can be built.

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BUSINESS



Shoppers check out Thai durians at a grocery market in Nanning, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, on May 12. YU XIANGQUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Opening-up seen injecting impetus to Sino-Thai trade

Thai businesses optimistic as Chinese market 'vibrant, brimming with potential'

By **ZHENG YIRAN** in Shanghai
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China's opening-up efforts are injecting momentum into bilateral trade with Thailand, especially for premium Thai exports such as durian and cosmetics, a leading Thai business representative has said.

Confident that China will emerge as "the world's largest retail market" within four to five years, Phaichit Viboontanasarn, vice-chairman and secretary-general of the Thai Chamber of Commerce in China, said: "The Chinese market is vibrant and brimming with potential. With only a four-to-five-hour flight separating Thailand and China, Thai enterprises are well-positioned to seize these opportunities by understanding Chinese consumer preferences and delivering more high-quality Thai products and services. I am optimistic that meaningful progress will unfold in the near term."



Phaichit Viboontanasarn

China's Ministry of Commerce said that in 2025, bilateral trade between Thailand and China surpassed 1 trillion yuan ($147.8 billion), up 15.1 percent year-on-year.

Thailand's Ministry of Commerce said that in April, the country's exports to the rest of the world climbed 23.1 percent year-on-year to $31.5 billion, reflecting the growing competitiveness of the Southeast Asian nation's products.

Citing the "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative — a move by China's commerce ministry to expand the nation's opening-up — Phaichit said: "I wish to express my sincere appreciation to the Chinese government for its steadfast efforts to further open its market in recent years. This campaign is a clear demonstration of China's genuine commitment to welcoming foreign products and enabling Chinese consumers to enjoy a wider range of high-quality goods.

"The approval of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), which places strong emphasis on further market liberalization, is equally encouraging. And we continue to see landmark events such as the China International Import Expo in Shanghai grow in scale and influence year after year."

Suphajee Suthumpun, Thai deputy prime minister and minister of commerce, said China remains Thailand's most important trading partner, and a wider range of Thai products are gaining popularity among Chinese consumers.

Phaichit said: "China's market is growing tremendously — not only in scale, but in sophistication. Against the backdrop of China's high-quality development, I firmly believe this is a moment the world cannot afford to overlook, and Thailand is no exception.

"We warmly welcome Chinese consumers to discover Thailand's exceptional products and services, and to explore everything our country can offer. The opportunities are boundless. More broadly, I envision the two countries enjoying a flourishing and enduring diplomatic relationship for the next 50 years and beyond."

Zhou Mi, a senior researcher at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said: "China boasts vast consumers from abundant levels. Meanwhile, the Chinese government always prioritizes trade and investment facilitation. By lowering taxes, expanding market access and increasing the import of agricultural products, foreign countries with lower costs are exporting to China with stronger trade stability.

"The Chinese market is key to import and export enterprises from all over the world. Some of their products, with value-added through Chinese industrial chains, can be better exported to other parts of the world. In addition, expos such as the CIIE and the Canton Fair also promote exports from other countries to China."

Carrier mulls larger investment in nation on AI data center, green push

By **ZHONG NAN**
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China's push to expand computing infrastructure and advance green urban development will create fresh growth opportunities for Carrier Global Corp to deepen investment in manufacturing, innovation and digital technologies in the country during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, said a senior executive.

As China accelerates the development of data centers, green urban infrastructure and artificial intelligence applications, Carrier — a United States-based intelligent climate and energy solutions provider and parent company of Toshiba HVAC and Viessmann Climate Solutions — will align its business priorities with these emerging opportunities while exporting products made at its China plants to markets worldwide.

Michael Gierges, president of climate solutions for Asia-Pacific, Middle East and Africa at Carrier, said China is no longer viewed simply as a regional market, but as a key driver of the group's global growth strategy.

"Cooling systems account for a significant share of data center energy consumption, making efficiency improvements increasingly important," said Gierges. "Through our QuantumLeap solution, we integrate intelligent cooling, digital controls and predictive monitoring technologies to optimize thermal management and improve energy performance across data center operations."

Beyond cooling technologies, Carrier is also expanding AI applications across its building solutions business.

"We have developed AI-enabled building control solutions for the Chinese market that help optimize building performance, improve energy efficiency and enable smarter, more adaptive building operations," he added.

With China entering a new era of green and innovation-led growth, the Florida-headquartered company has continued to expand its manufacturing footprint. It launched a new air-cooled chiller production line at its facility in Shanghai's Baoshan district, with investment exceeding 100 million yuan ($14.8 million) in January.

Equipped with digital, automated and intelligent technologies, the facility delivers a capacity increase of more than 30 percent compared with pre-upgrade levels.



Michael Gierges

Together with additional production lines yet to be commissioned and supporting facilities, the project's total investment is expected to reach approximately 400 million yuan.

Building on this, Carrier inaugurated an integrated commercial HVAC testing center in May in Shanghai to strengthen its capabilities in energy-efficiency validation and performance optimization, particularly for data centers.

Gierges said Carrier also sees China as an increasingly important hub for innovation and exports, with centrifugal and screw chiller technologies developed by its local engineering teams now being deployed in markets around the world.

"Collaboration with local partners will remain central to our China strategy," Gierges said, adding that the company's partnerships with Alibaba Cloud, the cloud computing arm of Alibaba Group, will help advance digital transformation and AI infrastructure development.

He also highlighted the company's long-standing partnership with State-owned Shanghai Electric Group Co, which is expected to support sustainable urban renewal, reinforcing its long-term confidence in the Chinese market.

Supported by more than 5,000 employees in China, Carrier currently operates seven manufacturing bases, three research and development centers, and over 70 branch offices across the country. One of its companies in Shanghai received a National May 1st Labor Award, one of China's highest honors for organizations, earlier this year.

Wang Xiaohong, a researcher at the China Center for International Economic Exchanges in Beijing, said China's strengths in industrial supply chains and innovation ecosystems continue to attract long-term investment from multinationals.

China saw the actual use of foreign direct investment in high-tech industries surge 20.3 percent year-on-year to 116.33 billion yuan in the first four months, accounting for 40.4 percent of the country's total FDI, data from the Ministry of Commerce showed.

NeuroXess eyes mass BCI production with new unit coming online in H2

By **CHENG YU**
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Chinese brain-computer interface company NeuroXess is gearing up for what it sees as the next phase of the industry: mass production.

The startup plans to begin operating a 14,300-square-meter manufacturing facility in Jiangxi province in the second half, a move NeuroXess founder and chief scientist Tiger Tao Hu said will help transform BCIs from experimental technologies tested on dozens of patients into products that can be delivered at an industrial scale.

This also reflects the company's dual-core strategy of "research and development in Shanghai, production in Jiangxi", Tao said in an exclusive interview with China Daily.

Such efforts come as BCIs, which create direct communication pathways between the human brain and technology such as a computer or artificial limb, attract growing global attention from investors, governments and technology companies.

While the industry remains dominated by clinical trials and research milestones, companies are increasingly racing to answer a more practical question: Who can manufacture these devices reliably, safely and at scale?

For NeuroXess, the answer lies not only in neuroscience, but also in factories.

The company has completed more than 50 clinical trials and is developing what it calls a fully implanted, fully wireless and fully functional BCI system. The Jiangxi facility is designed to eventually support annual production at the scale of tens of thousands of units.

The company's first patient implanted with the system in late 2025 achieved a brain control speed of 5.2 bits per second after 17 days of training, according to the company, enabling web browsing, gaming and control of external devices.

By early 2026, the participant was independently shopping, writing Spring Festival calligraphy and using digital payment tools through brain control systems.

According to Tao, 2026 has become a pivotal year because three critical pieces are finally coming together.

"The technology, the clinical validation and the manufacturing capabilities have matured at the same time," he said.

As competition intensifies between China and the United States, Tao argues that the discussion often focuses too heavily on individual technologies rather than the broader ecosystem needed to commercialize them.

He rejects the idea that China lags significantly behind the US in BCIs. "The core scientific principles are not fundamentally different," he said.

Tao acknowledged that the US still holds advantages in specialized chips, but argued that China has significant strengths in clinical resources, manufacturing and industrial integration.

BCIs, he said, are not simply chips implanted into the brain, "they are system engineering projects".

The challenge is integrating electrodes, chips, packaging, software, operating systems, wireless communication systems, manufacturing and clinical workflows into a single functioning product.

"A patient doesn't need a world champion in one component," Tao said. "A patient needs a complete system that works."

China's manufacturing ecosystem, he argues, offers a unique advantage. "Technology only matters if patients can actually use it," he said. Tao pointed to China's precision manufacturing supply chains, hospital networks and engineering talent as factors that could help accelerate commercialization.

The Jiangxi factory reflects that strategy. Beyond manufacturing, it will also serve as a rehabilitation and training center. The facility will include simulated streets, subway stations, cafes and convenience stores where patients can practice using BCI systems in realistic environments.

The goal, Tao said, is not simply restoring movement. "The ultimate goal of rehabilitation isn't that a patient can move again," he said. "It's that they have the confidence to go outside again."



Tao Hu (left), founder and chief scientist of NeuroXess, shakes hands with a patient using a thought-controlled exoskeleton at a clinical rehabilitation center in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

In addition, the recent boom in artificial intelligence may prove as important to BCIs as advances in hardware.

Tao describes large AI models not as an add-on to BCIs, but as an "operating system upgrade".

Previously, decoding neural signals often required weeks of calibration for each individual patient. AI models are increasingly making brain signal decoding faster, more accurate and more transferable between patients.

"AI is turning brain computer interfaces from something that must be calibrated for every individual into a technology that can generalize across patients," Tao said.

NeuroXess has already used AI to achieve several notable milestones.

In late 2024, the company conducted what it said was the world's first real-time Chinese language decoding trial. After nine days of training, a participant achieved 71.5 percent accuracy in full-spectrum Chinese syllable decoding without assistance from a language model.

The patient was able to generate spoken Chinese through thought, control a digital avatar and interact directly with AI systems.

In another clinical trial conducted with Shanghai's Huashan Hospital Affiliated to Fudan University in 2025, patients in Shanghai and Fuzhou completed what NeuroXess described as the first long-distance "thought conversation" between two human subjects.

The system translated neural signals into text at speeds exceeding 300 Chinese characters per minute, roughly twice the pace of ordinary speech.

Tao believes such breakthroughs could eventually allow direct interaction between the human brain and AI systems.

"We don't see brain computer interfaces as just medical devices," he said. "We see them as the bridge connecting human intelligence and AI."

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BUSINESS

Finance sector keen to boost robotics industry

State lenders' capital support for technology firms continues to strengthen and broaden

By **JIANG XUEQING**
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As humanoid robots move rapidly from research labs into real-world applications, China's banking and insurance sectors are racing to provide the financial fuel behind the industry's growth, rolling out innovative products, tailored financing solutions and ecosystem support to help robotics companies scale up and accelerate technological breakthroughs.

Statistics released by the People's Bank of China — the country's central bank — show that financial support for technology enterprises continues to strengthen and broaden. As of the end of the first quarter, 294,600 high-tech enterprises had obtained loan support, with a loan approval rate of 58.6 percent, up 1.3 percentage points from the end of the previous year. Outstanding loans to high-tech enterprises in Chinese yuan and foreign currencies reached 20.96 trillion yuan ($3.09 trillion), up 13.6 percent year-on-year and 6.1 percentage points higher than the end of last year.

The nation's six largest State-owned commercial banks remain the backbone of technology finance. Annual reports show that by the end of 2025, their combined outstanding technology loans exceeded 23 trillion yuan. Providing targeted support for innovation in the robotics industry has become a key focus for these banks as they work to foster new quality productive forces and upgrade strategic emerging industries.

Humanoid robotics companies are characterized by high research and development spending, significant technological barriers, strong growth potential and light-asset business models. Most startups rely heavily on intangible assets such as intellectual property and patents, while lacking the collateral typically favored by lenders. As a result, they face challenges including insufficient collateral, difficulties in asset valuation and high barriers to financing.

To address these pain points, major banks have continued to innovate their financial service models, tailoring support to the needs of leading enterprises. Through integrated services encompassing equity investment, lending, bond financing and insurance, they are providing support throughout the entire lifecycle of technology companies and helping them achieve rapid growth.

At the 2026 Beijing E-Town Half Marathon and Humanoid Robot Half Marathon on April 19, humanoid robots appeared alongside human runners. During the event, the Industrial and Commercial Bank of China set up a financial service station to provide services for participants and spectators, supporting the successful staging of the technology-focused competition.

In recent years, ICBC Beijing Municipal Branch has provided comprehensive financial support to Beijing Galbot Co, a market-leading company specializing in embodied multimodal large-model general-purpose robotics, helping its technologies move from the laboratory to large-scale production.

ICBC Financial Asset Investment Co, a whollyowned subsidiary of the bank, also participated in an equity investment in Galbot in December, injecting long-term capital into the company while leveraging industrial and financial resources to strengthen corporate governance and industrial collaboration.

Zhejiang Hechuan Technology Co, also known as HCFA, is specialized in industrial automation and has steadily advanced its humanoid robotics R&D efforts in recent years. However, intensive technological breakthroughs and product iterations have led to mounting financial pressure for the company.

After learning of HCFA's financing needs, the Longyou subbranch of China Construction Bank in Quzhou, Zhejiang province, designed a customized financial service package based on the company's operational characteristics, cash flow patterns and development plans. The subbranch extended nearly 200 million yuan in credit to HCFA, ensuring the company could smoothly advance its technological R&D and commercialization efforts.

Qinglong Lite, a humanoid robot co-developed by HCFA, made its debut at the 2025 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai, and participated in a fun run event in Longyou county in Quzhou in March.

On April 17, Manycore Tech, a Hangzhou-based provider of spatial intelligence services, was listed on the Hong Kong stock exchange. The company's spatial intelligence technology supports embodied AI and robot training. Several commercial banks and their subsidiaries provided financial support for the company's listing in Hong Kong.

Bank of China, together with Bank of China (Hong Kong) Ltd and its overseas investment banking platform BOC International Holdings Ltd, provided a range of services for Manycore Tech and its subsidiaries, including credit facilities, cross-border cash management, IPO fundraising account services and underwriting support.





Above: People get to know intelligent services at the exhibition area of ICBC during the 15th China (Guangzhou) International Finance Expo in Guangdong province on June 3. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Left:** Qinglong Lite, a humanoid robot co-developed by HCFA, participates in a fun run event in Longyou county in Quzhou, Zhejiang province, in March. China Construction Bank has extended nearly 200 million yuan in credit to HCFA. LIU SHUTING / FOR CHINA DAILY

CCB International (Holdings) Ltd, the financial and investment services flagship of CCB, served as joint sponsor, overall coordinator, joint global coordinator, joint bookrunner and joint lead manager for Manycore Tech's Hong Kong IPO.

During the company's critical push toward the capital market, CCB Zhejiang Branch learned of its financing needs and promptly coordinated with CCB International. The entire credit application process was completed in just 10 working days, facilitating Manycore Tech's smooth listing in Hong Kong. The bank also provided the company with comprehensive financial services, including wealth management and exclusive unsecured loans for its employees.

Given the rapid pace of technological change and evolving market demand in the humanoid robotics industry, banks face increasing requirements for professionalism and foresight. In recent years, banks have continuously adjusted their financial support strategies and optimized their service models.

Wu Zewei, a contract research fellow at Jiangsu Su Merchants Bank, said future competition in technology finance will center on the depth of industry understanding and the ability to provide integrated services. Banks will compete on their capacity to deliver comprehensive financial solutions covering the entire corporate lifecycle, including equity financing arrangements, mergers and acquisitions advisory services, and supply-chain coordination.

As technologies mature, financial institutions are also actively exploring innovative applications of AI in financial services. Intelligent humanoid robots are gradually moving from laboratories into bank branches and becoming valuable tools for business innovation.

In recent years, the ICBC Software Development Center and ICBC's branch in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, have collaborated with leading robotics teams to develop a humanoid robot assistant for bank lobby managers. Equipped with multimodal interaction, autonomous mobility and intelligent recognition capabilities, the robot can accurately perform tasks such as customer guidance, business consultations and document-filling assistance, improving branch efficiency and customer experience.

In July 2024, CCB partnered with Beijing Runze Zhiyuan Technology Co, a company specializing in the fintech sector, and Fourier, a Shanghai-based proactive AI robotics company, to launch China's first intelligent humanoid robot training base for bank lobby manager scenarios at its branch in Shanghai's Pudong New Area. The initiative uses real-world banking scenarios to drive technological development and accelerate the practical adoption of humanoid robots in the financial sector.

Wang Peng, a researcher at the Beijing Academy of Social Sciences, said humanoid robots will increasingly take on customer service responsibilities in bank branches, such as self-service account opening, transaction inquiries and customer consultation. Their efficiency and accuracy will enhance the customer experience. Banks will also leverage robots' powerful data-processing capabilities to develop personalized wealth management consultations and intelligent investment advisory solutions, offering customers a broader range of financial services.

Insurance companies are also playing an active role in supporting cutting-edge technology development. Humanoid robots typically achieve maturity through repeated testing, and insurance can provide risk buffers for intensive, high-frequency testing, encouraging companies to pursue more ambitious technological validation. In commercial operations, humanoid robots face multiple risks, including equipment failure, accidental damage and potential bodily injury or property damage to third parties. Insurance can provide essential protection against these risks.

Since the second half of 2025, China's leading property and casualty insurers have accelerated their expansion into the humanoid robotics insurance market. At present, customized insurance products for humanoid robots mainly focus on equipment damage coverage and third-party liability insurance.

Last year, Ping An Property & Casualty Insurance Company of China launched a comprehensive financial solution for embodied intelligence in Shenzhen, Guangdong province. The package includes customized coverage for R&D cost losses, product liability, AI system liability and electrochemical performance degradation, among other risks related to R&D, operations, electrical systems, machinery and cybersecurity.

However, due to the lack of risk data on humanoid robots, rapid technological advancements, and the complex and constantly evolving risk profile, insurers still face significant challenges in fully understanding the risks associated with this business. Analysts said that, under the premise of ensuring data security and privacy protection, efforts should be made to strengthen data sharing and the joint development of standards among the technology industry, research institutions and the insurance sector.

Banks launch strong AI talent drive

By **JIANG XUEQING**

Several Chinese lenders have recently launched special recruitment programs targeting high-level artificial intelligence talent, accelerating their push into the financial AI arena. The trend underscores the banking sector's growing urgency to advance its digital and intelligent transformation.

The latest hiring drive focuses on core areas such as large language model development, AI application deployment and technology architecture planning. Entry requirements have been significantly raised, with most positions requiring candidates to hold PhD degrees from internationally renowned universities, possess work experience at major overseas institutions, and demonstrate expertise in LLM development, deep learning frameworks and other advanced AI technologies.

Yang Haiping, a researcher at the Shanghai-based SIFL Institute, said that the large-scale recruitment of top-tier AI talent is an important step for banks seeking to gain an early-mover advantage in AI applications and upgrade their digital finance strategies. The move will accelerate intelligent innovation in banking operations and management, reshape the industry's technological foundation and core competitiveness, and fundamentally change approaches to talent development in the sector.

Bank of Communications is recruiting senior AI experts for its financial technology department and fintech innovation research institute. Applicants are required to hold a PhD from a globally recognized university and have at least three years of relevant experience at a major overseas financial institution or international organization. Candidates with backgrounds in AI, data mining or computer vision, strong expertise in machine learning, deep learning and graph algorithms, as well as experience in AI strategy planning or generative AI model development at large institutions, will receive priority consideration.

Bank of China is hiring for an AI planning and research position in the fintech department at its head office. The role will be primarily responsible for developing the lender's AI framework and promoting the integration of AI technologies into core business operations. Preference will be given to candidates with experience in AI research and development at leading global tech companies, major financial institutions' AI centers or top-tier AI laboratories. The position also emphasizes the integration of technology and finance, requiring at least five years of fintech experience and familiarity with banking operations as well as risk and compliance requirements.

China Guangfa Bank has also recently opened an AI-related position at its head office, focusing on forward-looking research and commercialization of LLMs. Candidates are expected to be proficient in cutting-edge technologies such as LLMs and multimodal systems. The position is open only to PhD holders from prestigious overseas universities with at least three years of experience at internationally recognized companies or overseas financial institutions.

Gao Zhengyang, a special researcher at Jiangsu Su Merchants Bank, said lenders are competing intensely for top AI talent because the technology is rapidly penetrating every aspect of banking, including risk management, marketing, operations and customer service. Professionals with cutting-edge technical expertise can help banks build proprietary and controllable AI systems to support the intelligent upgrading of their businesses.

Gao said this year's AI recruitment drive reflects the banking sector's strategic ambition to use AI to fundamentally reshape banking operations. As competition shifts from traditional business capabilities to data management and intelligent decisionmaking, banks increasingly need multidisciplinary professionals who possess both advanced algorithmic expertise and a deep understanding of financial services.

A report released by PwC in March found that among surveyed financial institutions in the banking, insurance and asset management sectors in the Chinese mainland and Hong Kong, more than 75 percent plan to position AI as a "strategic transformation engine" to revolutionize and expand existing services, or as a "new revenue pillar" to generate new income streams through innovative services, over the next three to five years.

Looking ahead, Tian Lihui, a professor of finance at Nankai University, said the demand for AI talent in the banking sector will follow three major trends: talent shortages will increasingly be concentrated among hybrid professionals who combine business expertise with algorithmic skills; AI-related positions will gradually expand from the head office to branch networks and subsidiaries; and AI governance and compliance positions will become a critical requirement across the industry.

In the long run, Tian said, banks need to establish sustainable talent development systems, optimize performance evaluation mechanisms, and allow sufficient time for technology refinement.

AI has already permeated virtually every aspect of banking operations in China.

Industrial and Commercial Bank of China has deployed more than 500 AI application scenarios across over 30 business areas, while China Construction Bank's AI applications cover nearly 400 scenarios, leveraging AI to empower the entire credit approval process. Bank of Communications has deepened its AI applications in areas such as cross-border trade, wealth management and the digital transformation of retail banking operations, with its intelligent computing capacity increasing by more than 50 percent year-on-year in 2025.



Visitors interact with a humanoid robot from Bank of Communications during the 2025 World Artificial Intelligence Conference in Shanghai on July 27. HE XIAOXIAO / FOR CHINA DAILY

Demand for tech professionals is growing rapidly. The combined number of tech personnel employed by China's six largest State-owned commercial banks rose from more than 111,100 at the end of 2024 to over 135,800 by end-2025, representing a year-on-year growth of 22 percent, significantly outpacing changes in overall bank staffing levels.

Dong Ximiao, chief economist at Merchants Union Consumer Finance and deputy director of the Shanghai Institution for Finance and Development, said China still faces a significant shortage of fintech talent, and there remains a clear mismatch between university training programs and industry needs.

Dong said large financial institutions should take the lead in tech development and application, while sharing excess capabilities and talent resources. Smaller institutions should cooperate with leading financial institutions and tech firms to accelerate the integration of technology and business operations.

He suggested that financial institutions foster an open and inclusive culture that tolerates experimentation and failure, and build a comprehensive talent ecosystem through recruitment and promotion mechanisms.

Dong said banks should ensure that chief information officers are empowered with clear responsibilities, authority and resources. At the same time, AI-related risks should be fully incorporated into enterprise-wide risk management frameworks, with comprehensive measures adopted to prevent and address risks.

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CHINA

High-purity quartz discovered in Xizang

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Chinese scientists have identified a rock formation in the Xizang autonomous region as a potential source of high-purity quartz. This scarce mineral is critical to manufacturing semiconductors, optoelectronics — light-based electronics, and aerospace technology.

The discovery marks a significant step toward reducing the country's reliance on imported supplies of this strategic material.

The research team, led by the University of Science and Technology of China in Hefei, Anhui province, evaluated leucogranites — light-colored igneous rocks formed when the earth's crust melts — in the Dinggye area of southern Xizang. They found these rocks could be purified to yield a silicon dioxide content above 99.995 percent, meeting the threshold for high-purity quartz. The findings were published in the European Journal of Mineralogy on April 30.

High-purity quartz is highly valued because it can withstand extreme heat, is chemically stable, does not expand much when heated, and is an excellent electrical insulator that allows light to pass through easily. Defined as having total chemical impurities below 50 parts per million — meaning the mineral is roughly 99.995 percent pure silicon dioxide — it is extremely difficult to purify. However, it remains essential to high-tech industries such as microchips, solar panels and fiber-optic communications.

Global resources of the mineral are scarce and unevenly distributed. According to the China Geological Survey, the United States holds some of the richest deposits. In fact, the Spruce Pine mine in North Carolina once supplied more than 90 percent of the world's semiconductor-grade high-purity quartz sand. Russia, Norway and Australia also maintain significant reserves. These countries have long dominated the market with established mining and processing capabilities.

China, despite being the world's largest manufacturer of solar panels and a major semiconductor producer, is the largest importer of high-purity quartz. Consequently, the country has been intensifying efforts to develop domestic sources.

In recent years, breakthroughs under the national strategic mineral exploration campaign have identified high-purity quartz deposits in the East Qinling region of Henan province and the Altay region of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. These sites have yielded products with purities of at least 99.995 percent, with some samples reaching 99.998 percent. In 2025, the Ministry of Natural Resources officially designated high-purity quartz as China's 174th recognized mineral species, aiming to further bolster supply chain security.

The new study has extended that exploration effort to the Himalayan belt, which stretches across hundreds of kilometers in Xizang. While the light-colored leucogranites there have long been studied for their potential to host rare metals, no systematic assessment of their high-purity quartz potential had been conducted until now.

The research team collected samples from the Dinggye area and applied a series of analytical testing techniques.

After processing, the purified quartz sands from two sample types achieved silicon dioxide purities of 99.9969 percent and 99.9959 percent, successfully placing them within the high-purity category on industry-standard classification charts.

The study noted that the widespread exposure of these rocks in the region offers a significant opportunity to develop high-end quartz resources in China, ensuring a stable and strategic domestic supply of raw materials.



The delegation visits a robotics company in Tianjin on Monday. The event showcased cutting-edge robotics technology to officials and experts from various countries. TONG YU / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Tianjin Port's smart terminal lauded

By **YAN DONGJIE** in Tianjin
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A delegation comprising officials and experts from eight countries, including Cuba, Austria, Gambia, Laos and Cote d'Ivoire, praised Tianjin's efforts in advancing green development, technological innovation and public well-being during a recent visit to the port city.

The four-day visit, aimed at showcasing China's people-centered development philosophy through a tour of a range of sites including Tianjin Port's smart terminal, concluded on Wednesday.

The Beijiang port area's Berth C stands out as the world's first fully intelligent and carbon-neutral container terminal. Powered entirely by electricity generated through an integrated wind-solar-storage energy system, the terminal has achieved a 100 percent clean power supply and obtained carbon neutrality certification.

Its operations are supported by an integrated 5G and Beidou Satellite Navigation System, artificial intelligence and autonomous vehicles, significantly improving efficiency while reducing emissions.

According to port authorities, the intelligent system has reduced cargo loading and unloading times by 26.2 percent and improved vessel berthing efficiency by 28 percent compared with traditional operations.

For visitors, the terminal offered more than a glimpse of advanced port management. It demonstrated how digital technologies and renewable energy can work together to reduce carbon emissions while maintaining high operational efficiency, an issue many countries are exploring as they pursue sustainable development and green economic growth.

Mohammed B.S. Jallow, vice-president of Gambia, said he was impressed by the terminal's ability to increase throughput while maintaining zero-emission operations.

"As you can see, there is barely any noise on site. The operational efficiency is truly remarkable. Higher efficiency enables the port to handle more cargo volume, while maintaining zero emissions, which is an incredible achievement," he said.

Robert Mag Fitzthum, an Austrian author, said, "For a long time, people have pursued economic development while longing for clean rivers and clean surroundings, which are essential for people's well-being.

"China has achieved remarkable success in balancing sound ecological development and robust economic progress, setting a fine example for sustainable development," he added.

The delegation also visited the Sino-Singapore Tianjin Eco-City in Binhai New Area, where smart governance and green urban planning have been integrated to improve residents' quality of life.

As the world's first eco-city jointly developed by two countries, the project was designed to explore sustainable urban development solutions. With more than 12 million square meters of green space and a digital governance platform powered by big data and AI, the eco-city monitors environmental indicators in real time while providing efficient public services.

Visitors learned how pedestrian greenways connect parks, schools, hospitals and residential communities, forming a convenient low-carbon lifestyle network. New facilities including senior universities, community markets and cultural centers have also been introduced to meet residents' diverse needs.

Christian Arnaud Adjelou, president of the National Human Rights Council of Cote d'Ivoire, said the city's extensive green space and well-developed public services demonstrated a strong commitment to improving people's quality of life.

"Every effort made here is geared toward protecting human rights and creating a better living environment for residents," he said.

Dayron Valido Escalona, a specialist from the human rights group of Cuba's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, said the visits highlighted the close connection between technological innovation, sustainable development and people's well-being.

A bridge reopens



Villagers sing traditional Dong ethnic songs during the reopening of a bridge in Congjiang county, Guizhou province, on Wednesday. Originally built in 2012, it was destroyed by a devastating flood in June 2025. Reconstructed as a key post-disaster recovery project, the 310-meter-long bridge now features improved safety and stability measures, ensuring smooth passage and providing convenience for local residents.
WU XINGKE / FOR CHINA DAILY

DPP's response to delimitation talks a betrayal

Mainland warns external interference undermines regional stability, peace

By **LI SHANGYI**
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The Chinese mainland criticized on Wednesday the Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan for betraying the nation in their response to the so-called maritime delimitation negotiations between Japan and the Philippines, accusing the authorities of currying favor with external forces.

Zhang Han, spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, reiterated at a regular news conference that China possesses an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the proposed maritime delimitation area announced by Japan and the Philippines, which lies east of Taiwan.

She denounced the DPP authorities for "bowing and scraping" in an attempt to curry favor with external forces, calling them "traitors to the nation".

While the Chinese mainland called on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to jointly safeguard national sovereignty and territorial integrity, the DPP authorities asserted that "the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are not subordinate to each other, and China has no right to interfere or speak on behalf of Taiwan".

In response, Zhang said in the face of condemnation from people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait, the DPP authorities have once again hyped the fallacies of "Taiwan independence" to shift attention and mislead the public.

The DPP authorities' response to the maritime delimitation talks launched by Japan and the Philippines on May 28 has been criticized by opposition parties and political commentators as sacrificing the island's maritime interests. After expressing support for the talks on May 31, the DPP authorities later said that Taiwan had "fisheries agreements" with both countries and would continue consultations with them on maritime issues.

Zhang warned the DPP authorities that anyone who forgets their ancestors and betrays the nation will "be nailed to the pillar of shame in history".

Responding to a maritime standoff between the mainland and Taiwan in waters around the Dongsha Islands on Friday, Zhang emphasized that China has sovereignty over the South China Sea Islands, including the Dongsha Islands and their adjacent waters.

She said that law enforcement patrols by the mainland's coast guard in the relevant waters constitute the normal exercise of official duties.

Addressing claims by the DPP authorities that the mainland vessel had entered "restricted waters" around the islands, and their corresponding measures, Zhang warned that the DPP authorities would bear all consequences arising from further provocation.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said on Tuesday that Japan and the Philippines' decision to unilaterally launch maritime delimitation negotiations while bypassing China seriously violates international law, including the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea, as well as the basic norms governing international relations.

"It gravely infringes upon China's maritime rights and interests," Lin said, expressing firm opposition to the move.

On June 1, the China Coast Guard conducted routine law enforcement patrols in accordance with the law in waters east of Taiwan, an operation carried out in response to the delimitation talks between Japan and the Philippines, according to Jiang Lue, spokesman for the China Coast Guard.

From June 6 to 10, the Ministry of Transport organized vessels from the maritime safety administrations of Fujian and Guangdong provinces to jointly conduct a special maritime traffic law enforcement and survey operation in waters east of Taiwan.

Zhang Xiaogang, spokesman for the Ministry of National Defense, urged Japan and the Philippines on Tuesday to immediately cease what he described as illegal and provocative actions that infringe upon China's rights and interests. He warned that if the two countries persist, they will only bring consequences upon themselves.

At the Wednesday news conference, Zhang Han also noted that with the strong backing of the motherland following peaceful reunification, people of Taiwan will enjoy greater security, and the risk of conflict arising from "Taiwan independence" will be fundamentally eliminated.

She said Taiwan people will no longer be used as "cannon fodder" for the "Taiwan independence" separatist agenda, and the island will no longer be a "pawn" of external forces.

"Taiwan fishermen operating in waters surrounding the island will receive timely and strong protection of their lawful rights and interests from the country's maritime forces," she added.

China's oldest captive male Asian elephant Bamo dies at age 65

By **HE QI** in Shanghai
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The oldest living male Asian elephant raised in captivity in China, Bamo, died on Sunday at the Shanghai Zoo. He was 65.

Bamo, who died at 1:16 pm, held the record for the longest-lived male Asian elephant in the studbook of the Chinese Association of Zoological Gardens.

Born in Myanmar in 1961, Bamo first came to China in 1967, initially residing at the Beijing Zoo. He moved permanently to the Shanghai Zoo in 1973, spending 53 years in the city and becoming the longest occupant of the zoo's elephant enclosure, as well as a cherished fixture in the childhood memories of countless local residents.

"I had been with him for nearly eight years," said Liu Chang, Bamo's 34-year-old full-time keeper.

Despite his advanced age, Liu said Bamo maintained the playful heart of a mischievous child. "During on-site explanations, he loved to spray water at me — his way of demanding attention and snacks," Liu recalled.

Liu noted that Bamo was exceptionally intelligent and often traded items for treats with his keepers. "He would tear off chains or branches from enrichment items and swing them around with his trunk. We would trade corn and watermelon for them, and he would gently drop the items in front of us. He was very sensible."

As Bamo aged, time left its marks: his molars deteriorated, his spine curved, and he began gradually losing weight. To ensure his comfort, the zoo implemented a systematic health management program for elderly elephants, which Liu credited as crucial to Bamo's longevity.

"Given his tooth deterioration, we cut his food into smaller pieces and switched to frequent, smaller meals, adding a little each time to encourage him to eat more," Liu said.

Beyond meticulous dietary care, the park constructed two specialized training walls for positive reinforcement training under protected contact. This enabled staff members to safely and effectively conduct foot care, oral examinations, and ear temperature checks.

The outdoor exhibit area was also enhanced with pools, sprinklers, sand piles, and red earth mounds, while soft resting beds were added to the indoor enclosures for added comfort.

"We undertook a major renovation of the pool in 2023 and installed sprinkler systems," Liu said. "Elephants love playing with water and enjoy spraying themselves."

To cater to the elephants' need for mental stimulation, the husbandry team frequently replaced feeding devices and other enrichment items. "We had to continually refresh the enrichment content, as he would lose interest after interacting with the same items a few times," Liu added.

Since 2025, the Shanghai Zoo has enlisted elephant care experts from the United States on two occasions to provide on-site guidance in behavioral training, foot care, and elderly elephant management to maximize Bamo's comfort.

However, Bamo's appetite declined sharply in late May, and he occasionally appeared restless. Despite continuous adjustments to his diet and various nursing efforts by the care team, his condition did not improve. On Saturday morning, Bamo's hind legs began to show noticeable unsteadiness, and he collapsed in the early hours of Sunday.

"The elephant house feels so empty now," Liu said. "For eight years, my day began with checking on him — his condition, eating habits, and spirit. Now, there's a huge void in my heart.

"As a keeper, the best way to honor Bamo is by updating our husbandry practices and caring better for the remaining elephants," Liu added.

Bamo fathered eight calves, significantly enhancing the genetic diversity and population of captive-bred Asian elephants. Liu said Bamo witnessed the evolution of the Shanghai Zoo from basic facilities to a comprehensive breeding environment. The elephant's late-life care protocols and daily husbandry practices have since become a standard for zoos across China.



A file photo of Bamo.
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CHINA

CROSSING THE STRAIT

Editor's note: *The Taiwan question is a key focus for China and the international community. China Daily is publishing a series of reports to track hot Taiwan-related topics and address disinformation from the Democratic Progressive Party administration.*

DPP snubs mainland cooperation package

Taiwan industries to suffer as island's authorities choose politics over people

By **LI SHANGYI**
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A visitor tours the booth of Jinmen, an outlying county near Fujian province but governed by the Taiwan authorities, during the 20th Strait Travel Fair in Xiamen, Fujian, last year. The fair invited professionals in Taiwan's tourism industry for discussions and promotions.
ZHANG BIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Two months after the Chinese mainland introduced 10 sweeping policy measures to advance cross-Strait cooperation, tangible economic benefits have begun reaching key agricultural, tourism and media sectors. However, a deepening political deadlock remains, as the Democratic Progressive Party authorities in Taiwan have yet to respond to mounting public and industry calls to adopt the package.

The comprehensive policy blueprint was announced by the Taiwan Work Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on April 12, following a visit by a Chinese Kuomintang delegation to the mainland led by Chairwoman Cheng Li-wun. Framed as a gesture of goodwill to foster closer integration, the broadly supported package covers youth exchanges, infrastructure connectivity, trade facilitation, tourism and cultural cooperation.

Over the past two months, several measures have been steadily advanced.

Based on adherence to the 1992 Consensus, which embodies the one-China principle, and opposition to "Taiwan independence", the mainland proposed a regularized mechanism for communication between the CPC and the KMT as part of the policy package. Both parties pledged to promote cross-Strait exchanges and integration with more effective measures.

Similarly, both parties have been building an institutionalized mechanism to facilitate two-way exchanges between young people across the Taiwan Strait. In addition to regular cross-Strait youth exchange events organized by the mainland's All-China Youth Federation and the KMT's youth league, 20 youth delegations from Taiwan are set to visit the mainland annually.

Lee Chang-chih, who oversees youth affairs for the KMT, said he hopes to connect with young people who are interested in the mainland but have limited familiarity with it. "Through exchanges that are more closely tied to everyday life, we aim to help them find common ground, deepen mutual understanding, and build stronger connections," Lee said.

Regarding the measure aimed at promoting cross-Strait cooperation in film, television and cultural production, Zhu Fenglian, spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, outlined on June 3 three avenues through which Taiwan industry professionals can participate in the mainland's burgeoning micro-drama sector.

According to Zhu, Taiwan industry professionals can establish television program production companies in Fujian province, jointly develop micro-dramas with mainland partners, or take part in productions as performers.



Visitors view the *Jadeite Cabbage* exhibit at the Taipei Palace Museum Southern Branch in Chiayi county, Taiwan, on May 3.
CHEN JIANXIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

At present, 18 Taiwan-funded enterprises in Fujian have obtained licenses for radio and television program production and are actively engaged in micro-drama production.

Taiwan-produced films also continue to enjoy smooth access to mainland theaters. So far this year, six Taiwan films have been released on the mainland. Last year, eight Taiwan-produced films were screened on the mainland, generating a combined box office revenue of approximately 88.11 million yuan ($12.2 million).

In a recent poll conducted by Taiwan's United Daily News, about 60 percent of respondents on the island supported the authorities taking this opportunity to resume or expand cross-Strait exchanges.

However, among the 10 measures, major initiatives aimed at facilitating cross-Strait exchanges, such as resuming more direct flights, restoring individual tours to Taiwan for residents of Fujian and Shanghai, and advancing cross-Strait infrastructure connectivity, have yet to receive a response from the DPP authorities.

While the mainland has been actively advancing the implementation of the policy package, the DPP authorities have dismissed it as a "sugar-coated poison" and characterized it as a set of "united front" measures.

Citing what they describe as "security" concerns, the DPP authorities have rejected the mainland's proposals to facilitate the provision of water, electricity and gas services, as well as to promote bridge links between Fujian's coastal areas and Jinmen and Matsu, the Taiwan-controlled islands closest to the mainland.

Lee Wen-liang, deputy county magistrate of Jinmen, said in an interview that the local government remains open to any proposals that would contribute to Jinmen's development and attaches great importance to issues concerning people's life, regional development and transportation infrastructure.

Meanwhile, the new Xiamen Xiang'an International Airport has incorporated dedicated check-in and customs clearance channels for travelers from Jinmen into its design. The facilities are ready to be integrated into Jinmen's transportation network once cross-Strait policies are eased.

In late April, the mainland's Civil Aviation Administration submitted technical applications to Taiwan's aviation authorities to resume regular direct passenger flights between Taiwan and five cities on the mainland, including Urumqi in the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region and Xi'an in Shaanxi province. The proposal forms part of the broader policy package aimed at fully normalizing cross-Strait passenger air services.

As of June, only 15 mainland destinations and 10 Taiwan destinations are served by regularly scheduled cross-Strait passenger flights. Under existing arrangements, however, as many as 61 destinations on the mainland and 10 in Taiwan are eligible for such services, a level that was in place before 2020.

The "mainland affairs council" in Taiwan has refused to adopt the initiative, arguing that the "current arrangement is sufficient".

Cross-Strait air traffic remained robust in the first quarter, with 8,079 flights carrying 1.47 million passengers and average load factors exceeding 80 percent. Mainland airlines have already utilized nearly all of their allocated capacity on cross-Strait routes.

China Eastern Airlines, Spring Airlines and Shandong Airlines planned to resume direct flights starting this July, respectively operating routes from Chengdu in Sichuan province to Taichung, Ningbo in Zhejiang province to Kaohsiung, and Qingdao in Shandong province to Taichung.

Calling on the DPP authorities to lift "unreasonable" restrictions on air travel, the mainland said cross-Strait flight services should be arranged by airlines according to market demand.

The policy package also includes pilot programs allowing residents of Shanghai and Fujian to travel to Taiwan as individual tourists, a move that has been welcomed by Taiwan's tourism industry. However, its full implementation remains contingent on a response from the DPP authorities.

Since April 29, residents of Shanghai have been able to visit Jinmen and Matsu under the individual travel program, following the mainland's announcement in February that such tours to the counties would resume.

According to the latest statistics from the county tourism department, 6,579 mainland tourists with travel permits entered Jinmen during this year's May Day holiday. So far this year, the total number of mainland visitors to Jinmen has reached nearly 60,000, of whom 99 percent were individual travelers.

Wang Chih-hung, chairman of the Taiwan Chinese Tourism Management Association, said in an interview during the holiday that Taiwan's past milestone of 10 million inbound visitors was largely driven by a steady flow of mainland tourists. "Today, Taiwan's tourism industry is missing this crucial piece of the puzzle, and tensions in cross-Strait relations and geopolitical instability have also raised safety concerns among overseas visitors," Wang said.

In August 2019, the mainland suspended the pilot program for residents of 47 cities to visit Taiwan because of the DPP authorities' continued promotion of "Taiwan independence" activities and efforts to heighten cross-Strait tensions.

About 2 million people in Taiwan are employed in tourism and related industries, accounting for roughly one-sixth of the island's total workforce. Taiwan media estimate that the cross-Strait tourism sector recorded a deficit of approximately NT$152 billion ($5 billion) last year, as mainland visitor arrivals totaled just 557,700, far below the peak of 4.14 million in 2015, while 4.89 million visits were made by Taiwan residents to the mainland.

On April 20, Taiwan's general chamber of commerce held a news conference bringing together representatives from seven major industries, including hotels and travel service providers. They urged the DPP authorities to "open up and lift restrictions where they should", and questioned, "Why not accept the mainland's 'olive branch'?"

In addition to the tourism sector, Taiwan's agricultural and fisheries industries are also closely watching the mainland's policy measures.

According to Taiwan's agricultural authorities, agricultural exports totaled $4.45 billion last year, down 9.6 percent year-on-year. In the first quarter of this year, exports amounted to $1.01 billion, a 2.7 percent decrease from a year earlier. Fish and fish products recorded the largest decline among export categories.

To facilitate agricultural and fishery products from Taiwan in accessing the mainland market, as proposed in the policy package, port authorities in Fujian province, including Dongshan Customs, have enabled the import of Taiwan agricultural and fishery products that meet inspection and quarantine standards. They have achieved this by developing a tailored customs clearance framework for live fish shipments from the island.

In the first quarter, local customs authorities facilitated the import of 1,263.2 metric tons of live grouper from Taiwan, with a total value of 51.98 million yuan, representing year-on-year increases of 88.3 percent and 96.1 percent, respectively.

Regarding the accommodation of Taiwan's deep-sea fishing vessels and the landing of their catches, the Lianjiang national distant-water fisheries base in Fuzhou, Fujian, provides the necessary facilities and conditions. A supporting network and industrial chain have also been established in the province to facilitate berthing, resupply and trade for Taiwan fishing vessels.

Other forms of economic cooperation are also being advanced on the mainland, including the organization of exhibitions and trade fairs for Taiwan products, and the development of small-scale cross-Strait commodity trading markets.

Chang Li-shan, magistrate of Yunlin county in Taiwan, told the media that the opportunity to export agricultural products to the mainland is good news, serving as a shot in the arm for local farmers and fishermen. It will help create broader and more accessible channels for trade, she added.

Zhang Han, a spokeswoman for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, said at a news conference in May, "The DPP authorities should follow public opinion on the island and respond to industry appeals by lifting artificial restrictions and removing barriers to the normalization of cross-Strait travel, exchanges and cooperation in various fields."

Cross-Strait 'mother' volunteers nurture child welfare

By **ZHANG YI** and **HU MEIDONG**
in Fuzhou

Strolling through a university campus in Fuzhou, Fujian province, Tsai Yu-chin from Taiwan tightly held the hand of a local primary school boy whose parents both live with visual impairments. Beside them, Tsai's junior high son joined in, laughing and chatting with the young boy.

For the young guest, who rarely has the opportunity to travel outside his immediate neighborhood, every corner of the campus — from the university history museum to the student dining hall — was a wonder to explore.

This campus day trip was organized by Tsai to fulfill a personal wish for the boy. Her efforts represent just one of many regular companionships forged by a unique cross-Strait volunteer group of "mothers" from both sides of the Taiwan Strait.

The volunteer team brings together around 30 Fuzhou and Taiwan volunteers. Through regular companionship, educational trips and charitable activities, the team has become a warm support system for underprivileged youth.

The heart of the operation is the Sunny Children's Welfare Library in Chengmen village, an underdeveloped suburban neighborhood on the outskirts of Fuzhou built in 2022.

Lin Qinyan, a local social worker, envisioned creating a quality reading environment for children who lack family care in the area. A prominent Taiwan-funded milk tea chain operating in the Chinese mainland became the project's earliest partner, providing essential funding and hands-on renovation assistance. From that initial library base, a dedicated cross-Strait volunteer network gradually expanded to support children from low-income families.

Lin and her fellow social workers match compassionate volunteers with vulnerable children for one-on-one, long-term mentorship.

Tsai, who is also head of the women's committee of the Fuzhou Taiwan Entrepreneur Association, joined the program last August. Her involvement quickly shifted from delivering custom study desks to disadvantaged households to providing deep, personal companionship.

Moved by the children's resilience, Tsai rallied 15 members from the Fuzhou Taiwan Entrepreneur Association in Fuzhou to join the volunteer ranks.

Ahead of International Children's Day on June 1, the network collected and published over 100 modest holiday wishes from vulnerable children, ranging from badminton rackets and sneakers, to scarves and storybooks.

Cross-Strait individuals and businesses claimed every single wish shortly after the list was released. "Donors purchase these gifts themselves based on the price guidelines we provide, and volunteers specially deliver them to the children's homes," said Huang Shan, a local social worker.

"These wishes, coming from underprivileged children across Fuzhou, are all very simple. Once, a child in a remote area just wished to eat a hamburger," she added.

"Some parents even encourage their own children to use their pocket money to buy gifts for these families in need," Huang said.

The library has since blossomed into a weekend haven. At a recent pre-Children's Day gathering, around 20 children of local gig-economy workers and distressed families gathered to play games. Guided by the social workers and volunteer "mothers", the children painted creative name plaques to share on stage and participated in interactive legal safety games to earn school supplies and safety gift packs.



A volunteer interacts with children at the Sunny Children's Welfare Library in Fuzhou, Fujian province, last month ahead of International Children's Day on June 1. QIU YUWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

"The children happily accept their 'Taiwan moms'," Tsai said, adding that doing good deeds makes her feel fulfilled, ensuring that care is truly delivered to those in need who require consistent support.

Lin said, "This sustained presence has brought visible, positive changes to the children."

Lin shared the story of a young girl who lost her parents and lives with her grandparents; through the long-term companionship of her dedicated volunteer mentor, she has become significantly more cheerful while maintaining stable academic performance. "These small acts of kindness are like scattered glimmers of light," Lin said. "When we join forces, we build a bridge of love."

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LIFE

TAPPING CHINA'S TOURISM MARKET

Azerbaijan opens its office in Beijing, seeking partnerships and closer ties to become a premier destination for outbound travelers, **Yang Feiyue** reports.

Azerbaijan is aiming to make China one of its top three tourism source markets within the next five years, a goal underscored by the opening of the Azerbaijan Tourism Board's first China office in Beijing in late May.

The move reflects the country's growing confidence in the Chinese outbound travel market and its determination to build closer ties with Chinese travelers, travel companies and media partners as visitor numbers continue to rise.

"We have been very active in China for the past six or seven years, promoting Azerbaijan through roadshows, exhibitions and industry events," says Florian Sengstschmid, chief executive officer of the Azerbaijan Tourism Board.

"We felt this was the right moment to move from working remotely to having a physical presence here. It shows our commitment to the Chinese market."

The new office is intended to serve as more than a marketing outpost. Sengstschmid envisions it as a platform for people-to-people exchanges and industry collaboration.

"We want this office to be a place where people meet," he says. "We want to invite travel partners, journalists, bloggers, and business leaders to exchange ideas and explore opportunities between Azerbaijan and China."

The visa waiver agreement between China and Azerbaijan has been in effect since July 16, 2025, meaning Chinese citizens holding valid ordinary passports can now enter Azerbaijan visa-free and stay up to 30 days per visit, with no more than 90 days within any 180-day period. In 2024, Azerbaijan had already introduced a one-year unilateral visa-free trial for Chinese visitors.

China has become one of Azerbaijan's fastest-growing tourism source markets. The country welcomed 63,500 Chinese visitors in 2025, a year-on-year increase of 41.7 percent, according to the tourism board. From January to April this year, arrivals from China exceeded 14,300, maintaining strong growth momentum.

Fuad Naghiyev, chairman of the State Tourism Agency of the Republic of Azerbaijan, emphasizes that the establishment of the Beijing office reflects Azerbaijan's strategic focus on the Chinese market. He notes that improved air connectivity and visa facilitation have supported steady growth in bilateral tourism flows.

For Azerbaijan, the significance of China extends beyond numbers.

"China is the world's largest outbound travel market and has held that position for many years," Sengstschmid says. "For many Chinese travelers, Azerbaijan is still a relatively new destination, which means there is tremendous potential."

The tourism board hopes to increase annual arrivals from China to between 200,000 and 300,000 within the next three to five years.

Industry players say a growing interest among Chinese travelers suggests the target may be within reach.

Li Mengran, marketing manager of the Beijing-based travel agency Utour, notes that Azerbaijan is emerging as a key growth driver in the niche Transcaucasus travel market.

"With Chinese travelers increasingly seeking out less-explored destinations, our multi-country itineraries combining Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia have recorded steady growth year after year," Li says.

She attributes part of the destination's rising appeal to increasingly convenient travel policies across the region.

"For Chinese tourists, it is no longer just one country opening up. The wider Transcaucasus region is becoming more accessible, making it easier for travelers to visit several destinations in a single trip," she says.





According to Li, demand for smaller and emerging destinations served by her company has risen by around 15 percent year-on-year this year, with Azerbaijan standing out thanks to its distinctive culture, dramatic landscapes and relatively untapped appeal.

The destination tends to perform particularly well during China's major holiday periods, including the National Day holiday in October, when it often emerges as a dark horse among long-haul and niche destinations, she adds.

Supporting Azerbaijan's ambition are a growing number of travel facilitation measures. China and Azerbaijan have implemented mutual visa-free arrangements, while air connectivity continues to expand. Azerbaijan Airlines currently operates direct flights between Beijing and Baku, while China Southern Airlines operates direct flights between Urumqi and Baku. A direct Shanghai-Baku route is expected to launch next year.

The Beijing office will also coordinate the tourism board's marketing campaigns across China, including cooperation with major online travel platforms and participation in industry events.

During a recent visit to China, the tourism board held roadshows in Xi'an, Shaanxi province, Shanghai and Beijing, alongside six industry partners, including Azerbaijan Airlines. The organization also participated in ITB China in Shanghai and signed a strategic cooperation memorandum with Tongcheng Travel, a leading travel platform based in Jiangsu province.

Recognizing that Chinese travelers are increasingly discovering destinations online, Azerbaijan has been strengthening its presence on Chinese digital platforms such as Weibo and Xiaohongshu.

"We don't want to bring Azerbaijan into these channels in a top-down way," Sengstschmid says. "We want Chinese travelers and Chinese content creators to tell their own stories and share their own experiences."

The country has also expanded its "China Ready" program, which aims to help local tourism businesses better serve Chinese visitors through staff training, service standards and improved visitor facilities.

Beyond certification programs, efforts are underway to improve signage, navigation systems and digital payment options. Services, including Alipay, are expanding to make travel easier and more convenient for Chinese visitors.

Sengstschmid says he believes Azerbaijan's appeal lies in its unique blend of cultures and landscapes.

"Azerbaijan is Western with an Eastern outlook," he says. "You see it in the culture, the food, the hospitality, and the way people live."

Azerbaijan has rolled out a wide range of tourism experiences tailored to Chinese travelers, including cultural exploration, nature-based travel, Silk Road heritage, gastronomy, wine tourism, and wellness experiences.

Visitors can explore the Walled City of Baku, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, admire modern landmarks such as the Heydar Aliyev Center, or venture further afield to discover mud volcanoes, mountain villages and ancient Silk Road towns. Destinations such as Khinalig, one of the highest and oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the Caucasus, offer insights into centuries-old traditions, while regions known for wine production and wellness tourism add further diversity to the visitor experience.

Sengstschmid says ultimately, human connections matter most.

"When people feel welcome, they want to return," he says. "Tourism starts with people."

With a permanent presence in Beijing, growing air links and targeted efforts to adapt to Chinese travelers' preferences, Azerbaijan authorities are betting that greater familiarity will translate into stronger tourism flows and deeper exchanges between the two countries in the years ahead.

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From top: Azerbaijan Tourism Board's booth at this year's ITB China in Shanghai. Khinalig, one of the highest and oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the Caucasus, is a recommended destination in the country. People enjoy a promenade on the Baku Boulevard. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Conservation efforts boost awareness of mangrove protection

GUANGZHOU — At Jinlong Primary School in South China's Guangdong province, second-graders are busy sketching mangroves, imagining tiny crabs scuttling among the roots.

"Mangroves are like a kindergarten for little crabs," one pupil says.

The lush mangroves that now inspire the students were once dismissed by locals in Tantou village in Nansha district, Guangzhou, as nothing more than common shoreline weeds.

"When we were kids, we often ran to the beach to catch fiddler crabs and river shrimp. We thought these mangroves were just ordinary water plants," says Huang Jinhua, Party secretary of the village.

The villagers' perception shifted dramatically in 2019, when a powerful typhoon struck the area.

"The water level rose so fast that we thought the sea would overflow the embankment. We were ready to evacuate people. But unexpectedly, the tide slowly receded," Huang recalls.

Realizing that mangroves act as "coastal guardians" that stabilize shorelines and purify nearshore waters, villagers began participating in regular beach cleanups and implementing plant pest and disease control measures.

Furthermore, a more systematic and scientific conservation effort took root following an unexpected encounter.

In 2022, a group of strangers appeared near the village's mangrove forest during a routine patrol. The villagers grew instantly alert, approached the visitors, and shouted: "What are you doing? Don't cut the trees!"

To their surprise, the strangers turned out to be researchers from the Guangzhou Ocean Carbon Peak and Carbon Neutrality Research Association, who had arrived to survey the mangroves.

"We spotted the mangroves earlier using drones and remote-sensing technology. They were growing well but lacked proper scientific management, so we came to conduct field surveys," says Du Yuyan, secretary general of the association.

The confrontation quickly transformed into cooperation. With support from the United Nations Development Programme, the association helped build a 300-meter mangrove science corridor in 2023, featuring 46 display panels along the wetland.



Song Meiying, deputy Party secretary of Tantou village, in Guangdong province, shows a mangrove seedling in the mangrove forest in the village. YANG SHENSHEN / XINHUA

"Seeing a public welfare organization travel so far and dedicate itself to protecting our mangroves inspired us to step up our efforts," says Song Meiying, deputy Party secretary of Tantou village.

Part of these efforts includes transforming the local library into a marine science base with over 1,000 specialized books and forming a volunteer team of more than 50 local women and children to serve as science interpreters.

Academics have also joined mangrove conservation efforts. Liang Xiaoting, an associate professor at the Guangdong Eco-Engineering Polytechnic, was so moved by the natural mangroves during a summer clean-up that she spontaneously grabbed a microphone and began explaining the ecological value of mangroves to those nearby.

Liang regularly volunteers in Nansha and leads her students in developing ecological courses for primary and secondary schools.

The regular cleanups helped the village and the association realize that trash collection alone is not enough. They launched a "waste-to-wealth" initiative: collected plastic waste is recycled into silk-like scarves, which are gifted to volunteers as a tangible reminder of their efforts.

"Our volunteers come from across the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, including many young people from Hong Kong and Macao, who join our beach cleanups," says Huang.

"We want to build a small station near the wetland so that people doing clean-ups or field research can rest and recharge."

The efforts in Tantou reflect a broader national success story.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-2025), China's mangrove area expanded to 31,000 hectares, making the country one of the few in the world to record a net increase in mangrove coverage.

Mangroves, alongside seagrass and coral reefs, are globally recognized as one of the three main marine coastal ecosystems. They play a critical role in supporting offshore fisheries, purifying the environment, and enhancing carbon sequestration.

Tantou's efforts have aligned with China's national mangrove conservation strategy. In 2025, the country released and implemented its first technical group standards for the precise ecological restoration of mangroves to promote their protection and sustainable development.

The country made significant strides in green development during the 14th Five-Year Plan period, with increased forest coverage, improved biodiversity, and greater harmony between humans and nature.

XINHUA

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LIFE





More than just beans and brewing

Coffee festival showcases new combinations, some seemingly crazy flavors such as beef noodles, and integration with Kunqu Opera, attracting caffeine lovers from around the world, **He Qi** reports in Shanghai.

For Firat Sahin from Turkiye, to have a cup of specially tailored coffee in the greenland of Shanghai's financial zone is a comfortable yet homesick experience.

The special combination of coffee and tea made him feel completely natural.

"In my country, we drink unsweetened black tea, and we also drink coffee regularly, so pairing coffee and tea is not strange to us at all."

"Tea, coffee, and other types of drinks should be mixed together," Sahin says during the opening day of the Lujiazui Coffee Festival in Shanghai. "Overall, the festival is really great."

Held from May 29 to 31 at Lujiazui Central Green, the Lujiazui festival has gathered more than 150 brands, creating an elegant integration of Western coffee and traditional Chinese culture, which is the festival's theme this year.

Mingzhishan Coffee, which operates stores in historical cities of Luoyang, Henan province, and Jingdezhen, Jiangxi, attracted visitors with its iconic gourd porcelain cups.

By midday on opening day, Guo Daren, founder of Mingzhishan Coffee, had sold nearly 300 cups of his signature gourd-shaped porcelain cold brew coffee.

"It completely exceeded our expectations. We didn't expect Shanghai people to love the new Chinese-style gourd coffee so much."

In Chinese tradition, the gourd, or *hulu*, is usually associated with wishes for prosperity.

"We also combine Jingdezhen's local Fuliang black tea with coffee and serve it in gourds, creating a Chinese-style coffee-drinking experience that feels like ancient people drinking wine," he adds.

The brand's best-selling product at the festival is Osmanthus cold brew, made by steeping Osmanthus flowers in coffee overnight to infuse a natural floral aroma. "We also paired it with the poem: 'I wanted to buy Osmanthus and wine with you, yet it is no longer like our youth days'," Guo says. "Many people came to buy a cup specifically because of this line."

Spring Morning on Mishan, a tea and pastry brand making its Lujiazui Coffee Festival debut, demonstrated the perfect compatibility between traditional Chinese snacks and coffee.

"We divided our products into three series: 'Meal Buddies', for pairing with toast and other staples; 'Tea Buddies', for various teas; and a dedicated 'Coffee Buddies' series," said Xiao Yuanwu, the brand's founder. "Our Coffee Buddies focus on salty and sour flavors, which effectively neutralize the coffee's bitterness and deliver a richer tasting experience."







Top left and right: The Lujiazui Coffee Festival creates an elegant oriental gathering that blends flavor and culture in Shanghai. **Left:** The festival opens a new chapter in East-West cultural integration. **Below left:** Mingzhishan Coffee brings its signature gourd-shaped porcelain cold brew coffee to the festival. **Below right:** Spring Morning on Mishan demonstrates the perfect pairing of traditional Chinese snacks and coffee.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Also drawing long queues is the beef noodle-flavored specialty coffee from Hebei-based Coffix Coffee. "Lujiazui invited us to bring our hometown's urban flavors to Shanghai as specialty blends," says founder Chen Xixi. "We extracted the aroma of chili oil — the soul of beef noodles — and infused it into coffee."

This seemingly unconventional combination has received unexpected acclaim. "Shanghai residents love it, surprisingly. Ethiopian coffee beans naturally have a hint of spice, which unexpectedly complements the flavors of the noodles," Chen says.

The unique blend has even gained international recognition. "We took beef noodle coffee to a Melbourne coffee festival, and many foreign guests loved it. Here at the festival, we sell out every morning."

The most groundbreaking collaboration this year is the deep integration between Kunshan Contemporary Kunqu Theater and coffee culture. The theater has launched two limited-edition specialty drinks named after classic Kunqu tunes, inspired by the ink-wash new-style works of Kunqu master Zhang Jun and infused with traditional Chinese cultural elements.

Shi Zhiyuan, a member of the festival's operations team, says, "The signature of Lazy Eyebrow Tune is that we outline eyebrow shapes in the milk foam with indigo powder, and it has a refreshing taste that is perfect for summer. Ever Lasting Love Aria evokes the pink imagery of love, so we used summer watermelon to create a sparkling Americano specialty."

Beyond beverages, Kunqu Opera also comes alive at the festival in more vivid forms, with Zhang leading a group of musicians to perform on the Lujiazui Central Green lake with the water body as the stage and neon lights illuminating the skyscrapers, bringing traditional art to the heart of the city's vibrant coffee culture.

Many industry insiders agreed that integrating Chinese elements into coffee is not a passing fad but an inevitable industry trend.

"Previously, most coffee creativity focused on fruits, and combining coffee with tea and traditional culture was relatively rare," Guo says. "In the future, there will definitely be more tea-coffee blends, and people will explore clever ways to integrate tea and coffee to create new flavors."

Li Junfeng contributed to this story.

Tourism attempts to balance human touch with technology

By YANG FEIYUE
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When Valentin Diaz Gilligan flew from Buenos Aires to Beijing for a recent tourism forum, the journey took 30 hours. Decades earlier, his great-grandparents made the same trip by ship. It took 40 days.

That contrast is what technology has done for travel, the Argentine capital's tourism chief told a big audience at the Zhongguancun International Innovation Center in Beijing's Haidian district on June 2.

Commercial aviation democratized it. Then the internet and smartphones accelerated it. Artificial intelligence and big data are the next leap, says Gilligan at the 2026 Beijing Fragrant Hills Tourism Summit hosted by the World Tourism Cities Federation, the Beijing Municipal Bureau of Culture and Tourism and the Haidian district.

But, he added a caveat.

"In Buenos Aires, our difference is passion, not technology," he says. "We use data to understand what Chinese tourists want versus American or Brazilian tourists. But what we never want to lose is the human warmth of welcoming every visitor."

That tension between efficiency and empathy, and algorithms and the human touch, runs through the entire discussion of how digital tools can make cross-border travel smarter without stripping away what makes it worthwhile.

Zhang Xu, vice-president of Trip.com Group, a major online travel platform headquartered in Shanghai, offers a practical framework consisting of communication, service, and operation.





From left: Inbound visitors pose for a picture with a Chinese guide at a gift shop in Beijing in June. A Chinese tour guide answers questions from an international traveler during a visit to the capital in early June. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The first step is knowing who you are talking to, he says.

Data from his platform show sharp differences among travelers coming to China. Europeans and Americans want cultural experiences and urban lifestyles. Southeast Asians prioritize food, shopping and short trips. Japanese and South Korean tourists tend to favor weekend leisure and live performances.

"If you don't know these differences, you cannot market effectively," Zhang says. Destinations need to turn their resources into bookable products, and do it well.

Service comes as the bigger challenge.

"Certainty is everything for international travelers," Zhang notes. A tourist needs to know their flight, hotel and tickets are confirmed before they board the plane. That certainty, he argues, is what a quality tourism platform should be positioned to provide.

Long-term thinking matters too. Launching a campaign is not enough. Destinations must track feedback, listen to consumers, and continue to improve, he points out.

"We send coupons to encourage people to come back," Zhang says. But the real goal, he adds, is building trust.

Beyond the framework, Trip.com has rolled out concrete tools for inbound travelers. The company has set up service counters at major airports in Beijing, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Shenzhen, Guangdong province, and Chengdu, Sichuan province, offering travel guides and local assistance. Multilingual ticketing machines at scenic spots across China now help foreign visitors buy tickets and process refunds without language barriers.

Last year, the Shanghai-based travel agency opened an AI-powered restaurant, Taste of China, where screens wrap around the room and the system learns diners' preferences. A second branch is opening in Beijing this year.

The restaurant is not a gimmick, Zhang says.

It is an experiment in how technology can enhance — not replace — the experience of sharing a meal, he explains.

Zhang's emphasis on service was echoed across the panel.

Soon-Hwa Wong, the Pacific Asia Travel Association's ambassador for Greater China, offers a systematic take. "The real opportunity lies in balancing high-tech with high-touch," he says.

"Technology should empower, not replace."

Wong points to Singapore's upcoming Terminal 5 at Changi Airport — designed not just for greater capacity but for future pandemics, automated passenger flow, and seamless connections between air, land and city transport.

Smart tourism is not just about solving today's problems but also about anticipating tomorrow's needs, Wong says.

Christopher Cocker, chief executive of the Pacific Tourism Organization, points to a five-year digital transformation project with the New Zealand government that has raised digital skills in the region from 50 to 79 percent and understanding of sustainable tourism from 29 to 64 percent.

But he says that AI will never replace humans. "Tourism is a people business."

Speaking on behalf of 20 small island nations, he emphasizes that smart connectivity must be inclusive.

"If it works for large destinations, it should work for small ones too. Leave no one behind."

Todd Barberel, general manager of destination marketing and communications for Wellington, agrees with Cocker.

"People want to deal with people. Tools matter. But at the core, it is always about people."

Since China Eastern Airlines launched direct flights between China and Argentina last year, Chinese arrivals in Buenos Aires have grown by 50 percent. Gilligan attributes that not just to flight routes but to understanding what each market wants — and that understanding comes from data.

But data, he insists, is only part of the equation. The rest is a city's ability to make a visitor feel genuinely welcome. "That is what brings them back," he says.

Zhang Xu says that it should be every travel service provider's top priority to make someone feel welcome in a country they do not know.

"Sometimes an inbound traveler just needs someone to point them to the right train," he says.

"That is not big data. That is a person helping another person. You know what really brings people back? Not a coupon. A memory."

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CULTURE

A scholar's devotion to Buddhist teachings

A veteran editor has spent 43 years compiling the religion's scriptures, driven by a determination to keep ancient wisdom accessible, **Wang Xin** reports in Shanghai.



Chen Shiqiang, a 76-year-old senior editor at Fudan University Press in Shanghai, could hardly hold back his tears when he touched his newly published books, a massive Chinese Buddhist philology masterpiece that he has been working on single-handedly for 43 years.

Three books of the *General Catalogue and Synopses of the Chinese Buddhist Canon* were recently published by Shanghai Ancient Books Publishing House, bringing the collection's current total to 13 volumes.

Comprising a total of 1,473 Buddhist works in 8,246 volumes, the collection, with about 6.7 million characters, provides a detailed guide through Chinese Buddhist scriptures of successive dynasties. It is also believed to be the most authoritative and comprehensive reference work in the field of Chinese Buddhist scriptural studies to date.

The work currently comprises two volumes on classic Chinese Buddhist works first published in 1992 (revised and reprinted in 2008), three volumes on Hinayana Buddhist sutras published in 2007, two volumes on Vinaya texts published in 2015, three volumes on Abhidharma published in 2019, and the latest three volumes on Mahayana Buddhist sutras released in March.

Among them, the sutra is the source of basic Buddhist teachings, which is believed to be the actual words of the Buddha. Vinaya usually refers to the collection of canonical texts outlining the rules of conduct and discipline for Buddhist monks and nuns. Meanwhile, Abhidharma, or commentaries, refers to works on various Buddhist scriptures that are attributed to masters and offer commentary on the words of the Buddha.

"Originating in ancient India, Buddhist scriptures were translated and expounded in classical Chinese after their introduction to China. However, the vast majority of these texts lack punctuation and annotations. They are profound yet obscure, abstruse, diverse and complex, making them very difficult to read and understand," Chen explains.

All these factors present significant challenges to the reading and study of Buddhist scriptures, which motivated Chen to create a specialized reference book on Buddhist studies to provide basic guidance and assistance for today's researchers.

Thus, in June 1983, he embarked on this journey with no end in sight. Rather than brief annotations or dictionary-style entries on Chinese Buddhist scriptures, he expects to complete a collection that provides comprehensive information and detailed summaries of the core content of each scripture — in a modern way and using layman's terms.

Almost devoting his entire life since then to sorting out Buddhist scriptures, Chen says he simply does not wish to see these millennia-old classics become incomprehensible texts to modern readers.

Chen notes that the collection provides a detailed analysis of each scripture, covering its title, number of volumes, origins of translation and composition, version history, chapter structure and core philosophical principles, while also addressing the tracing of origins, the collation of variant texts, and the correction of historical inaccuracies.

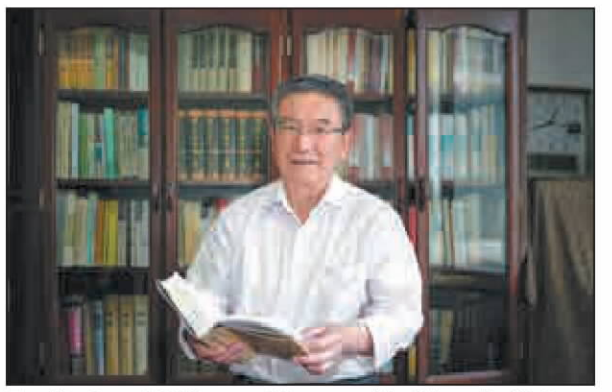
"I am not merely compiling an index for a single edition of the Tripitaka, but rather synthesizing all editions from the Song Dynasty (960-1279) through to modern times, to create a truly comprehensive reference work on Buddhist studies," says Chen.

Fate and faith

This path has never been easy for Chen, yet he pursues it with determination, as if it were his destiny.

Born in 1949 in Zhuji, Zhejiang province, Chen was recommended to join the Department of Philosophy at Fudan University in 1973 and stayed at the school as an instructor after graduation.

Chen was not a Buddhist and knew barely anything about Buddhism before stepping into the university. However, Fudan, as one of the earliest universities in China to systematically conduct research and teaching in religion, boasts a long-standing tradition and deep-rooted heritage in Buddhist studies and research. In 1979, the university officially launched the research direction of Buddhist studies for the first time, and Chen — who was good at classical Chinese — became the only master's student admitted into the program.



Top: The *General Catalogue and Synopses of the Chinese Buddhist Canon* is believed to be one of the most authoritative and comprehensive reference works in the field of Chinese Buddhist scriptural studies. **Above:** Chen Shiqiang, senior editor at Fudan University Press, has worked for 43 years compiling the 13 volumes of the books. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

> "I am not merely compiling an index for a single edition of the Tripitaka, but rather synthesizing all editions ... to create a truly comprehensive reference work on Buddhist studies."
>
> **Chen Shiqiang,** senior editor at Fudan University Press

That marked the real beginning of Chen's story with the Chinese Buddhist Canon. After earning his master's degree, Chen joined Fudan University Press in 1984 and continued his academic research on Buddhist philology.

Over the past four decades, Chen has edited and published more than 200 books on philosophy and social sciences. The editing experience has continuously expanded his knowledge in various fields and categories, laying a solid foundation for the writing of the vast Buddhist collection.

"Buddhist classics engage with ancient Chinese and Indian civilizations. They are not only religious works, but also historical records involving all kinds of knowledge such as philosophy, geography and arts. The massive books I edited before are carved in my mind, and later became the basis for me to understand those classics," says Chen.

The collection includes detailed accounts of Buddhist doctrines, figures, events, rituals, festivals, activities, temples, artifacts and terminology over the past millennia, as well as covering a wealth of knowledge across various fields such as history, philosophy, literature, ethics, education, linguistics, logic, psychology, customs, geography, astronomy, medicine, architecture, sculpture, painting and music.

It is a huge task that is not profitable, but requires superhuman determination and effort, which may also explain why no similar works have ever been completed before. To achieve his ambitious goal, Chen has given up all his spare time since the 1980s — not even spending time watching TV.

"It is hard — very, very hard," Chen said at a panel meeting held at Fudan University on May 21 to mark the release of the updated collection.

But he told China Daily that he had never thought about quitting this epic work. He would always recall the legendary trek made by Tang Dynasty (618-907) Buddhist monk Xuanzang on his westward pilgrimage more than 1,300 years ago.

"He risked his life to bring the Buddhist scriptures back. He, like other ancient sages, sought neither fame nor personal gain, but built a cultural Silk Road. If no one today interprets them, his life, efforts and sufferings would be all in vain. I am always deeply moved by their spirit of self-sacrifice," says Chen.

In the days before computers, a pen and a stack of paper were his only companions. For each scripture, Chen would read through the original text intensively at least three times, and pore over obscure passages repeatedly while making in-depth comparisons and cross-references.

He regards this work as the foundation for future Buddhist research in China, likening it to the first step laid at the foot of a mountain. "Future researchers, like climbers, can now continue their ascent to the top by stepping on these steps," says Chen, smiling in relief.

Chen's efforts also align with the nation's and the university's exploration of developing a system of philosophy and social sciences with Chinese characteristics, which incorporates the country's socialist practices, and contributes more wisdom and strength to the nation's modernization drive and cultural heritage.

"The collection is a major achievement in the compilation and publication of ancient Chinese Buddhist historical and cultural texts. It is not only an indispensable authoritative reference book in the fields of Buddhist philology, religious studies and Chinese philosophy, but also serves as a solid bridge for the wider general public to engage with China's outstanding traditional culture," says Fang Ming, deputy Party secretary of Fudan University.

Chen's journey still continues. Despite his vision being severely impaired by decades of desk work, which limits him to reading for only about 15 minutes at a time, he is still relentlessly marching toward the end of the collection.

"I intend to devote the remainder of my life to compiling the 300-plus Esoteric Buddhist scriptures, so that the collection will cover Mahayana and Hinayana sutras, Vinaya and Abhidharma in full, as well as the scriptures of both the exoteric and esoteric traditions," says Chen firmly.

Contact the writer at wangxin2@chinadaily.com.cn

Turning the page on traditional publishing in the era of AI

By **XU LIN**
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Participants at a forum on advancing integration in publishing agree that it's essential to strengthen technological leadership, integrate technological advancements with publishing innovation, and accelerate the digital and intelligent transformation of the publishing industry.

Representatives of publishing institutions and cultural and technological enterprises, scholars from universities and colleges, and officials from relevant authorities, recently gathered for the sub-forum, which had the theme, "Integration promotes development, transformation shapes the future".

They exchanged views on key issues such as organizational transformation, technological empowerment, talent nurturing, and industry restructuring in the integrated development of publishing.

It was part of the Forum on Building Up China's Cultural Strength 2026, which was held in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, in late May.

"As technological barriers are removed and anyone can create and express themselves with artificial intelligence, the needs of readers are no longer limited to simply finishing a book. They crave deep intellectual connection, solutions for real-world problems, and immersive reading experiences," said Chen Wei, chairman of CITIC Press Group, in his keynote speech.

He emphasized that in the face of such industrial restructuring, publishing organizations must focus on integrated development and scale up their investments.

"Besides financial input, efforts should also include developing an understanding of the industry's new paradigm, nurturing talent with digital capabilities, and fostering an open and collaborative ecosystem. This requires publishers to adopt a more forward-looking strategic vision and the courage to reform," he said.

Sun Qiang, chairman of People's Education Press, agreed. According to him, the publishing press prioritizes the recruitment of talent in AI and related fields, to build a high-quality professional talent team. A three-year mentoring system will be adopted for new employees, and senior staff members will provide them with guidance. There are also different training programs for mid-career employees to improve their digital literacy.



With the theme "Integration promotes development, transformation shapes the future", the Forum on Advancing Integration in Publishing is held in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Wu Yike, a researcher from the Publishing Research Institute, Nankai University, offered a complementary perspective. "AI excels in efficiency, connectivity, and generative capacity, making knowledge more accessible. The value of publishing lies in quality standards, the organization of knowledge and value judgment, ensuring reliable knowledge services," he said.

"Therefore, the more advanced AI technologies grow, the more integrated publishing needs to provide a solid foundation of trustworthy and usable content," he said.

To advance the development of credible content, Wu suggested that this work should focus on providing high-quality content that stands rigorous scrutiny, turning fragmented content into organized knowledge, strengthening collaboration between AI and professionals and clarifying their respective responsibility boundaries.

The "new trio" of cultural exports — online literature, web dramas and online games — has gained global popularity in recent years. For example, *Black Myth: Wukong*, a hit Chinese video game, has spread Chinese culture to the world via animation and gaming.

Tong Zhilei, chairman and CEO of COL Group, said that the popularity stems from deepening publishing integration and ever-expanding publishing boundaries. The future of integrated publishing lies in focusing on content origins to drive the multi-format development of online literature, web dramas and online games, while continuously enhancing intelligent production capabilities.

"Publishing has never been merely about producing and distributing books. Rather, its core purpose is to bring knowledge, ideas, stories and culture to wider audiences, to be seen, understood and carried forward. In the digital age, this fundamental mission remains unchanged, and we have richer ways to fulfill it, diverse pathways to connect with audiences, and a broader scope to serve society," Tong said.

Zhao Dongyan, a researcher at the Wangxuan Institute of Computer Technology, Peking University, noted that intelligent publishing represents an opportunity for a new round of innovation and transformation of the publishing industry in the AI era.

According to him, in 2025, the adoption rate of AI-generated content among publishing institutions nationwide reached 54 percent, with applications mainly in content review and proofreading, content creation, and user experience improvement.

He added that it is essential to develop AI tools for all stages of content publishing, provide end-to-end intelligent publishing technologies, and enable new forms of content publishing and knowledge services based on large language models.

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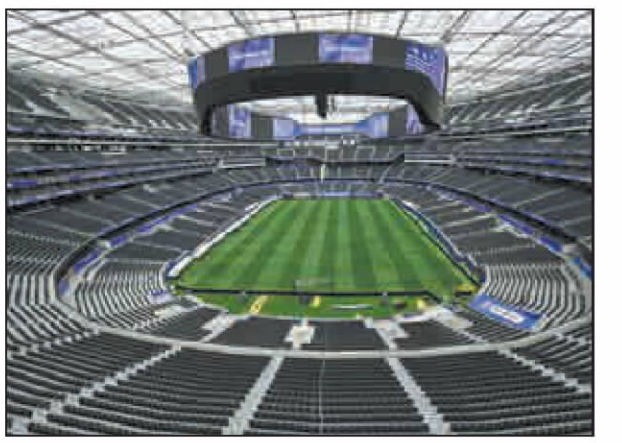
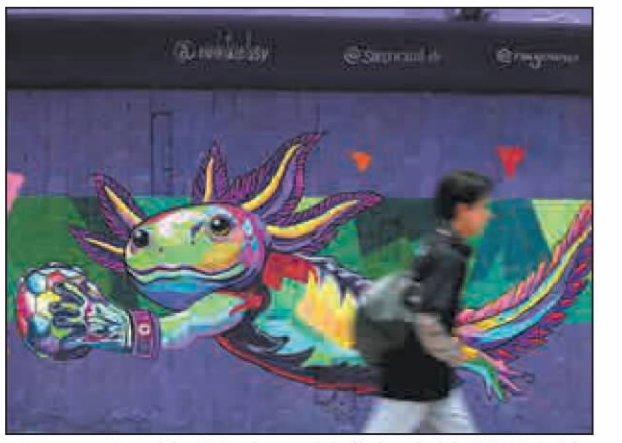
SPORTS

WORLD CUP 2026







Clockwise from above: An aerial view of Science World in Vancouver, Canada, which has been transformed into a 360-degree, 40-meter-diameter re-creation of the Trionda match ball ahead of the FIFA World Cup; A view of the freshly installed grass pitch at Los Angeles Stadium ahead of the US team's opening game on Saturday; A mural featuring an axolotl, a critically endangered salamander native to lakes in central Mexico, catching a soccer ball on a wall in Mexico City. REUTERS / AFP

World Cup set to kick off after shaky run-up

FIFA is banking on the showpiece tournament's enduring appeal to cancel out the months of criticism

The World Cup kicks off on Thursday with FIFA hoping that the enduring appeal of soccer's greatest showpiece can rise above the anger at soaring ticket prices, an uneasy political climate in the United States and the shadow of conflict in the Middle East.

A record 48 teams and millions of fans are set to descend on the United States, Canada and Mexico for the first-ever World Cup co-hosted by three nations, the largest and most logistically complex edition of the tournament ever staged.

The action gets under way at Mexico City's iconic Estadio Azteca on Thursday, with co-host Mexico taking on South Africa at 3 pm local time (3 am Friday, Beijing time), launching a sprawling, nearly six-week-long spectacle that will culminate in the final at New Jersey's 82,500-seat MetLife Stadium on July 19.

Can Lionel Messi, at the age of 38, settle any lingering debate about his status as the greatest player of all time by leading Argentina to a second consecutive World Cup title?

Or can Messi's great rival, the 41-year-old Cristiano Ronaldo, defy father time by inspiring a talented Portugal team to its maiden World Cup win?

Or will England, led by Harry Kane, finally end the country's 60-year wait for a second major international championship following its lone 1966 World Cup victory?

Those questions and more will be answered over the course of a tournament that Gianni Infantino, the president of world soccer's governing body, has bullishly hyped as "the greatest show that the planet has ever seen".

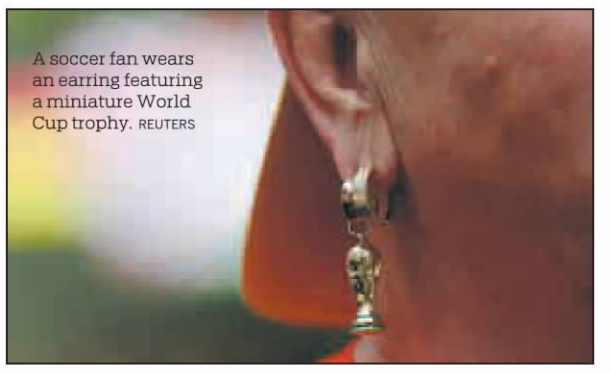
Ticket fury

Yet Infantino's breezy optimism has run into hurricane-force headwinds of skepticism during a build-up dogged by concerns over affordability, politics and conflict.

The skyrocketing cost of tickets to the tournament has triggered a global backlash that has left FIFA and Infantino struggling to mount a convincing public relations defense.

The most expensive ticket for the 2022 World Cup final cost around $1,600 at face value; in 2026 the most expensive face value ticket being sold by FIFA is an eye-watering $32,970.

That kind of inflation has been prevalent across the tournament's 104 matches, where seats for many games remain available on secondary resale markets despite supposedly huge demand.



A soccer fan wears an earring featuring a miniature World Cup trophy. REUTERS

Even Infantino's staunch ally, US President Donald Trump, has balked at the cost, reacting with surprise when told of the $1,000 price tag for tickets to the USA's opening game with Paraguay in Los Angeles on Friday — the first game on US soil.

"I wouldn't pay it either, to be honest with you," the US president told the New York Post.

While fans absorb the expense of travel to the tournament, other critics have questioned whether the World Cup party will be soured by the political climate in the United States.

Human Rights Watch says Trump's crackdowns on immigration, demonstrations and press freedom could lead to a World Cup defined by "exclusion and fear".

Those fears were fueled Monday when FIFA dropped a Somali referee from the World Cup after he was denied entry to the United States.

Omar Artan was set to be the first match official from Somalia to referee a match at a global finals, but he was turned back following his arrival at Miami International Airport on Saturday.

FIFA said it was powerless to influence the decision and announced it had omitted Artan from its 52-strong referee roster.

The US-Israel military strikes launched against Iran in February have also loomed large over the tournament, where Iran is due to play three group games in the US, starting with its opener against New Zealand on June 15.

Trump initially suggested Iran should withdraw from the tournament for its own "life and safety", before walking back his rhetoric.

Iran, meanwhile, has switched its base camp from Tucson, Arizona, to the Mexican city of Tijuana, where it touched down early Sunday.

While Iran's players are free to travel in and out of the US, some 15 administrative and management staff have been denied visas by US authorities in a move Iranian authorities have condemned as "deliberate and discriminatory treatment".

Expanded field

On the field, the decision to expand the tournament to 48 teams — up from 32 in 2022 — is likely to strip the group stage of any sense of jeopardy.

A total of 72 first-round matches will be needed to eliminate just 12 teams, with 32 advancing to the knockout rounds — the top two finishers in each of the 12 first-round groups along with the eight best third-place finishers.

The tournament will see a range of other innovations.

For the first time in World Cup history, every game will feature cooling breaks in the middle of each half, a measure designed to mitigate the effects of searing heat and humidity expected at many of the tournament's 16 venues.

Players and referees will need to adjust to several new rules being rolled out at the World Cup, including teams being required to make substitutions inside 10 seconds to prevent time-wasting.

A crackdown on racist abuse will see players risk a red card for covering their mouth with a hand, arm or shirt during a confrontation with an opponent.

Next month's final, meanwhile, could well be the longest on record due to the decision to stage a Super Bowl-style halftime show, headlined by Madonna, Shakira and BTS.

The show means the halftime interval will be stretched from the traditional 15 minutes to around 25 minutes.

AFP

Whether you're watching in the bar, or sitting behind the goal, banter like a natural with this handy guide to soccer slang

In squeaky bum time, the false 9 pulled off a nutmeg, before firing a worldie into the top bin.

Make any sense?

Soccer fans from across the globe are heading to North America for the World Cup — and bringing with them a lexicon of esoteric words and phrases that describe the beautiful game.

Here's a look at some of the things the locals might be hearing from traveling supporters inside and outside stadiums, and where they might have originated.

Squeaky bum time



Let's paint a picture: It's the World Cup final, and Argentina and Brazil are locked at 1-1 with five minutes remaining. We are officially in "squeaky bum time". Coined by former Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson, the phrase describes the late stages of a match — or even a season or tournament — when players and fans get tense and nervous. It even got recognized by the Oxford English Dictionary, which defined the saying, somewhat obtusely, as "the sound of someone shifting restlessly on plastic seating during tense closing stages of a contest".

Parking the bus

You're likely to hear this when a big underdog comes up against a top team at the World Cup. If an inferior team — or maybe one which has had a player sent off — shows no attacking intent and plays ultra-defensively to stop its opponent scoring, it is said to be "parking the bus" in front of its goal. The phrase came into soccer's wider vernacular after Jose Mourinho, the Portuguese coaching great, complained while managing Chelsea in 2004 that Premier League rival Tottenham "might as well have put the team bus in front of their goal".

False 9

There's nothing wrong about a false 9. When a player starts a match as the nominal striker — i.e. as a classic No 9 — but constantly moves into deeper positions on the field to be harder to mark and create confusion among opposition defenders, they are said to be playing as a "false 9". In modern-day soccer, the role was mastered by Lionel Messi at Barcelona when Pep Guardiola was its coach and by Cesc Fabregas in Spain's title-winning team in the European Championship in 2012. Harry Kane might play in a similar position for England at the World Cup.



Worldie

Typically reserved for long-range shots that fly into the top corner of the net, a "worldie" — a word coming from British slang — describes a goal that belongs in the "world class" category.

Total football

It started off being a tactical ideology used by the Dutch national team in the 1970s, where outfield players have no fixed position and can feel comfortable on the field wherever they are. Nowadays, the phrase is invariably used loosely, even jokingly, by soccer fans to describe a lengthy spell of possession, often involving some intricate, fluid passing and ending up in a goal.

Nutmeg

It's one of the simplest tricks in soccer — and a humiliation for those on the receiving end. A "nutmeg" is the act of kicking the ball between your opponent's legs to either run round and gather it yourself or to pass to a teammate. It has derivatives around the world, from "petit pont" ("little bridge") in French, to "cano" in Spanish and "tunnel" in Scandinavian.

Panenka

You know when a player chips a penalty kick slowly and cheekily straight into the middle of the goal or, in the worst-case scenario, into the hands of a grateful goalkeeper? Well, it has a name.

The "Panenka" was born in 1976, when Czech player Antonin Panenka converted the title-clinching penalty in that manner during a shootout in the European Championship final against West Germany. He ran up to the ball at normal speed and chose to float it softly up and down into the net, predicting



correctly the direction the goalkeeper would dive. It's risky and can make the penalty-taker look stupid if it goes wrong.

Clean sheet

A goalkeeper at the World Cup will sleep well if he keeps a clean sheet. Termed a shutout in the United States, it simply means when a team doesn't concede a goal. The use of "clean sheet" dates back to when reporters only used paper notebooks to record different incidents — like goals — in games. If no goals were scored by a team, a sheet of paper would remain clean.

Top bin

The two top corners of a goal are the ideal targets for a shot, so obviously they have a special name for fans. Creeping into the soccer lexicon this century — and also into the Oxford English Dictionary — is the usage of "top bin", possibly a nod to the use in practice sessions of targets in each of the top corners of a goal that resemble a bin (the British term for a trash can). Another is "postage stamp", which you'd apply to the top corner of an envelope. Many languages have their own derivative, and one such example that conjures a great image heralds from Brazil, where they say a top corner is "onde a coruja dorme" (where the owl sleeps).



12th man

There will be 11 players in each team at the World Cup. There's a way of getting 12 — kind of. The "12th man" refers to the team's fans, who — if they are loud or intimidating — can act as an extra player. Or so coaches say, anyway.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Content hub
City's digital ecosystem draws global influencers
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Carbon-negative island delivers profitable growth
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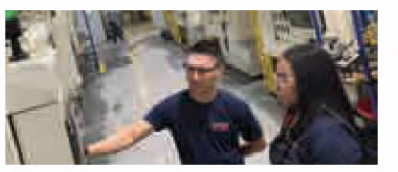

Industrial cooperation
Chinese-American factory in Michigan builds teamwork
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, JUNE 12, 2026

XI'S VISION | CULTURAL HERITAGE

Nation set to celebrate its 'root and soul'

Heritage day reflects enduring commitment to preserving and sharing cultural legacy

By **WANG KAIHAO** and **WANG QIAN** in Beijing and **CHEN YE** in Hangzhou

Thousands of celebrators are expected at events nationwide, including exhibitions, symposiums and public education programs, which have been scheduled to immerse the country in an atmosphere of cultural heritage and history to welcome China's annual Cultural and Natural Heritage Day, which falls on Saturday.

The arrangements for observing the day are strong testament to China's commitment to preserving and sharing the beauty and essence of its time-tested legacies with the outside world.

This year's celebration holds even greater significance than usual, as it marks the 20th anniversary of the country's first designation of this special day, which before 2017 was known as Cultural Heritage Day.

The past 20 years have seen an unprecedented boom in the heritage sector throughout the country. In 2006, museums nationwide attracted a total of around 150 million visits, a number that by 2025 had increased to 1.56 billion. China initially had 24 entries on the UNESCO World Heritage List, but the number has now risen to 60.

President Xi Jinping, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, has consistently prioritized heritage protection in recent years. In a guideline statement released in 2016, for example, he described cultural relics as "a valuable legacy from our ancestors", emphasizing that conservation will benefit future generations. He pointed out that the relics are tangible manifestations of the fine traditional culture, or "the root and soul", of the Chinese nation.

Such resolution has its roots in eastern Zhejiang province 20 years ago. The saplings planted then have now grown into flourishing trees, and they set an example for the rest of the country and beyond.

In Yuhang district of Hangzhou, the capital of Zhejiang, are located the Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City. Dating back 4,300 to 5,300 years, this vast prehistoric site was the hub of a regional state that worshipped jade and grew rice with highly-developed water conservation systems.

The site is considered to mark the dawn of Chinese civilization.

Nowadays, it offers a living, evolving testament to how a grand plan for preserving the past is implemented at the grassroots level.

The Regulations of Hangzhou on the Protection and Management of the Liangzhu Ancient City World Cultural Heritage were officially rolled out in June. They establish a comprehensive legal framework that aims to integrate this cradle of Chinese civilization more deeply into the fabric of contemporary life.

Sun Haibo, director of the Cultural Relics and Heritage Administration Bureau of the Hangzhou Liangzhu Archaeological Site Administrative District, said that the regulations could provide a model for the management of large-scale archaeological sites nationwide.

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Comment, **page 6**

The legislation, comprising six chapters and 37 articles, marks a decisive shift from decades of protection-first focus to a more ambitious vision of making heritage a driver of coordinated regional development.

"This has been an iterative journey spanning more than 20 years," said Sun. "At each stage, we faced different challenges."

In the early 2000s, Liangzhu's northern mountains, which were rich in high-quality stone, were being carved up by quarries and thus served as one of the main drivers of the local economy.

Upon learning about the situation in July 2003, Xi, then Party secretary of Zhejiang, visited the site and promptly ordered the closure of the mines. It was not an uncommon occurrence at a time when archaeological protection was often compromised for the need of economic development. However, Xi emphasized that economic growth should not be at odds with cultural preservation.

He also said that the Liangzhu site is a sacred place that provides evidence of China's 5,000-year-old civilization, and is an invaluable treasure that must be protected.

The path of Liangzhu protection thus turned into a promising lane. In 2019, it was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage List.

Xi's dedication to Liangzhu has lasted throughout the subsequent decades. In 2023, he proposed holding the Liangzhu Forum, by which the ancient culture could offer inspiration to the world in a modern context.

In the congratulatory message to the inaugural Liangzhu Forum in December 2023, Xi called for efforts to promote a view of civilization that features equality, mutual learning, dialogue and mutual accommodation, thus helping different civilizations to live in harmony and reinforce one another.

The forum has been held annually in Hangzhou for the past three years.

Following the plan to ensure the Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City's sustainable development, economic benefits are being reaped. Last year, the site welcomed 1.46 million visits, establishing the ruins on the outskirts of Hangzhou as a popular tourist destination.

"We're exploring an effective way to coordinate the protection of this heritage with the sustainable development of the region," said Sun, the heritage administration bureau director. "We hope to integrate the cultural, ecological and landscape resources of Yuhang district (of Hangzhou) to drive tourism and the cultural creativity industries centered on the archaeological site."

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Sincerity, reciprocity and symbiosis
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Deadly airstrike





Above: Smoke billows from the site of an Israeli airstrike in Sarba, Lebanon, on Wednesday. Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon have killed at least 18 people and injured several others, according to Lebanon's National News Agency, civil defense and health authorities. ALI HASHISHO / XINHUA
Left: A firefighter battles a blaze caused by an Israeli airstrike in the southern port city of Sidon, Lebanon, on Wednesday. MOHAMMED ZAATARI / AP **See story, page 3**

China seeks greater imports from Europe

By **ZHANG ZHOUXIANG** in Berlin
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China stands ready to import more from Germany and the rest of Europe, Ling Ji, vice-minister of commerce and deputy international trade representative of China, said on Thursday, emphasizing the complementary nature of China-Germany economic relations and the vast opportunities offered by the Chinese market.

Speaking at the "Big Market for All: Export to China" event in Berlin, Ling recalled German Chancellor Friedrich Merz's visit to China in February, during which the two nations reached a series of important common understandings, providing strategic guidance for the future development of China-Germany economic and trade ties.

"Under the strategic guidance and promotion of the leaders of both countries, China and Germany have long adhered to openness, mutual respect and mutual trust. Bilateral economic cooperation has developed into a pattern characterized by deeply integrated industries, interconnected markets and complementary advantages," Ling said.

The Berlin event, aimed at creating an efficient channel for high-quality products to enter the Chinese market, marked the first "Big Market for All: Export to China" activity held in the European Union this year.

The "Big Market for All: Export to China" initiative, launched in Shanghai in November 2025, is part of China's broader push to boost imports and tap the purchasing power of its vast consumer market.

Under the program, China's Ministry of Commerce selects five to eight annual partner countries each year to organize more than 100 import-boosting activities.

Li Guoqing, deputy director-general of the China International Import Expo Bureau, noted that 151 countries, regions and international organizations have so far participated in the CIIE Country Exhibition, while Germany ranks first in Europe in terms of both exhibition space and the number of participating enterprises.

"The China-Germany relationship has always been strong and complementary, with significant long-term potential," said Thomas Koenig, a senior China affairs expert at the German Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

"Despite global trade tensions and other challenges, there remains substantial room for cooperation. China's market continues to be highly attractive for German businesses and expanding German exports to China can contribute to a more balanced and resilient bilateral economic relationship. That is why I remain cautiously optimistic about the future of China-Germany cooperation," Koenig added.

Eberhard J. Trempel, director-general of the German Global Trade Forum Berlin, said he believes that the future holds enormous potential for deeper, synergistic cooperation in forward-looking industries such as infrastructure, green tech and decarbonization, autonomous driving, as well as artificial intelligence and industrial automation.

"In smart manufacturing, German expertise in hardware and mechanical engineering complements China's speed in applying AI and big data in an ideal way," he said.

WORLD WATCH
By John Quelch and Zarko Krkeljas

Sports can strengthen much more than people

At a time when many nations are grappling with rising healthcare costs, youth anxiety, social fragmentation and economic uncertainty, sports must be viewed not just as a leisure activity, but as a strategic investment in national development.

Too often, discussion of sports is primarily in terms of medals, elite athletes or major competitions. Yet the true value of sports extends far beyond the stadium. Sports build healthier citizens, stronger communities, more resilient economies and more connected societies.

Most important, sports are not only for Olympic champions or professional athletes. They are for everyone — schoolchildren, university students, working adults and the elderly alike. A nation that embraces sports as part of daily life creates long-term social and economic benefits that no medal table alone can measure.

At the individual level, regular physical activity improves physical and mental health, builds confidence, strengthens discipline and develops resilience. Increasingly, medical experts emphasize that exercise, alongside healthy diet, is one of the most effective ways to prevent chronic diseases such as diabetes, heart disease and obesity. Encouraging active lifestyles is therefore not simply a public health issue; it is an economic imperative.

The financial stakes are enormous. According to the World Health Organization, insufficient physical activity contributes to millions of preventable deaths annually and imposes substantial healthcare costs worldwide. Sedentary lifestyles place growing pressure on national healthcare systems, particularly as populations age. By contrast, healthier populations reduce long-term medical expenditures, improve workforce productivity and contribute to social stability.

Sports are particularly effective because they are often social and collective. Whether through football, basketball, badminton, pickleball, running clubs or community-square dancing, people motivate one another to remain active. Exercise becomes sustainable when it is embedded in social interaction and community life.

*See **Lifestyles,** page 3*

VISITORS THRONG TO ZHOUCHENG FOR BAI-STYLE FABRICS

Ethnic group's ancient design technique is finding modern applications and global fans

By **GUO JIATONG**
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Under the eaves of a courtyard in Zhoucheng village in Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, Zhang Hanmin bent over a white cloth, her fingers steady as she stitched tiny knots into the fabric.

Around her, long strips of blue and white cloth swayed in the wind, their patterns catching the bright plateau sunlight. More fabric hung nearby, casting dancing shadows on the stone-paved courtyard.

For Zhang, an inheritor with more than 10 years of experience and founder of Lanxu, a tie-dye brand, the cloth is more than a decorative fabric, it is a language of daily life, ritual and memory for the Bai people.

Known as the largest natural Bai ethnic village in China, Zhoucheng was named the "Hometown of Ethnic Tie-dye Art" by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 1996.

Today, the village is home to more than 4,000 tie-dye artisans, who have carried the craft's blue-and-white patterns across generations.

The process begins with plain white cloth. Artisans stitch, knot and bind the fabric by hand before dipping it into dye vats. When the knots are loosened and the cloth is unfolded, patterns emerge, shaped by the pressure of thread, depth of the dye and the patience of the maker.



Bai ethnic tie and dye artisans Duan Yinmei (left) and Duan Lilan untie cloth knots after dyeing at a workshop in Zhoucheng village, Dali Bai autonomous prefecture, Yunnan province, on Nov 21. HU CHAO / XINHUA

China Vibes — GIFTS

In Bai communities, those patterns are not only decorative. According to Zhang, tie-dye accompanies people through some of life's most significant moments.

During the Benzhu Festival, for example, villagers drape tie-dyed cloth over statues of their patron gods as a sign of respect and homage, praying for peace, good harvests and prosperity.

*See **Technique,** page 3*

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INDEPTH

US farmers 'cautiously optimistic' on China trade

After leaders' summit built consensus, growers hopeful of return to strong agricultural exports

By **MAY ZHOU** in Houston, Texas
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The United States food pavilion is displayed at the SIAL Shanghai, an international food exhibition, on May 19, 2025. YI CHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

During United States President Donald Trump's visit to Beijing last month, both sides reached a positive consensus on market access for certain agricultural products. The two parties agreed in principle to incorporate those products into a framework arrangement for reciprocal tariff reductions, and establish targets to expand agricultural trade.

On China's General Administration of Customs website, hundreds of expired licenses for US beef, pork and poultry plants were renewed soon after Trump's visit. The trade in meat was resumed shortly after the summit, an encouraging sign for US farmers.

Regardless of what size US farm exports to China will turn out to be in the next three years, one thing is clear — China and the US are working to jointly lower tariffs and expand access to agricultural products in their respective markets.

The news has been welcomed by US farmers, many of whom take it as a new beginning. Trump's tariffs halted the flow of farm goods between the two countries last year, following a previous stalling in 2018.

Matt Wagenson, a farmer in Outagamie County, Wisconsin, and vice-president of the Wisconsin Soybean Marketing Board, told local news outlet WPR that improved trade numbers would be "a huge help".

"We're always looking to increase our free trade across the world, and China is just a crucial part of that free trade," he said.

Dave Pfarr, a soybean farmer near Le Sueur, Minnesota, said that from the producers' perspective, "we would love to get them back as a customer". "Because they are a big importer of our proteins, primarily soybeans and soybean meal," he told local CBS News in mid-May.

But others in US agriculture are more cautious. China-US agricultural trade has experienced a roller-coaster ride in the past decade, largely due to Trump's tariff policy.

"I think we are cautiously optimistic when it comes to these things because we've been on both sides of this equation. You know, the first time we went through the tariff crisis, we lost 20 percent market share," Todd Main, director of market development at the Illinois Soybean Association, told Ag Daily in late May.

Soybean sales seesaw

Before the first trade war, China's appetite for US soybeans had grown steadily, driven by a rising middle-income group that was eating more pork, more poultry and more edible oils — all of which depended on soybeans as a feedstock.

The numbers were impressive. In the seven years leading up to the 2018 trade war, 28 percent of all US soybean production on average went to China, according to the American Soybean Association.

By 2016 and 2017, US soybean exports to China were running at $10.5 billion and $12.2 billion, respectively, accounting for 62 percent and 57 percent of all US soybean exports, according to data from the US International Trade Commission.

Broader agricultural trade was also substantial.

From 2012 to 2017, China purchased US farm products worth $24 billion to $29 billion annually, about 20 percent of all US agricultural exports, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

The trade relationship had grown intertwined — China needed US grain to feed its livestock, US farmers needed Chinese demand to justify the acreage they were planting.

The symbiotic relation was abruptly interrupted when the first Trump administration imposed tariffs on billions of Chinese goods in April 2018. Beijing imposed a 25 percent retaliatory tariff on US soybeans.

The effect was immediate and severe. US farm exports to China dropped to $13 billion in 2018 from $24 billion in 2017, a reduction of almost 46 percent.

US soybeans, the No 1 farm export to China, fell much more — from $12.2 billion in 2017 to $3.1 billion in 2018 — a 75 percent collapse in a single year.

China was pushed to look elsewhere for its soybean supply, leading to a structural shift in the country's agricultural imports strategy.

In 2012, a severe US drought had forced Chinese buyers to turn to Brazil to fill their supply needs, and the South American country demonstrated that it could reliably deliver supplies. Since 2013, Brazil's soybean exports to China have grown steadily.





Left: Visitors learn about US wine during an international rural innovation development exhibition in Hefei, Anhui province, in March 2025. YUAN BING / FOR CHINA DAILY **Right:** An Iowa farmer and his son load soybean seed into a planter on May 6 near West Bend, Iowa, the US. SCOTT OLSON / GETTY IMAGES

Conversely, China's demand for soybeans has helped Brazil to grow its soybean capacity. Brazil overtook the US to become the world's largest soybean producer in 2017.

When US soybean exports to China dropped to 8 million metric tons in 2018, Brazil sold 69 MMT of soybeans to China, speeding up Brazil's share of soybean exports to China.

By 2024, Brazil expanded China shipments to 73 MMT, accounting for 70 percent of China's soybean imports, while US exports represented just 21 percent.

Brazil now produces nearly 40 percent of the global soybean harvest while the US produces about 28 percent, according to analysis by the American Soybean Association.

As trade began to recover under the Phase One agreement, US soybean exports to China grew and peaked at 34 MMT in 2020, about 55 percent of what Brazil shipped to China.

The US' tariff escalation last year was even more brutal. When Trump imposed a 34 percent tariff on Chinese goods in April 2025, the retaliatory tariffs from China sunk US soybean exports deeper to a mere 7 MMT.

"When that was announced, soybean prices basically collapsed," Mike Cerny, a farmer in Sharon, Wisconsin, told PBS in April last year. "If you could afford to hold on to your beans and wait for better times, you were OK. If you had a mortgage due, or payments due, or cash flow needs, and you had to sell at that point, you were taking it pretty rough."

The financial loss for soybean growers was significant. Even with federal assistance, farmers still lost almost $75 per acre of soybeans in 2025, according to the American Soybean Association.

Similarly, US beef exports to China fell from a peak of $2.76 billion in 2022 to $977 million in 2025. Overall, US farm exports to China, which peaked at $41 billion in 2022, dropped to a mere $10 billion in 2025, the lowest since 2008.

> "After a year of widely fluctuating tariff levels, having stable costs of the main ingredients involved in producing a crop will be a most welcome tranquil period for farmers in the American heartland. ... If China is not removed from that list ... it may be difficult to expect to see large increases in purchases of US agricultural commodities or other significant business deals."
>
> **Kenneth Quinn,** president emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines, Iowa



Samples of US soybeans are displayed at the Chinese International Import Expo in Shanghai on Nov 6. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Overall US farm exports were down by 3 percent in 2025, primarily driven by losses in soybean exports, according to the US Department of Agriculture.

Farm debt rises

The trade losses have cascaded through the farm economy.

The Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City found that farmers were taking larger operating loans and taking longer to repay them, a report by the American Farm Bureau Federation said. Nearly 40 percent more farm operating loans were opened in the fourth quarter of 2025, compared with the same period in 2024.

Total farm debt reached a record $624.7 billion in early 2026 — up $30.8 billion, or 5 percent, from the year before, according to the federation. It was the second consecutive year of 5 percent farm debt growth.

Critically, the debt growth was not from investment or expansion but from necessity: Farmers were borrowing simply to cover input costs.

"Farm debt continues to rise as producers rely on borrowing to manage elevated operating costs and uneven cash flow," the report concluded. The situation was, in the federation's assessment, "a generational downturn rather than a temporary slowdown".

In addition, more farmers filed for bankruptcy in 2025, the federation said. A total of 315 farm bankruptcies were filed in the calendar year, up 46 percent from 2024.

The US Midwest and Southeast were the hardest hit, with the regions seeing 121 and 105 bankruptcy cases filed, respectively. The numbers represented a 70 percent year-on-year increase in filings in the Midwest, and a 69 percent rise in the Southeast.

In addition, the number of US farms was reduced by 15,000 in 2025, reflecting a broader trend in farm closures, according to the American Farm Bureau Federation.

This year, US farmers have been hit by another major shock with the US-Iran military conflict sending fuel and fertilizer costs sharply higher.

A survey of 400 farmers, conducted by researchers at the Purdue Center for Commercial Agriculture in late March, found that almost half said their farm operations were financially worse than a year earlier.

With the rising price of land, rent, equipment, fertilizer and fuel, US farmers have been struggling with thinning margins. In February, before the start of the Iran conflict, the USDA projected the US farm income will slip lower in 2026.

Americans miss pie

The reality is that China's overall farm imports have been growing steadily over the past nine years — from $125 billion in 2017 to $207 billion in 2025, with a peak of $234.8 billion in 2022, primarily due to prices.

In the same period, however, US farm exports to China have been going through ups and downs, but producers have largely missed out on the growth in China's farm imports.

The Beijing summit could produce positive outcomes for US farmers. If China ends up purchasing $17 billion of US farm goods annually, plus 25 MMT of soybeans as the White House announced, it would take the volume of US exports to China to about $28 billion to $30 billion a year.

However, that number barely matches the volume preceding the 2025 "Liberation Day" announcement of US tariffs, and is much lower than the $41 billion peak achieved in 2022.

The structural shift caused by Trump's tariff policy has US citizens worried about the prospects for long-term farm trade with China.

"If you look out a decade or so, we know that long-term China is not going to be the dominant buyer that it once was," said Main, director of market development at the Illinois Soybean Association. "And so, we have to pivot."

Kenneth Quinn, president emeritus of the World Food Prize Foundation in Des Moines, Iowa, is more optimistic.

"In my opinion, the reference to a new 'constructive strategic stability' with 'moderate cooperation' and 'manageable differences' can provide an extended period of predictable situations, which Midwest farmers strongly desire," Quinn told China Daily.

The takeaway from the May summit is that it allows US farmers to make decisions before planting time, based on a clear understanding of the costs involved throughout the growing cycle, he said. "After a year of widely fluctuating tariff levels, having stable costs of the main ingredients involved in producing a crop will be a most welcome tranquil period for farmers in the American heartland," Quinn said.

The prospects for US-China farm trade largely hinge on big-picture bilateral relations.

Quinn said that one measure of the summit's impact will be whether China stays on the US Secretary of Commerce's List of Adversaries along with Iran, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Cuba and Russia.

"If China is not removed from that list ... it may be difficult to expect to see large increases in purchases of US agricultural commodities or other significant business deals," he said.

The most important thing is for the US State Department and China's Foreign Ministry to work on the goals and possible outcomes for any follow-up state visit of President Xi Jinping to the US. During the summit in Beijing, Trump invited Xi to visit the US later this year.

Quinn said a presidential summit provides an opportunity to answer a "fundamental question" in the US-China relationship by announcing a partnership to address the "greatest challenge humanity has ever encountered".

"Can we sustainably feed the 9.5 billion to 10 billion people who will be on our planet by 2050?" he said.

There may not be a time in the coming decades when the leaders of the US and China are both positioned to take dramatic steps to achieve that, Quinn said.

"My hope is that President Xi and President Trump will seize this opportunity and strive to achieve historic greatness by taking the first steps toward building peace through agriculture," he said.

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TOP NEWS

Heritage: Protection, development coordinated

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After Liangzhu, the next focus in exploring the origins of Chinese civilization in Zhejiang is the Shangshan culture.

Named after the Shangshan site in Pujiang county of Jinhua, Zhejiang, this Neolithic culture dates back 8,500 to 11,000 years and is the oldest Neolithic culture ever found in the lower reaches of the Yangtze River and China's southeastern coastal region. However, it was once overlooked in academic studies.

Sheng Danping, former head of the Pujiang Museum, still vividly remembers receiving an instruction from Xi in late November 2006 to strengthen research and publicity regarding the Shangshan culture.

At a symposium earlier that month, the culture had been formally named, Sheng told Zhejiang Daily, adding that he was amazed by the attention from the leadership. The directive put things into high gear. Within months, a 500-square-meter exhibition hall was built and opened to the public. Within three years, the pottery pieces that had been unearthed were sorted. In 2007, work began on a major protection plan, which gained national and provincial approval in 2010.

Despite the mountainous terrain of Pujiang leaving relatively little space for land resources, local protectors like Sheng still left nearly 90 hectares of "fine land" for the excavation and research of Shangshan.

"Shangshan is thus a key for people to improve their cultural confidence," Sheng said.

In November 2020, top-tier scholars gathered again in Pujiang for another symposium on Shangshan studies. With in-depth field research and abundant findings, they concluded that the place was a key origin of the world's rice cultivation.

Yang Jianwu, former director of the Zhejiang Administration of Cultural Relics, said the surge in scholarly attention has cemented a series of landmark conclusions that fundamentally rewrite the story of human civilization in East Asia.

Around 20 years ago, Xi's guidance on heritage protection benefited more projects in Zhejiang, ranging from the world-famous West Lake and the Grand Canal to a number of intangible cultural heritage items, such as folk operas. He also made a key instruction on the restoration of the historic Wenlange library, a crucial trove of ancient books, and encouraged the wide participation of different sectors in the preservation of traditional villages.

"During Xi's work in Zhejiang, he stressed on many occasions that we must attach great importance to cultural heritage protection and embrace the notion that protecting cultural relics is also a kind of political achievement," Yang said.

The theme of this year's Cultural and Natural Heritage Day is "cultural heritage belongs to the people and serves the people", and what has been done in Zhejiang can serve as a suitable footnote for this.

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Capitol inquiry



Bill Gates leaves after appearing before the House Oversight Committee investigating late financier and sex offender Jeffrey Epstein, in Washington, DC, on Wednesday. During the hearing, US lawmakers questioned Gates about his interactions with Epstein as part of the committee's investigation into the Justice Department's handling of cases involving Epstein and his associates. ELIZABETH FRANTZ / REUTERS

Mideast tense as US, Iran trade fresh strikes

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong and **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE

The situation in the Middle East remained tense after the United States and Iran exchanged strikes for the second day, with Tehran announcing the complete closure of the Strait of Hormuz.

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called for a ceasefire and demanded "no more excuses" in a post on social media platform X on Thursday, noting that the region "is being pulled deeper into crisis".

Guterres also underscored that the "restrictions on navigational rights and freedoms in and around the Strait of Hormuz" are causing hardship and instability across the world.

The Iranian Army and the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps attacked several US bases and facilities across the region, Tasnim News Agency reported on Thursday.

"During two waves of operations, the brave warriors of the Aerospace Force and the heroes of the IRGC Navy, in the early hours of this morning (Thursday), struck and destroyed 18 important targets belonging to the evil US army in Bahrain and Kuwait," the IRGC was quoted as saying.

The IRGC is also said to have launched a drone attack on the US Fifth Fleet in Bahrain. "In this wave of military drone attacks, the communications antennas and radar installations of the Fifth Fleet's Patriot system were targeted," Xinhua News Agency cited a Mehr News Agency report as saying.

Iran's Khatam al-Anbiya Central Headquarters has announced the complete closure of the Strait of Hormuz to all shipping, including oil tankers and commercial vessels, citing insecurity caused by US strikes on southern Iran, according to Mehr.

Bahrain and Kuwait's air defense forces intercepted missiles and drones, with Kuwait announcing a temporary closure of its airspace after Iranian attacks as a precautionary measure.

Bahrain's Ministry of Interior said in a post on X that as a result of the "Iranian aggression against Bahrain", an 11-year-old girl sustained minor injuries and was treated at the scene.

Vehicles caught fire and houses were damaged in Hamad Town and Manama "due to falling debris from drones interception", the ministry said, adding that civil defense and national ambulance officials have taken necessary measures.

In a statement, Qatar's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned Iran's fresh strikes against Jordan, Bahrain and Kuwait as a "blatant violation of the sovereignty of these countries".

"The Ministry of Foreign Affairs stresses the need to spare the region the repercussions of these unjustified attacks and to work toward de-escalation in order to restore regional and international security and stability," the ministry said.

Secretary-General of the Gulf Cooperation Council Jasem Mohamed Albudaiwi, in a statement published on Thursday, condemned "the repeated treacherous Iranian attacks" on Bahrain, Kuwait and Jordan, and affirmed the GCC's support for all measures taken by the affected Arab countries "to enhance their security, preserve their sovereignty and territorial integrity".

The US Central Command, or CENTCOM, said it had completed additional self-defense strikes against multiple targets in Iran on Wednesday.

"CENTCOM forces launched strikes on Iranian military surveillance capabilities, communication systems, and air defense sites across Iran," it said, adding that US Marine Corps, Air Force, and Navy assets fired precision munitions on Iranian targets that posed a threat to US forces and international commercial ships transiting regional waters.

US President Donald Trump said in a social media post that Iran "has taken too long to negotiate a deal that would have been great for them", and now "they will have to pay the price".

"Iran is all talk and no action. The Bully of the Middle East is DEAD!!!" Trump posted, adding that Iran "is doing zero business", not paying for their military or "any of their bills", and that it was quickly "becoming a failed nation".

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Technique: Craft gains a global fan base

From page 1

"When we make each piece, we are not only preserving our traditions, we are expressing our pride in Bai culture," Zhang said.

That pride comes not only from the craft's role in daily and ceremonial life, but also from its history.

Records indicate that the Bai ancestors had already developed textile techniques during the Neolithic age. In the first half of the 20th century, household tie-dye workshops had become widespread across Zhoucheng and neighboring towns, turning the region into a well-known tie-dyeing center.

Today, the craft is finding new vitality among younger generations and visitors from around the world.

In Zhoucheng, tie-dyed products have expanded beyond traditional household use to include contemporary fashion and lifestyle items, such as T-shirts, dresses, bucket hats, tote bags, hair accessories and decorative ornaments.

At Zhang's workshop, tourists arrive daily to experience the slow, meditative process of stitching, binding and dyeing fabric by hand. Some spend hours creating their own patterns, immersing themselves in the village's atmosphere.

Many visitors are also attracted by the environmentally friendly materials used in the process.

The craft is also entering new commercial and cultural spaces beyond the village.

In Lijiang, Yunnan, cafe owner Li Jimin has incorporated tie-dye aesthetics into his business. His takeaway cups, coffee bean packaging and shopping bags all feature tie-dye-inspired designs.

"Many overseas visitors stop by our cafe," Li said. "They are often drawn to the blue-and-white packaging because it feels different from what they see elsewhere, and many buy it as a gift to take home."

For Zhang, the appeal of tie-dye goes beyond aesthetics or commerce. She sees the craft as a bridge between people and cultures.

Human rights action plan for 2026-30 issued

Blueprint aims to ensure that the fruits of modernization benefit all people more fairly

By YANG ZEKUN
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China released a new national human rights action plan on Thursday at the opening of the 2026 Forum on Global Human Rights Governance, pledging to further protect people's rights and promote social fairness and justice.

The National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2026-30) aims to ensure that the principal position of the people is respected, their fundamental interests are safeguarded, and the fruits of modernization benefit all people more fairly.

China implemented its fourth national human rights action plan from 2021 to 2025. With the completion of its major objectives and tasks, the country made notable progress in human rights protection, according to the new plan.

The two-day forum, themed "Joint Development, Shared Human Rights: The 40th anniversary of the adoption of the Declaration on the Right to Development and a new vision for global human rights governance", was co-hosted by the State Council Information Office and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. More than 400 Chinese and foreign guests from over 100 countries and international organizations, including United Nations agencies, attended the forum.

Participants stressed that development should be given greater priority, so that its benefits can reach people in all countries in a more equitable way.

Li Shulei, a member of the Political Bureau of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and head of the Publicity Department of the CPC Central Committee, said that China follows a people-centered development philosophy, regards the rights to subsistence and development as primary basic human rights, and pursues a human rights development path suited to its national conditions.

Against the backdrop of uneven global development, China will continue to respect and protect human rights, implement the 2026-30 action plan and work with other countries to advance human rights, Li said.

Abdulatif M. Jamal Rashid, former president of Iraq, said the right to development is a fundamental pillar of the global human rights system.

Rights lose practical meaning without the material conditions that allow people to exercise them, he said, citing children without access to school, families without electricity or drinking water, and farmers who lose their livelihoods because of drought.

On green development, Rashid said the transition to a green economy should be fair and balanced, taking into account the realities of developing countries and respecting their people's rights to development and stability.

He said that Iraq has benefited from support and cooperation from many countries during its recovery and reconstruction, and highly appreciates China's contribution to Iraq's stability and peace, as well as its energy and infrastructure development.

Eduardo Melchor Arana Ysa, former prime minister of Peru, said that countries should continue building the future while preserving their national identities, traditions and core values. Human rights are a common pursuit in protecting human dignity and improving people's lives, but different societies may follow different paths.

Humanity's richness lies in its diversity, including different histories, cultures, systems and development experiences, he said. The universality of human rights should not mean a single fixed model, adding that countries should advance shared goals in ways consistent with their own realities. He called for stronger multilateralism and a more balanced, inclusive and representative global governance system.

Mohamed Abdelrahman Mohamed Moussa, minister plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation and Expatriates of Egypt, said the right to development is not an isolated right, but a synthesis of many rights closely linked to national well-being and people's livelihoods.

Development should be placed at the center of global human rights governance, as poverty, inequality, climate change and conflicts continue to undermine people's basic rights, Moussa said.

Participants also said that countries should create a fair and reasonable international environment for the realization of human rights and take practical action to address common human rights challenges.



Representatives unveil the National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2026-30) at the opening of the 2026 Forum on Global Human Rights Governance on Thursday in Beijing.
TIAN YUHAO / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

Lifestyles: Sports have enormous educational value

From page 1

This is why investment in sports must go beyond elite training facilities. Municipal governments, schools and universities all have important roles to play in providing accessible sports infrastructure, public exercise spaces, amateur leagues and qualified coaches. If sports are to become part of a nation's culture rather than simply spectator activities, opportunities for participation must be widely available.

China has increasingly recognized this reality. Public fitness campaigns, expanded sports infrastructure and greater support for school athletics have helped raise awareness of healthy and active lifestyles. It is also encouraging that Chinese universities require students to pass physical education assessments before graduation. Such policies send an important signal that physical well-being is an essential component of education, not an optional extra.

The emergence of new sports also reflects changing lifestyles and demographics. Pickleball, for example, has grown rapidly around the world because it is easier to learn than tennis, requires less space and places less physical strain on participants. It is highly social, accessible to older adults as well as younger generations, and equally welcoming to men and women. The growth of such sports demonstrates how recreation can evolve to include broader segments of society.

Sports also have enormous educational value. Educators and employers increasingly recognize that academic achievement alone is insufficient for success in the 21st century. Teamwork, adaptability, perseverance, emotional intelligence and leadership are equally important. Sports develop these qualities in ways that classrooms alone often cannot.

Research consistently shows that student athletes tend to perform better academically, develop stronger social skills and experience greater emotional well-being. Sports teach young people how to cope with pressure, recover from setbacks and work collaboratively toward common goals. Equally important, they teach sportsmanship — respecting rules, showing fairness and learning how to win or lose with dignity. These values are fundamental not only for athletic participation, but also for social and professional success later in life.

When students come from diverse cultural and educational backgrounds, sports often serve another important purpose: creating connection and belonging. In an increasingly mobile and globalized world, many young people move frequently between countries, cities and communities. Sports provide continuity, friendship and identity in an ever-changing environment.

Another important quality of sports is universality. Athletic participation creates shared experiences and common values regardless of nationality, language or background.

In an age increasingly defined by polarization and mistrust, these values matter greatly. International sporting exchanges also create opportunities for dialogue and cooperation when traditional diplomatic channels may be strained. The historical example of the Ping-Pong Diplomacy between China and the United States remains a reminder that sports can sometimes open doors that politics alone cannot.

Ultimately, societies must think more broadly about what constitutes national investment. Infrastructure, technology and industry remain essential, but human capital matters just as much. Healthy, resilient and socially connected citizens are the foundation of sustainable prosperity.

Sports contribute directly to that foundation. They strengthen people, communities and nations. The returns may not always appear immediately on financial balance sheets, but over time they become visible in public health outcomes, educational achievement, economic productivity and social harmony.

John Quelch is executive vice-chancellor, American president of and a distinguished social sciences professor at Duke Kunshan University in China. Zarko Krkeljas is director of the Athletic Department at Duke Kunshan University. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:
In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.







From left: Pipes for the mud drainage system in Porong, Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia, on May 29. JUNI KRISWANTO / AFP Smoke billows from the crater of the "mud volcano" where a gas exploration triggered a mudflow accident in 2006, in Sidoarjo on May 29. TRISNADI / AP An excavator is seen at the mudflow embankment in Sidoarjo on May 29. JUNI KRISWANTO / AFP

A never-ending disaster

Mudflow tragedy in Indonesia's East Java still shapes lives 20 years on



Residents scatter flowers to mark 20 years since a gas exploration accident triggered a mudflow that buried more than a dozen villages and permanently displaced tens of thousands of people, in Sidoarjo, East Java, Indonesia, on May 29. TRISNADI / AP

Under the sweltering afternoon sun, 47-year-old Ahmad Solihudin waits outside his home in Glagaharum village, Porong district, Sidoarjo regency, East Java, for the familiar sound of a water vendor's motorcycle. When the vendor finally arrives, Solihudin hurries to buy three 25-liter plastic containers for Rp 15,000 (83 US cents), the clean water his family depends on each day.

For nearly 20 years, this has been part of Solihudin's daily routine, a lasting consequence of the Sidoarjo mudflow disaster, which occurred in Porong district in 2006 and buried thousands of homes across nearby villages.

Although authorities managed to restrain the mudflow above ground by constructing embankments rising 9 to 11 meters high, they have not been able to contain its impact beneath the surface, where it continues to seep through the soil, contaminating wells and damaging groundwater supplies in surrounding communities.

"Since the disaster, the well water here has tasted salty. It's greasy too, like it contains oil. Even soap can't wash it away. During the dry season, the water quality gets even worse and it turns black," he said.

With water quality this poor, Solihudin, like most residents in his village, has no choice but to spend a significant portion of his modest income on clean water delivered by traveling vendors who bring supplies from outside the regency, at a cost of up to Rp 450,000 a month.

The environmental damage of the mudflow extends far beyond household wells. Hundreds of hectares of rice fields that once yielded abundant harvests are now abandoned around the mudflow area. Farmers say saline groundwater causes newly planted crops to wither within days.

Solihudin pointed to stretches of farmland near his home, just about 100 meters from the eastern side of the mud embankment, where productive rice fields have since turned into empty plots overgrown with wild grass. Some are now used only as grazing land for buffalo.

"It's been more than 10 years since these fields could grow rice or any other crops," he said. "The owner tried to sell it cheaply, but no one wants to buy it, so he's just left it as it is."

According to the Jakarta Post, the mudflow began as a result of drilling activities conducted by Indonesian oil exploration company PT Lapindo Brantas in Sidoarjo on May 29, 2006. The company, however, maintained that the eruption was triggered by an earthquake that occurred two days earlier.

The hot mud eruption, initially releasing around 100 cubic meters per day, eventually submerged 16 villages across the Porong, Jabon and Tanggulangin districts, displacing around 60,000 residents.

It is widely regarded as one of the largest ecological disasters in Indonesian history, burying approximately 10,426 houses, 77 places of worship and vast areas of farmland, as well as public facilities and infrastructure.

Although nearly two decades have passed, the eruption continues at a reduced intensity. To control the mudflow, the government constructed a 640-hectare retention pond and has continuously diverted the mud into the nearby Porong River, with an estimated discharge of around 20 million cubic meters per year.

Constant anxiety

Against the backdrop of the ongoing mud eruption, daily life for Munir, 46, a resident of Gempolsari village on the northern edge of the embankment, has become defined by constant anxiety.



Residents affected by the mudflow, together with environmental activists, carry food and offerings toward the mud volcano area in Porong, Sidoarjo, East Java, on May 29. JUNI KRISWANTO / AFP

Continuous land subsidence caused by the mudflow has gradually turned his neighborhood into a low-lying basin, where rainwater easily accumulates and drains slowly, heightening the risk of flooding.

Whenever heavy rain falls, floodwater quickly inundates the road in front of his house, which is located just 100 meters from the embankment. Munir said his neighborhood is often among the last areas to dry out after major floods.

According to research by experts from the Sepuluh Nopember Institute of Technology, land subsidence extends up to 5 kilometers north and northeast of the mudflow center, with the ground sinking by as much as 40 centimeters per year.

"The inside of my house has already been raised by about 60 centimeters," Munir said. "I recently bought a truckload of soil for Rp 150,000 to elevate the yard. If I don't, it keeps flooding because the area has turned into a basin, and the water takes a long time to recede."

For Slamet, 55, another resident of Gempolsari village, the consequences of the mudflow have been just as profound. The disaster forced him, and many others, to abandon farming, as once-productive fields were rendered unusable after being buried or contaminated by the mudflow.

Slamet now earns a living selling fish. Around him, he says, neighbors have taken similar paths, shifting into small trade, motorcycle taxi services or other informal work available in the area.

"What we earn now is nothing like when we were farming, but we have no other choice if we want to feed our families."

Beyond depriving him of his livelihood, the mudflow disaster has deeply disrupted Slamet's daily life at home. Thick dust and pungent odors regularly drift from the site, becoming especially unbearable during the dry season.

"The stench makes it hard to breathe," Slamet said. "When the dry season comes, the mud thickens and has to be diluted before it can be discharged into the Porong River through pipelines. That mixing process releases an overwhelming smell, and many children living near the embankment frequently experience shortness of breath."

Losing hope

The polluted air brings not only a persistent foul odor, but also serious health risks for residents living near the mudflow site.

A 2008 study by the Indonesian Forum for Environment, or WALHI, found alarming levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons, hazardous pollutants associated with an increased risk of cancer, in the air and water surrounding the mudflow embankment. The concentrations were recorded at levels 2,000 times higher than normal safety standards.

Another WALHI study in 2016 identified at least 10 illnesses affecting residents in the area, with respiratory infections emerging as the most widespread. That year alone, around 16,700 residents were reported to have suffered respiratory infections, while the number of recorded cases had reached 63,750 in 2010.

Despite the constant threat of flooding, ongoing land subsidence and mounting health risks linked to contaminated water, soil and air, residents say there has been no meaningful long-term resolution to address the enduring impacts of the mudflow.

Slamet recalls that in the early years following the disaster, residents frequently organized events and voiced their demands. However, after years of unresolved grievances without meaningful solutions, many gradually lost hope.

"We are tired because there's no solution. We've simply learned to live with the situation," he said.

THE JAKARTA POST, INDONESIA

Rising fuel prices triggered by Mideast conflict drives car pool growth in India

Rising fuel prices triggered by the Middle East war are driving a sharp increase in carpooling, with a ride-sharing platform reporting a surge in new users seeking cheaper ways to travel.

The carpooling platform BlaBlaCar said soaring energy costs have pushed 600,000 additional drivers onto the app this year — 20 percent more than initially projected — as commuters look to offset the rising cost of fuel.

In India, its single biggest market with more than 20 million users in 2025, the number of passengers has increased by 40 percent since the start of the US-Israeli airstrikes against Iran on Feb 28.

Last year, the global carpooling leader posted record-breaking figures in the world's most populous country India, outpacing Brazil with 19 million users and France with 7 million, according to Benjamin Retourne, the platform's chief product officer.

This trend has been more pronounced in countries where fuel price increases driven by the war have been sudden and significant, combined with limited government support, such as in France.

The platform works by connecting drivers and passengers willing to travel together between cities to share costs, with the app in most of its 21 operating nations taking a 20 percent commission.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi earlier in May urged the country's 1.4 billion people to save fuel by making greater use of carpooling and public transport.

India imports approximately half of its crude oil via the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran effectively closed in response to US-Israeli strikes in February.

> "It's cheaper than the train, the bus, or a private taxi ... It also saves time, as there are few stops and the vehicle doesn't wait beyond the scheduled time."
>
> **Pratyush Anuraj,** a bank officer based in Mumbai

Retourne said a decade ago, when BlaBlaCar first launched in India, even "after two or three years, it just wasn't catching on".

The company, founded in France in 2006, therefore stopped investing in India but kept its application running from its Paris headquarters, unlike many large foreign groups that outsourced their services to India.

Growth finally began to pick up after the COVID-19 pandemic, driven by the country's economic and digital acceleration, as well as word-of-mouth.

Retourne pointed to a growth in private car ownership as well as rapid urbanization, with 200 million additional city dwellers over the past decade. "People are very connected," he said, adding that "today, wherever you go, there is 5G".

That proved to be the "recipe for carpooling to take off", he said.

Driving factor

But he was surprised that the driving factor was not the cost — but rather to avoid often crowded buses or trains.

"The number one reason people choose carpooling is not price, but comfort", he said.

The market potential remains vast, with "a new segment of the population" eager to travel for leisure and visit friends and family.

Assistant bank manager Pratyush Anuraj, 24, from India's financial capital Mumbai, said he used the carpooling platform to travel to his family's home in Pune every weekend — a 150-kilometer journey of around 2.5 hours.

"It's cheaper than the train, the bus, or a private taxi," he said. "It also saves time, as there are few stops and the vehicle doesn't wait beyond the scheduled time."

He does, however, point out some drawbacks: either the trip is often canceled at the last minute, or the drivers don't answer calls.

So far, the French platform has not monetized carpooling in India, where people pay each other directly, often using the popular digital payment systems.

The next objective is to "build a platform that aggregates multiple modes of transport" — connecting cars to buses and trains.

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WORLD

Event highlights role of dialogue among cultures

Chinese FM calls for mutual trust and understanding amid global challenges

By **SHARON NAKOLA**
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As conflicts, geopolitical tensions and technological disruptions reshape the international landscape, China, African countries and the United Nations are increasingly promoting dialogue among civilizations as a critical tool for strengthening global cooperation, advancing modernization and building a more peaceful and inclusive world.

The call came during celebrations marking the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations at the United Nations Office at Nairobi on Wednesday, where diplomats, development experts and international officials warned that rising conflicts, widening inequalities and rapid technological advances are testing the international system and underscoring the need for greater understanding among cultures.

The International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations falls on Wednesday. It was proposed by China and cosponsored by more than 80 countries, and was adopted at the UN General Assembly in June 2024.

Addressing the event via video, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi called on countries to improve understanding and foster mutual trust through dialogue amid unprecedented global challenges.

Wang said countries should promote unity and seek consensus through exchanges while strengthening the social and cultural foundations for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

Wang also highlighted the role of emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence and social media in promoting cultural exchange and mutual learning, while reaffirming China's willingness to deepen cooperation with other countries on governance and modernization.

Chinese Ambassador to Kenya Guo Haiyan said dialogue among civilizations remains essential for fostering mutual understanding, strengthening people-to-people ties and building a shared future for humanity.

She said China remains committed to working with diplomatic missions, international organizations and development partners in Kenya to advance dialogue among civilizations and deepen mutual understanding.

"Development serves as the foundation, security provides the guarantee, civilization acts as a bridge, and governance offers the institutional support," she said.

According to Guo, all countries, regardless of size, wealth or level of development, should have equal rights to participate in international affairs and determine their own development trajectories.

Kenya also used the occasion to underscore the importance of dialogue in promoting peace and development.

Collective action urged

Kenya's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Office at Nairobi and the United Nations Environment Programme, Ida Betty Odinga, emphasized the importance of collective action in addressing global challenges and strengthening international cooperation.

She said humanity is inherently interconnected and argued that nations can achieve more when they cooperate in pursuit of common goals. "Despite our differences, humanity shares common aspirations for peace, coexistence and development."

Odinga urged governments and institutions to invest in education, cultural exchange and international cooperation as they are key pillars for strengthening understanding among peoples and nations.

In a message marking the day, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the world is living through a period of "turbulence and transformation" characterized by escalating conflicts, growing inequalities and the emergence of technologies such as artificial intelligence and clean energy that present humanity with critical choices about the future.

"Too often, differences are misunderstood, or manipulated to undermine global solidarity," Guterres said. "But there is a path forward — dialogue." He said that dialogue among nations, cultures and faiths has the power to replace confrontation with cooperation and tension with trust, while helping build a more just and peaceful world.



An attendee tries Chinese calligraphy at a thematic celebration of the International Day for Dialogue among Civilizations in Nairobi, Kenya, on Wednesday. LIU QIONG / XINHUA

Opening victory



Fans celebrate after Mexico defeated South Africa in the opening match of the soccer World Cup in Mexico City, on Thursday. MARCO UGARTE / AP

See comment, page 6

China highlights strides in disability rights

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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China has made significant progress in developing disability-related programs, a representative of the China Disabled Persons' Federation said on Wednesday.

"The development of disability-related programs has been incorporated into China's national economic and social development plans," said Ren Zhanbin, director of the federation's education and employment department, at United Nations Headquarters in New York.

"It has gradually evolved into a comprehensive social undertaking encompassing rehabilitation, education, employment, poverty alleviation, social security, culture and sports, and accessibility development," he said.

Overall, this has improved the level of social protection and development opportunities for Chinese people with disabilities, Ren told the 19th session of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, or COSP19.

The convention, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2006, is the first legally binding international treaty that protects the rights of people with disabilities.

An active advocate in the drafting of the convention, China was among the first countries to become a state party. It signed the convention in March 2007, and the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress formally ratified it the next year.

Ren said the Chinese government adheres to a people-centered approach, conscientiously fulfills its obligations under the convention, and implements the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Speaking on Tuesday, when the three-day COSP19 started, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said, "Together, let's realize the rights of every person with disabilities and build a fair and vibrant future for all."

The UN praised the strides nations have made over the past 20 years, but said "significant barriers remain" and that COSP19 will offer solutions.

China is home to 85 million people with disabilities, about 6.34 percent of its population, according to the China Disabled Persons' Federation.

Ren expressed China's commitment to enabling people with disabilities to become "true holders of rights, as well as participants in, contributors to and beneficiaries of economic and social development".

The country has created a comprehensive legal framework to strengthen the protection of disability rights. This year, the Social Assistance Law was formally codified.

"This system ensures that persons with disabilities enjoy equal access to social security while receiving support services tailored to their individual needs," Ren said.

China has also established a living allowance system for people with disabilities who face financial hardship and a nursing subsidy system. The living allowance benefits 12 million people, while the nursing subsidy benefits 16.6 million.

Other successes in the fight for disability rights include promoting community and home-based care to support independent living, and housing support, rental assistance and housing security for those facing financial hardship.

Anyone who wants to work but has intellectual, psychosocial or severe physical disabilities is provided with supportive services that combine care with sheltered and supported employment, Ren said.

The China Disabled Persons' Federation, together with the federations of Zhejiang and Qinghai provinces, organized exhibitions at UN Headquarters on disability-related cultural and creative works and poverty alleviation achievements in China.

Themed Blooming Together, the exhibitions featured more than 200 works from Zhejiang, Qinghai and other regions.

Young musicians strike a chord across borders

By **MINGMEI LI** in New York
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Young US and Chinese musicians are embarking on their own journey across cultures through music, collaborating to build connections that go beyond language and borders.

Musicians from Carnegie Hall's National Youth Orchestra of the United States of America, or NYO-USA, the NYO Jazz ensemble, and Chinese pianist Zhang Sencheng performed at the *Youth Dialogue for the Future* concert held at the Chinese Consulate General in New York on Wednesday.

"People-to-people friendship between China and the US is taking on diverse new forms. Soon, the young musicians of the NYO Jazz will travel to China, and a group of top young Chinese artists will also come to New York," Chen Li, China's consul general in New York, said.

Among the performers was Zhang Sencheng, a 2010-born scholar of the Lang Lang International Music Foundation, who has performed twice at Carnegie Hall. He played several pieces at the consulate, bringing elements of Chinese musical expression to an international audience.

"I hope more audiences could hear the Chinese perspective on music and the way we express it, through the blend of Eastern and Western musical elements," he said.

"I am very happy and proud of him because he is very mature even though he is very young," Lukas Barwinski-Brown, CEO of the Lang Lang International Music Foundation, told China Daily.

For Carnegie Hall, these exchanges are part of a broader effort to bring young musicians together across cultures. Beyond bringing Eastern musical perspectives to Western audiences, Carnegie Hall has created opportunities for some of the most talented young musicians in the US to receive training, perform internationally and engage with artists and audiences around the world.

In 2025, the NYO-USA embarked on a six-city tour of Asia, performing in Hong Kong, Beijing and Shanghai. During their time in China, the young musicians participated in exchanges with their peers at the Beijing Performing Arts Centre, connecting with their Chinese counterparts through workshops and musical collaboration.

The NYO Jazz ensemble will soon return to China in August, visiting Shanghai and Beijing for the ensemble's second trip to the country.

Anna Abondolo, a 25-year-old bassist at NYO Jazz, told China Daily the upcoming journey represents an opportunity to discover new musical perspectives and build friendships with Chinese musicians.

"I am just very curious in terms of hearing music and like meeting other jazz musicians," she said. "Music is a very universal language. We can all learn from each other, like what people are listening to, how people are playing."

The impact of these exchanges extends beyond the musicians themselves. Mary Anne Huntsman, a Carnegie Hall trustee, told China Daily that international tours and performances in both China and the US create opportunities for young people from the two countries to share and understand each other's cultures.

"Music brings people together more than anything," she said.

Consul General Chen said the growing interest among young US people in Chinese art and culture reflects the importance of cultural exchange.

"We can see a growing trend of young Americans becoming interested in Chinese art and culture. Especially with performances selling out at New York's most prestigious venues, such as Carnegie Hall and Lincoln Center, we can see that American audiences are learning more about China through its culture," Chen told China Daily.

Beijing mourns veteran Japanese statesman Yohei Kono

By **MO JINGXI**
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China's top legislator Zhao Leji sent a message of condolence on Thursday to the family of Yohei Kono following his death, expressing hope that Kono's family would carry forward his legacy and play a positive role in helping bring China-Japan relations back on the right track.

Kono, who was president of the Japanese Association for the Promotion of International Trade and former speaker of Japan's House of Representatives, died at the age of 89 on Monday, Japanese media reported on Wednesday. Kono was also a former president of Japan's Liberal Democratic Party.

Zhao, chairman of the National People's Congress Standing Committee, said the veteran Japanese statesman was an old friend of the Chinese people who had long been committed to China-Japan friendship.

He noted that in 1993, Kono, then Japan's chief cabinet secretary, issued the Kono Statement on the issue of "comfort women", which continues to have a positive influence today.

The landmark statement acknowledged the Japanese military's direct involvement in setting up "comfort stations" and forcibly recruiting women on the Korean Peninsula, in China, and elsewhere, and expressed remorse and an apology.

At a regular news briefing in Beijing on Thursday, Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian said that Kono, who upheld a correct view of history, was widely regarded as a leading figure in defending Japan's pacifist constitution.

Kono had once said Article 9 of Japan's Constitution, which clearly stipulates Japan's renunciation of war and non-maintenance of war potential, "represents our resolve and readiness, as well as our ideal", adding that it is the mission of every politician to strive for that ideal.

"He devoted his life to China-Japan friendship, visited China dozens of times, and made important contributions to promoting the development of bilateral relations and advancing exchanges and cooperation between the two countries," Lin said.

Lin said that even in his final days, Kono remained deeply concerned about China-Japan relations and, with tears in his eyes, expressed his wish to visit China one last time. "Regrettably, due to his deteriorating health, that wish was not fulfilled," Lin said.

The spokesman said that Kono once said he would never forget the shock and joy he felt at the normalization of China-Japan diplomatic relations, stressing that history should not be forgotten, the spirit that underpinned the normalization of ties should be carried forward, and the commitments made at the time should be honored.

"Those words carry even greater practical significance under the current circumstances," Lin added.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Political-military alignment with ulterior motives the real threat to regional stability

With the Sanae Takaichi government of Japan leading the charge, the Ferdinand Marcos Jr government of the Philippines eagerly following, and the Lai Ching-te authorities of China's Taiwan region enthusiastically lending their support, East Asia is witnessing the gradual formation of a potentially destabilizing political-military alignment.

Many in Asia are worried that the Takaichi government is steadily eroding the postwar restraints that defined the country's security posture for decades. The ruling Liberal Democratic Party has approved proposals calling for a significant expansion of military capabilities, including stronger counterstrike capabilities, higher defense spending, enhanced long-range missile capabilities, and even exploring next-generation submarines with long-range weapons. Japanese policymakers justify these moves by citing a "deteriorating security environment".

But as China's Foreign Ministry has pointed out, right-wing forces in Japan are exploiting regional tensions to advance their agenda of militarization.

Peace activists and veteran statesmen in Japan have cautioned against ignoring the lessons of history. The passing of former Japanese political leader Yohei Kono at 89 on Monday is a poignant reminder of a different vision of Japan's role in Asia. Kono, who as Japan's chief cabinet secretary issued a landmark 1993 apology over the comfort women, understood that reconciliation, historical honesty and regional trust were strategic assets rather than burdens. His warnings against ultra-nationalism and military adventurism in the country appear increasingly relevant given the reckless moves of the Takaichi government.

The announcement by Tokyo and Manila last month that they will conduct "maritime delimitation negotiations" for waters east of China's Taiwan island adds a new layer of complexity to an already sensitive region. The proposed "delimitation" by Japan and the Philippines infringes on China's maritime interests and violates the basic norms of international relations, as China has an exclusive economic zone and continental shelf in the concerned waters according to international law.

Philippine Secretary of Foreign Affairs Maria Theresa Lazaro insists that the Tokyo-Manila negotiations should continue regardless of Chinese objections. Such statements may play well domestically and among external partners, but they increase the risk of turning the region's maritime disputes into geopolitical flashpoints.

Compounding the concerns is the enthusiastic endorsement of the move by the secessionist-minded Lai authorities. Since taking office over two years ago, Lai has consistently sought closer security and political alignment with external forces that advocate a harder line toward the Chinese mainland. His latest praise for Japan's "security role" and his support for deepening Japan-Philippines "delimitation" moves fit this agenda and amount to political adventurism.

Therefore the real danger lies in the cumulative effect of the collusion of the three, each with its own axe to grind. A Japan steadily expanding its military role, a Philippines increasingly willing to stake its future on provoking China, and the Taiwan authorities — led by the diehard secessionist Lai — eager to internationalize cross-Strait tensions, form a highly combustible mix.

If Tokyo, Manila and the Lai authorities continue down the current path, Beijing will necessarily take corresponding countermeasures to safeguard the Chinese nation's core interests. The mainland's recent special maritime traffic law enforcement and hydrographic survey operation in waters east of Taiwan island are necessary responses to the latest antics of the provocative threesome.

Beijing's ban on Philippine defense chief Gilberto Teodoro Jr and his family from entering the mainland, Hong Kong and Macao, along with a prohibition on any transactions or cooperation between Chinese entities and them, serves as a warning to Manila not to go too far in the wrong direction.

The region does not need a clique formed for confrontation by militarists, adventurists and separatists. The so-called Tokyo-Manila "delimitation" talks, endorsed by the Lai authorities, are illegal, null and void. No matter what the three parties dream up, they cannot alter the fact that Taiwan is part of China. Their collusion reveals that they are the real troublemakers that pose an imminent threat to regional peace and stability.

World Cup should be platform for global unity

The FIFA World Cup 2026 has finally arrived. The tournament kicks off on Thursday in Mexico City, where Mexico will face South Africa in the opening match. Featuring an expanded roster of 48 teams and a record-breaking 104 matches over 39 days, the global event, which will unfold across an unprecedented three host nations — Canada, Mexico and the United States — is the largest ever.

Embodying the spirit of excellence and mutual respect, the World Cup traditionally provides a rare moment when political, cultural and ethnic differences give way to a shared passion for the beautiful game. Yet this year's tournament has kicked off with a seemingly chaotic buildup, limiting its potential to become a huge worldwide celebration that transcends sports due to political disruption as well as other factors such as over-commercialization.

Just days before Iran starts its first game, on Monday in Los Angeles against New Zealand, the country's soccer federation said in a statement that it was unable to provide any tickets as previously promised to its supporters because FIFA had revoked the ticket allocation, presumably under pressure from the US, "which has now taken steps to obstruct the presence of Iranian supporters at the stadiums".

This adds to the woes the Iranian national team has experienced leading up to the World Cup: Several senior federation officials and support staff members have been denied visas, and Iranian players are only permitted to enter the US on the exact day of their matches, and are required to leave immediately after the final whistle blows, leaving them exhausted and with almost no time to practice and familiarize themselves with the playing conditions, unlike other teams.

This obviously contradicts the principles of fair competition and the common understanding that any country bidding to host the World Cup must ensure access for all qualified teams, including their supporters and officials. "Otherwise, there is no World Cup," FIFA President Gianni Infantino stated nine years ago.

Apart from the Iranians, award-winning World Cup referee Omar Artan from Somalia was also denied entry due to unspecified vetting concerns, while Iraqi player Aymen Hussein was allegedly held for questioning for nearly seven hours after arriving in the US. "The disruption is such that one has to ask who is running the World Cup. Is it FIFA or is it the US government ... ?" Piara Powar, the head of FIFA's antidiscrimination monitoring partner, said on Tuesday.

FIFA's decision to hold the tournament in three countries, under the slogan "United as One", was based on the idea that a larger pool of participating teams will lead to increased profits from the sale of television, marketing and licensing rights.

FIFA's most recent financial report showed it will make $13 billion from the four-year cycle culminating in the 2026 World Cup, almost $9 billion of which will be from this year, according to The Guardian. In comparison, FIFA raked in $7.5 billion in revenue through the four years of commercial deals tied to the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, and $6.4 billion for the cycle leading up to the 2018 Russia World Cup.

However, what the soccer's governing body has failed to pay attention to in terms of geographical knowledge is that the three countries cover three time zones, each with its own customs, security protocols and bureaucratic structures. This presents significant challenges for teams in arranging their schedules. Some teams, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, will have to travel more than 5,000 kilometers during the group stage alone, making it one of the most taxing tournaments. All this, coupled with a lack of top-level coordination, makes the unfolding scenes seem inevitable.

The fact that the China Media Group ultimately paid around $60 million for the broadcasting rights to the World Cup — far below the $300 million that FIFA initially asked for — highlights how capricious FIFA's pricing strategy can be, prioritizing maximum revenue over a country's enthusiasm and circumstances.

Despite being a country with a population of 1.4 billion, China's national team has once again failed to qualify for the World Cup. This has led to renewed calls for reform of the soccer system in the country, focusing on the grassroots and youth training. Encouragingly, more children are taking to soccer pitches, offering hope for the sport's future in China.

The World Cup presents a rare opportunity for China to reflect on the challenges facing its soccer and to draft a practical and sustainable strategy for the future. Meanwhile, as the tournament progresses, soccer fans around the world will hopefully underscore the sport's potential to bridge divides and unite people, fostering understanding and goodwill among people of all nations.

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Cai Meng



Opinion Line

Action plan a new blueprint for people-centered development

China had completed four consecutive national human rights action plans as of last year. It released its fifth, the National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2026-30), at the 2026 Forum on Global Human Rights Governance in Beijing on Thursday.

The action plan aims to ensure that the principal position of the people is respected and the people's fundamental interests are safeguarded. It will also promote social fairness and justice and ensure that the fruits of modernization benefit all people fairly.

Human rights are meaningful only when translated into concrete outcomes. The right to education is reflected in school enrolment. The right to health is measured through access to healthcare and life expectancy. The right to development is demonstrated by poverty reduction, rising incomes and expanding opportunities.

This philosophy is embedded in the newly released action plan and, more broadly, in the country's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). Human rights are not treated as a separate policy silo. They are woven into economic development, social welfare, environmental protection, technological governance and public administration. The result is a comprehensive framework in which human-rights objectives become part of the system of State planning and implementation.

The action plan assigns responsibilities, establishes benchmarks, fixes deadlines and holds institutions accountable for implementation. It includes goals relating to healthcare, education, social security, environmental quality and protections for vulnerable groups. It also expands into newer territory, including artificial intelligence governance, data protection and digital inclusion. In other words, Beijing is attempting to update its human-rights framework to match the realities of a society being transformed by technology and demographic change, using high-tech to facilitate the improvement of human rights conditions.

The practical achievements that have accompanied the country's development over recent decades are a contribution to the global human rights cause. The elimination of absolute rural poverty, the construction of the world's largest social security and healthcare systems, and the dramatic expansion of educational opportunities have altered the lives of hundreds of millions of people.

Indeed, many first-time foreign visitors to China come away struck not by the things that dominate some Western media coverage but by something far more mundane: public safety, efficient infrastructure, digital convenience and the accessibility of public services. These outcomes did not emerge by accident. They are the cumulative product of scientific planning and long-term down-to-earth hard work following the people-first principle. The human-rights action plans are one component of that broader ecosystem.

The 2026 Forum on Global Human Rights Governance took place at a moment when the global human-rights agenda is increasingly entangled with geopolitical rivalry. Human rights have been weaponized by some Western countries, their allegations targeting some countries while the violations of allies are ignored or downplayed.

The world has witnessed more than its share of humanitarian crises instigated by these self-proclaimed human rights "champions".

China rejects this approach, prioritizing cooperation over confrontation. From Beijing's perspective, development remains the most urgent human rights issue for large parts of the world and human rights should be a field for mutual learning, practical cooperation and shared progress.

There is no single universal model for advancing human rights. In an era of widening inequality, technological disruption and geopolitical fragmentation, it is not who talks most passionately about human rights but who can produce measurable progress that is the real driver of the human rights cause.

China's new action plan demonstrates that for Beijing progress is achieved through concrete actions and tangible results. It serves as a broader response to the world, underscoring the need for an improved global human rights governance system that is fairer, more equitable and more inclusive.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Actions to help protect world's cultural heritage

Editor's note: *As China prepares to observe Cultural and Natural Heritage Day on the second Saturday in June, it provides an opportunity to reflect on the nation's efforts to conserve cultural heritage. People's Daily Overseas Edition spoke to Sun Yan, senior engineer at the key laboratory on archaeometry and cultural heritage conservation under the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, about China's contribution to global cultural heritage protection. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

China joined the Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage in 1985. Last year, the Xixia Imperial Tombs located in the Ningxia Hui autonomous region were included in the World Heritage List, bringing the total number of World Heritage sites in China to 60.

In recent years, China has made remarkable progress in protecting its cultural heritage. For example, between 2016 and 2025, several Chinese cultural heritage sites have been added to the World Heritage List, each embodying distinctive cultural values.

The Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City, which were included in 2019, bear witness to China's 5,000-year-old civilization. A large urban settlement dating back to the late Neolithic Age, Liangzhu boasts a massive ancient city and a sophisticated water conservation system, offering a unique glimpse into the origins of Chinese civilization.

The Beijing Central Axis, which was added to the list in 2024, stretches 7.8 kilometers and embodies the ideals of ancient Beijing, the capital of the Yuan (1271-1368), Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties. The design of the axis features "balance" and "harmony", which reflect the importance of order inherent in traditional Chinese culture.

The Xixia Imperial Tombs, the mausoleums of the Xixia Dynasty (1038-1227), showcase distinctive cemetery architecture and exquisite stone carvings, providing fresh evidence of cultural exchanges along the Silk Road.

Over the past decade, China's approach to world cultural heritage protection has shifted from emergency rescue to systematic conservation. Remarkable strides have also been made in the legal and institutional frameworks supporting cultural heritage protection. The amended Law on the Protection of Cultural Relics, which came into force on March 1, 2025, provides a solid foundation for safeguarding cultural relics.

Digital technologies are now being widely used to enhance the management of heritage sites.

By studying and interpreting the values of China's cultural heritage, people gain a correct, multi-dimensional and comprehensive image of the country.

For example, following the inclusion of the Archaeological Ruins of Liangzhu City in the World Heritage List, the international archaeological community has spoken highly of the development level of the city, as reflected by its water conservation system, social stratification and belief system.

Meanwhile, Chinese institutions have collaborated on archaeological research and conservation projects at World Heritage sites in Egypt, Honduras, Cambodia and other countries, sharing China's philosophies and technologies in archaeology and cultural heritage protection.

In 2023, China spearheaded the establishment of the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia and the launch of the Asian Fund for Cultural Heritage Conservation. China remains committed to leveraging its expertise to contribute to global cultural heritage conservation efforts.

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VIEWS

Johan Rockström

Eco-civilization meets planetary boundaries

Over a decade after the United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals — to end poverty, protect the planet and ensure prosperity for all by 2030 — we are in a precarious situation.

As we approach the 2030 deadline for the SDG framework that has defined not only the last decade of global development, but also work on climate, water, health and beyond, the question naturally arises: What next?

At a time of growing geopolitical fragmentation, it is increasingly difficult to imagine the UN forging the same broad consensus around a new global development framework that it did with the SDGs.

In this context, China's vision of an ecological civilization is a political and developmental framework that seeks to reconcile economic growth, social stability and environmental protection.

It is based on evidence that the old industrial production methods have run up unsustainable ecological costs, and concludes that environmental considerations must be integrated into planning, governance and economic activity.

This vision has seen a strong role for the state in its energy transition, such as large-scale investments in renewable technologies, ecological restoration programs, pollution control, and the use of environmental targets in government performance assessments.

Environmental protection is not above economic growth; rather, growth is compatible with ecological limits and national development goals.

Building an ecological civilization is fundamentally about succeeding in attaining aspirational social goals for human welfare and economic development, within scientifically defined boundaries: economic growth within the safe operating space of a stable, healthy and resilient planet. But a precondition to building an ecological civilization is to define and quantify the ecological limits or boundaries.

The planetary boundaries framework does just that. On the basis of the latest Earth system science, it starts by identifying the environmental processes that regulate the stability and resilience of the planet. These are the planetary boundaries.

Global Lens

If we fail to keep the Earth's tipping point systems intact, ecological invoices will be sent, and they will hit indiscriminately across the world.

It is not only about carbon and climate change, but also the ecological boundaries of biodiversity, land use, freshwater use, overloading of nitrogen, ocean stability, air pollution, depletion of the ozone layer and finally, novel entities, such as the overloading of persistent chemical compounds into the Earth system.

For all of these nine planetary boundaries, we have identified control variables, which — backed by big data, long time series and advanced analytics — enable us to quantify a safe boundary level that defines the transition from safety (when staying within the boundary level) to danger (when breaching the boundary).

Our scientific assessment from 2025 concludes that seven of the nine planetary boundaries have been breached. This means there is strong scientific support that we, as humanity, are in danger of destabilizing the Earth system and undermining human welfare across the world.

In the last decade, global warming has accelerated; the intensity of extreme events such as droughts, floods, wildfires and human-reinforced storms is increasing; and we are increasingly close to crossing tipping points, which would cause the permanent collapse of systems that provide planetary stability and life support for millions of people.

A new development paradigm will be needed to grapple with these challenges, and it will require policies, economic incentives, regulations and profound equity dimensions (such as how to share, in a fair way, the ecological space on Earth among countries). If translated into ecological civilization targets, it can also drive innovation and efficiency and contribute to the next phase in humanity's journey toward shared prosperity.

At the same time, the international agenda will have implications for a large economy such as China. Our old and still dominant economic paradigm, which assumes that the planet has infinite capacity to buffer our unsustainable Anthropocene pressures, has long been proven wrong. The Earth is regulated by dampening (stress-reducing and cooling) feedback and interactions that regulate the large tipping point systems.

Scientifically, we have recently suggested that all tipping point systems (such as the large ice sheets, the Atlantic Meridional Overturning Circulation, the Amazon rainforest) need to be legally defined as global commons.

Why? Because, to ensure strong socio-economic development, not only must the ecological civilization targets of all countries be met within their national borders, but also all tipping point systems on Earth must stay within safe planetary boundaries.

This also suggests a need to further align the Belt and Road Initiative with China's ecological civilization principles and scientifically defined planetary boundaries.

If we fail to keep the Earth's tipping point systems intact, ecological invoices will be sent, and they will hit indiscriminately across the world.

Ecological civilization in China thus not only implies clean, healthy environments for economic development within the country, but also becoming Planetary Stewards to keep the Earth, as a whole, within safe planetary boundaries.

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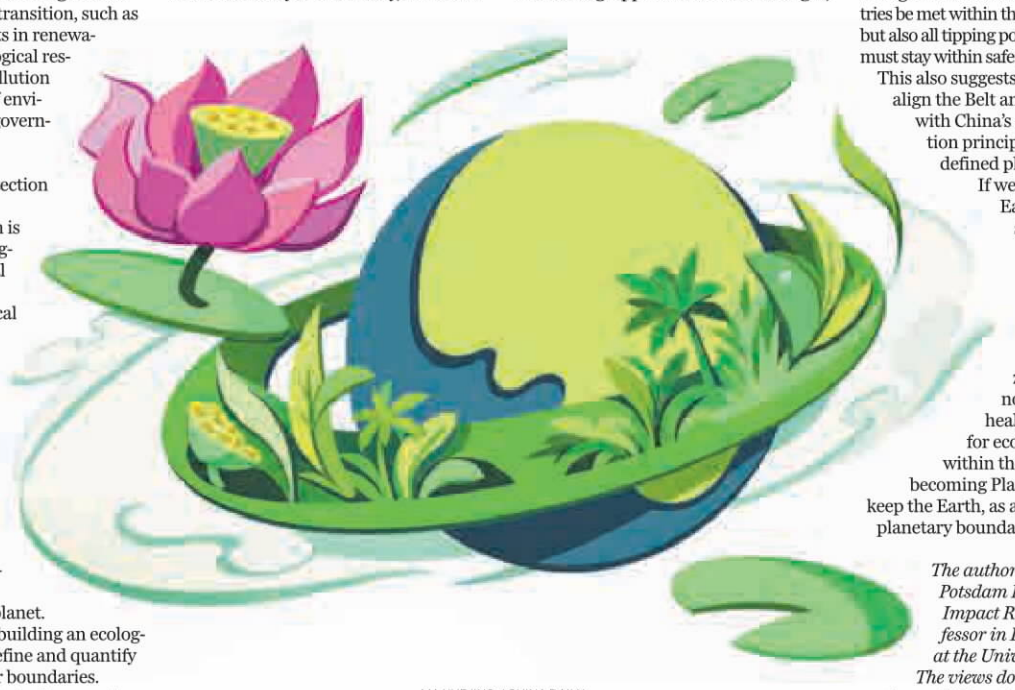

MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Douglas de Castro

China and Brazil's blueprint for a shared future

Brazil was the top destination for Chinese capital in 2025, attracting $6.1 billion in 52 Chinese investments. This was 45 percent more than the previous year, as highlighted in a report published by the Brazil-China Business Council recently.

To see these figures simply as traditional foreign direct investment is to miss a deeper structural alignment between China and Brazil.

This is not a cyclical movement of capital or a transactional pivot, but a civilizational convergence unfolding at a time when the liberal world order and international institutions are fracturing.

The China-Brazil partnership is quietly drawing a blueprint for a multipolar and ecologically rooted development model that reflects the vision of a shared future for humanity.

For decades, South-South economic engagement was often viewed through a narrow framework of resource extraction, debt diplomacy or geopolitical maneuvering.

This is the narrative that the 2025 report dispels: investing in Brazil's power grid, mining key minerals, electric-vehicle production, digital logistics, and high-tech manufacturing aligns with Brazil's priorities in energy transition and sustainable development, while also providing new opportunities for Chinese companies.

What distinguishes this wave of investments is its developmental philosophy.

China and Brazil share many characteristics: large and diverse populations, imperialistic disruptions throughout history, state-led modernization and a preference for long-term sovereignty over short-term financialization.

Their growing partnership is anchored in strategic coordination, with infrastructure as the driver of industrialization and resilience as the measure of success.

This is very different from the Washington Consensus model of austerity, privatization and market fundamentalism that weakened many countries in the Global South and increased inequalities.

Notably, many were greenfield projects, focusing on capacity building, technology transfer, and sustainable operations. The investments touched a record 20 Brazilian states, with the North and Northeast gaining unprecedented momentum alongside traditional leaders such as Sao Paulo and Minas Gerais.

Global Lens

In the broader context, cooperation between China and Brazil is accelerating because of the structural crisis of the liberal world order.

Investments in mining tripled to $1.76 billion, focusing on critical minerals, copper, nickel, graphite and rare earths that are directly tied to the global energy transition.

Brazil has 26.5 percent of the world's graphite reserves and is second in rare earths, but China dominates their processing and manufacturing. Their collaboration is not exploitative but rather a vertically integrated supply chain that supports decarbonization.

The partnership's ecological dimension is evident at a deeper level. China's concept of ecological civilization places environmental sustainability at the center of modernization, embedding carbon neutrality, circular economy principles and green industrial policy into state planning.

Brazil adheres to the rights of nature framework, which recognizes ecosystems not only as economic resources but as subjects with their own intrinsic value.

Investment data from 2025 show how this philosophical convergence is turning into real infrastructure for the benefit of both nature and people. For the fifth consecutive year, investment in sustainability and clean energy projects expanded in 2025, with a record 31 projects launched in hydropower, solar, wind and e-mobility.

These are not isolated initiatives, but part of an integrated low-carbon industrial ecosystem.

For instance, BYD and GWM did not simply replicate the Western assembly models in Bahia and Sao Paulo but localized entire value chains. Within months of starting operations, BYD produced nearly 20,000 electrified vehicles and established local supply networks.

Rumo and COFCO's rail logistics investment promises to cut carbon dioxide emissions from grain and sugar transportation by 80 percent compared to Brazil's heavily diesel-dependent road system.

Even the mining boom is linked to global decarbonization goals. EVs use six times more critical minerals than conventional combustion engine vehicles.

Here, China's model of ecological civilization intersects with Brazil's ethical emphasis on the rights of nature.

Together, they offer a pragmatic model of energy transition that respects both planetary boundaries and developmental sovereignty. In this sense, green industrial policy becomes a vehicle of South-South cooperation rather than a tool of Northern conditionality.

But this alignment requires careful navigation. Chinese companies must move beyond technical compliance and develop genuine socio-ecological integration by aligning with Brazil's complex environmental licensing rules, indigenous land protections, and decentralized regulatory environment.

In the broader context, cooperation between China and Brazil is accelerating because of the structural crisis of the liberal world order. Growing protectionism, technology decoupling, fragmented climate finance, and the weaponization of global supply chains have eroded trust in West-led multilateralism and Bretton Woods institutions.

Brazil is a natural anchor for China's decarbonization and reindustrialization agenda given its clean energy mix, abundance of critical minerals, continental market size, and commitment to strategic autonomy.

From 2007 to 2025, Chinese investment in Brazil totaled $85.5 billion in 355 projects, with manufacturing alone accounting for $2.66 billion between 2023 and 2025, surpassing oil and mining in recent years. This signals a structural move away from dependence on raw materials to industrial integration with added value.

Brazil in turn gains access to capital, technology and industrial partnerships without the political conditionalities that have historically limited its policy space.

Projects such as the Geely-Renault joint venture in Parana, the expansion of Chinese digital platforms such as Keeta and 99Food, and the geographical dispersion in 20 states point to a decentralized and resilient network of cooperation. The community with a shared future for humanity is not a slogan but a functional architecture for multipolar development.

But this vision calls for long-term strategic alignment, transparent regulatory frameworks, robust local partnerships, and deliberate technological absorption.

Brazilian institutions should simplify licensing procedures while enforcing environmental and social standards. Chinese companies should deepen localization, prioritize workforce training and adapt to Brazil's institutional pluralism.

The crisis of the liberal order should not lead to fragmentation. Instead, it should be a catalyst for new forms of cooperation.

If Brazil and China continue to align their developmental trajectories with ecological imperatives, build regulatory transparency and develop technological capacity, they can shape a post-hegemonic, planet-centered future.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



Chen Weihua

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European Union should get over its protectionist impulse

The upcoming European Council summit in Brussels from June 18 to 19 is a pivotal opportunity for the European Union to review its trade and investment policy toward China.

The EU needs to decide whether it wants to be more protectionist and confrontational or foster a more cooperative relationship with the world's second-largest economy.

The EU has been crafting multiple trade and investment measures against China, including the proposed Industrial Accelerator Act. The legislation would exclude China from participating in public procurement bids in certain sectors and from accessing subsidies in supply chains.

Since March 2019, when the EU redefined China from a comprehensive strategic partner to a "cooperative partner, economic competitor and systemic rival", the bloc has adopted a less cooperative policy.

Many of the EU's investment screening and trade measures in the past years have deliberately targeted China even if they did not explicitly mention it by name.

The EU has also kowtowed to coercion by the United States to ban Huawei 5G and is now planning more measures against the Chinese company.

Within the 27-member EU, countries are divided on their approach to China. France, Spain, the Netherlands, Italy and Lithuania have advocated a tougher China policy while Germany and some Scandinavian countries believe stronger ties with China serve their best interests.

A tit-for-tat trade war between China and the EU will be a lose-lose game for both and the fragile global economy.

EU has leveled various accusations against China, including running a trade surplus with the bloc, State subsidies, overcapacity and unfair trade practices. Yet, it's worth noting that the EU as a whole runs trade surpluses with most countries, including the US.

When Washington imposed punitive tariffs on the EU, the bloc tried hard to convince US President Donald Trump that trade deficits are not problematic. Yet somehow China's trade surplus has become a concern.

Many Europeans find it difficult to accept the fact that the country that once exported only labor intensive goods, such as garments, footwear and toys, is now globally competitive in electric vehicles, batteries, solar panels, wind turbines, AI and several high-tech sectors.

Most Europeans are not aware of China's phenomenal transformation.

I am writing this column in Chongqing, which has changed dramatically in the past two decades from a Third World city into a modern urban center comparable to major European cities.

At the same time, the EU's competitiveness has declined, especially against the US and China. According to a September 2024 report by former European Central Bank president Mario Draghi, the numerous challenges the EU faces are mostly internal.

China's GDP in nominal terms was smaller than that of Italy in 2000. But it surpassed Germany's GDP in 2007, and by 2025, was almost the same as that of the entire EU.

Blaming China for its own problems is a misguided approach. Instead, the EU should focus on addressing its internal problems and policy failures. During my time in Brussels, the EU prided itself on being a regulatory giant even though it had no tech giants of its own.

The Draghi report highlights that overregulation by the bloc has become a major problem that discourages innovation.

The EU's Cold War mentality, as exemplified by the demonization of Huawei and Chinese EVs as national security threats, is another problem.

In contrast, China welcomes EU investment, with millions of German, French and Italian cars running on Chinese streets.

Many EU companies have been involved in China's critical infrastructure construction. China has never branded Airbus as a national security threat despite the fact that it has a dominant 55 percent share in the commercial aviation market in the Chinese mainland.

The Comprehensive Agreement on Investment, which took many years to negotiate and remains frozen by the European Parliament, is a huge wasted opportunity for European companies in the Chinese market.

As two major trade partners, China and the EU have frictions on many issues. However, the right way to address them is through consultation rather than unilateral protectionist measures.

A tit-for-tat trade war between China and the EU will be a lose-lose game for both and the fragile global economy.

When EU leaders meet next week, they should aim to preserve the mutually beneficial trade and investment relationship, not derail it with tariffs, sanctions and discriminatory tools.

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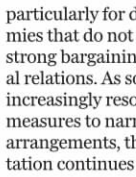
GLOBAL VIEWS

Editor's note: *The world has undergone many changes and shocks in recent years. Enhanced dialogue between scholars from China and overseas is needed to build mutual understanding on many problems the world faces. For this purpose, the China Watch Institute of China Daily and the National Institute for Global Strategy, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, jointly present this special column: The Global Strategic Dialogue, in which experts from China and abroad will offer insightful views, analysis and fresh perspectives on long-term strategic issues of global importance.*

HUMPREY ARNALDO RUSSEL

From turbulence to trust

The future of Asia-Pacific trade will depend not only on growth or market expansion, but on the ability of regional states to cooperate more effectively



The world is experiencing turbulence as a result of an increasingly unpredictable global political situation. The crisis in the Middle East, which has led to difficulties at the Strait of Hormuz, has further worsened the situation. Given the scarcity of viable alternative routes, any sustained disruption to this choke point carries profound consequences for global energy markets and, by extension, international economic stability.

Against this complex backdrop, the two-day APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting in Suzhou, East China's Jiangsu province, on May 22-23 played its role in advancing the realization of "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together" — the theme of the APEC "China Year". The APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting is scheduled to be hosted in Shenzhen, South China's Guangdong province, in November.

A key challenge for Asia-Pacific economies is how to continue upholding openness, strengthening cooperation and maintaining a rules-based international trading system amid the current global fragmentation. As is widely recognized, contemporary global trade is no longer shaped exclusively by tariff structures and market access arrangements; it is increasingly conditioned by geopolitical competition, national security imperatives, industrial competition and a range of other considerations that, in effect, undermine the integrity of the existing multilateral order. However, the principles of non-discrimination, transparency, predictability and rules-based dispute settlement remain highly relevant, particularly for developing economies that do not always possess strong bargaining power in bilateral relations. As some countries increasingly resort to unilateral measures to narrow preferential arrangements, the risk of fragmentation continues to grow. If left unaddressed, global trade may shift from being an open space for cooperation into an arena of bloc-based competition.

In the context of the relations between the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and China, this is highly relevant. According to China's General Administration of Customs, trade between China and ASEAN reached 7.55 trillion yuan ($1.12 trillion) last year, surging 8 percent year-on-year. This growth is being formalized through agreements such as the ASEAN-China Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol. Record GDP and export growth in Malaysia, and successful initiatives such as the China-Indonesia implementation of cross-border QR payments, are, in large part, due to the stability of ASEAN-China relations.

And this year marks the fifth anniversary of the ASEAN-China comprehensive strategic partnership. ASEAN-China relations carry significant political weight, as they involve one of the world's most strategically important regions and one of the leading global powers. The scale and importance of this relationship have been managed on the basis of openness, consultation and balance. For ASEAN, the principal challenge lies in maintaining collective coherence. Therefore, ASEAN needs to strengthen its internal mechanisms to ensure that cooperation with China remains aligned with the broader interests of the region as a whole.

Meanwhile, China's cooperation with ASEAN is genuinely mutual and beneficial. China has also expressed support for ASEAN-led mechanisms, respect for consensus-based processes and a continued commitment to avoiding approaches that could create perceptions of dominance. In the current context of unilateralism pursued by the United States, China continues to serve as a guardian of the multilateral system and defender of institutions such as the World Trade Organization. In this regard, ASEAN-China relations may serve as an example of how regional cooperation need not undermine multilateralism. This assessment is further substantiated by empirical evidence. The State of Southeast Asia: 2026 Survey Report released by Singapore's ISEAS-Yusof Ishak Institute reveals that 52 percent of ASEAN respondents indicated they would align with China over the US, with the latter preferred by 48 percent. This finding reflects a discernible shift in regional strategic orientations that policymakers cannot afford to overlook. China's contribution to regional development is gradually understood and recognized by more people from ASEAN countries.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

ASEAN-China relations set an example for regional cooperation and beyond. Accordingly, all stakeholders should also focus on the Asia-Pacific policy agenda that can be oriented toward strengthening, rather than eroding, the multilateral system. Regionalism remains important, but sound regionalism must be open and inclusive. Developed countries should not dictate terms to smaller ones or compel them to conform to their preferences. Regional cooperation can serve as a policy laboratory for developing higher standards, enhancing transparency, and facilitating the participation of developing economies. Several policy priorities warrant focused attention in this regard.

First, regulatory transparency should be enhanced. In modern trade, barriers do not always take the form of tariffs. Many obstacles arise through technical standards, customs procedures, certification rules, investment policies, environmental provisions, digital requirements and product safety regulations. When regulations lack transparency, other countries may perceive them as a form of disguised protectionism. Therefore, Asia-Pacific economies need to strengthen mechanisms for regulatory consultation, information exchange and policy notification before new measures broadly affect trading partners.

Second, digital governance should be established as a central policy priority. Digital trade extends beyond e-commerce to encompass cross-border data flows, consumer protection, cybersecurity, artificial intelligence, electronic signatures and digital trade documentation. Each country has a legitimate interest in safeguarding data security and preserving digital sovereignty. However, if countries develop closed and mutually incompatible regulatory frameworks, the region's digital economy risks becoming increasingly fragmented. Accordingly, digital policy should seek to strike an appropriate balance: ensuring security without fostering isolation, promoting innovation while maintaining accountability and preserving openness while protecting the public interest.

Third, the green economy agenda can be governed in an equitable manner. Carbon standards, clean energy policies, sustainable supply chains and environmental certification have become increasingly important elements of contemporary trade policy. Nevertheless, green standards should not be employed as instruments to constrain the development prospects of developing countries, which continue to require time, financing, technological support and sufficient policy space to undertake a just and effective transition. Regional cooperation must therefore actively promote technology transfer, capacity-building, the mutual recognition of credible environmental standards and targeted support for small- and medium-sized industries to ensure they are not left behind in the green transition.

Ultimately, the future of Asia-Pacific trade will depend not only on growth or market expansion, but on governance, trust and the ability of regional states to cooperate transparently and equitably. Regional integration must reinforce, rather than weaken, the multilateral system. ASEAN and China can continue to demonstrate that regional cooperation can support global stability and help shape a more stable, just and inclusive international order.

The author is the head of the ASEAN-China Research Center at the University of Indonesia and a Qiushi scholar at the National Institute of Ethics and Moral Practice at Renmin University of China. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

LU GUOXUE

Sincerity, reciprocity and symbiosis

The 32nd APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting showed that Asia-Pacific economies are able to work together to build a regional community that prospers together



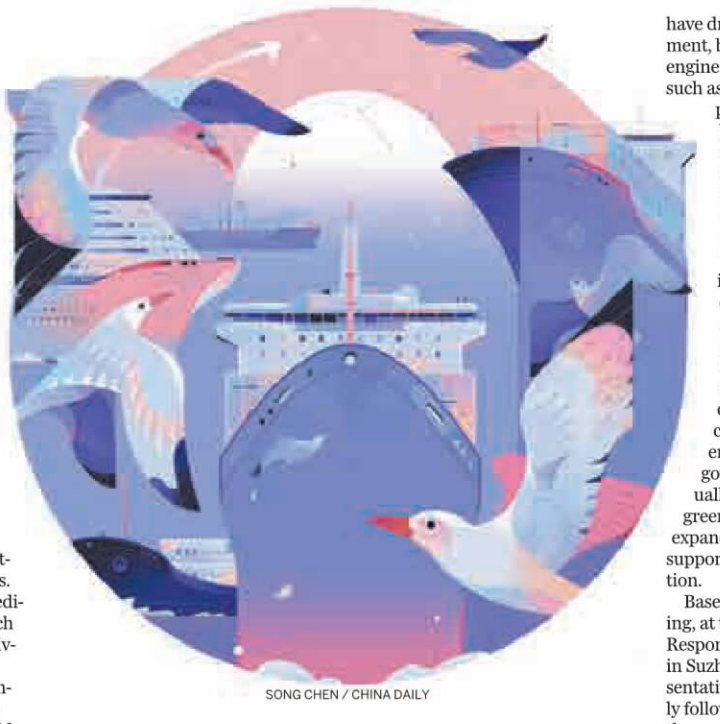
Geopolitical factors, including the Ukraine crisis and the situation in the Middle East, are impacting economic development in the Asia-Pacific region. The overall effects manifest in issues such as energy-driven inflation, trade disruptions, financial tightening, slowing growth and supply chain restructuring.

According to the United States' Energy Information Administration, about 20 percent of the global liquefied natural gas trade transited the Strait of Hormuz in 2024, and the agency estimates that 80 percent to 90 percent of that LNG goes to Asian markets. The Middle East conflict has not only increased shipping risks in the Red Sea, leading to higher freight costs and longer voyages, but also pushed international oil prices from around $70 per barrel to over $100. Meanwhile, the Ukraine crisis has disrupted export routes for Russian crude oil and natural gas, as well as Black Sea grain and fertilizers. The spillover effects of Europe's energy crisis have driven up natural gas, fertilizer and electricity prices in the Asia-Pacific region, raising costs for agriculture and manufacturing. Imported inflation remains high, while export-oriented economies face weakening orders and shrinking profit margins.

While the Ukraine crisis and the deteriorating situation in the Middle East continue to unfold, trade protectionism is also spreading unabated across the globe. Unilateral tariffs and sanctions bypass multilateral dispute settlement mechanisms, pushing global trade into a fragmented phase characterized by slowing growth and a "disorderly" governance landscape. Against this backdrop, short-term growing pains, long-term transformation, supply chain restructuring and accelerated regional cooperation have become realistic challenges that all members of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation mechanism confront.

Nevertheless, it is widely recognized that the Asia-Pacific region remains a key engine of global economic growth, showing positive signs of development, particularly in the trade and economic sphere. Look at first-quarter export data and year-on-year growth rates: China reached 6.85 trillion yuan ($1 trillion), an increase of 11.9 percent; the Republic of Korea posted $219.9 billion, up 37.8 percent; and Vietnam recorded $122.93 billion, a rise of 19.1 percent. In addition, emerging economies such as Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand also posted varied growth momentum. Led by the strong performance of these emerging economies, the Asia-Pacific region is demonstrating robust internal driving forces.

Digital services such as telemedicine, online education and fintech have emerged as new growth drivers in the digital economy. The Boao Forum for Asia Annual Conference released the Sustainable Development: Asia and the World Annual Report 2026 on March 24. It noted that the value of Asia's digital economy reached $27 trillion in 2025, accounting for 46 percent of the region's GDP. As of June 2025, China's digital economy exceeded 50 trillion yuan, and its scale is projected to surpass 80 trillion yuan by 2030. Members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations including Singapore, Malaysia and Indonesia have seen robust growth in their digital economies. Their combined volume topped $300 billion in 2025, 1.5 times the figure recorded a decade earlier.



SONG CHEN / CHINA DAILY

According to HSBC research, trade related to artificial intelligence surged year-on-year in the first half of 2025. The Asia-Pacific region contributed nearly two-thirds of the global growth in that period. Widespread use of mobile payments and e-commerce has laid a solid foundation for digital trade across the region.

The rapid expansion of the Asia-Pacific digital economy is driving the accelerated development of regulatory frameworks. Progress continues in aligning cross-border e-commerce rules, promoting paperless trade and electronic bills of lading, and building a network of demonstration e-ports.

Meanwhile, the region is making coordinated progress in its green economic transformation. China's exports of new energy products have driven regional green development, becoming a new growth engine. The completion of projects such as the Cirata floating solar power plant in Indonesia, built by a Chinese company, represents a landmark achievement of the China-Indonesia Belt and Road cooperation and will also promote Indonesia's energy transition. Correspondingly, issues related to regional coordinated development and sustainable investment growth, including green standards, green minerals and carbon emissions standards, have drawn significant attention. The share of environmental, social and governance investment is gradually rising and the scale of green bond issuance is steadily expanding, providing financial support for the low-carbon transition.

Based on the above understanding, at the 32nd APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting held in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, representatives from 21 economies closely followed the APEC "China Year" theme of "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together". Centered on openness, innovation and cooperation, they promoted stronger cooperation in areas such as regional economic integration, the construction of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, support for the multilateral trading system, enhanced digital cooperation and development of the green economy. These efforts resulted in core outcomes including the Suzhou Statement that jointly foster an open regional economic environment, laying the groundwork for the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in November.

The meeting also approved the updated APEC Roadmap for Innovative, Competitive and Resilient Services. All parties expressed support for the implementation of the outcomes of the 14th World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference and the advancing of the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific. New consensus was reached on strengthening digital trade cooperation, particularly in areas such as cross-border data flows, digital trust and AI governance.

The current economic and trade landscape in the Asia-Pacific region is characterized by resilience, innovation-driven growth and deepening cooperation. Despite multiple challenges, the region is expected to maintain relatively stable momentum, driven by the strong performance of the digital and green economies, as well as continued regional collaboration.

The region is also a vital engine for global growth. APEC economies need to work together and respond calmly to the challenges. On the one hand, they can leverage regional collaboration to build consensus through multilateralism, thereby countering the impact of unilateralism and trade protectionism. On the other hand, they can promote a new pattern of regional economic integration and confidence-building measures, foster an inclusive Asia-Pacific partnership framework under the new circumstances, and establish a mutually beneficial and win-win collaborative mechanism within APEC, providing regional solutions for global governance.

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BUSINESS

Humanoid robots enter mass market

Prices plummet seen in commercial, industrial sectors as production surges

By **LI JIAYING**
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As leading Chinese humanoid robot makers unveil increasingly affordable models, advances in manufacturing, supply chain localization and growing production volumes are pushing the sector into a new phase of commercial adoption.

Unitree Robotics recently launched its dual-arm humanoid robot R1 with a starting price of 26,900 yuan ($3,968), making it the company's most affordable humanoid robot to date. Earlier, Noetix Robotics introduced its Bumi robot for 9,998 yuan, becoming one of the first consumer-oriented humanoid robots priced below the 10,000-yuan threshold. Around the same time, Booster Robotics also launched its K1 series with a starting price of 29,900 yuan.

The declining pricing trend is no longer limited to consumer products. Industrial humanoid robots have also begun entering the under 100,000-yuan range. Astribot's T1 humanoid robot, for example, starts at 89,900 yuan.

The shift marks a significant departure from just a few years ago, when humanoid robots in China typically sold for several hundred thousand yuan each.

According to Unitree's prospectus, the average selling price of its humanoid robots fell from around 593,000 yuan in 2023 to about 260,000 yuan in 2024, before declining further to 167,000 yuan during the first three quarters of 2025. Similarly, Leju Robotics said the average selling price of its Kuavo series dropped nearly 26 percent year-on-year in 2025 to 308,100 yuan per unit.

Guo Tao, a special researcher at domestic consultancy Internet Economy Institute, said the widespread decline in prices among domestic humanoid robots is being driven by multiple industry and market factors.

"As shipment volumes continue to expand, companies are able to spread previously high research and development expenses and production-line depreciation costs across a larger number of products, allowing unit costs to fall steadily," Guo said.

Industry data platform GGII said China's humanoid robot shipments reached 14,400 units in 2025 and output is expected to surpass 100,000 and potentially reach 200,000 units in 2026.

At the same time, Guo said domestic suppliers have made substantial progress in critical components such as reducers and servo systems, helping lower procurement costs across the industry.

Unitree, for example, said its company filings show that more than 90 percent of its core components — including motors, reducers and lidar sensors — are developed and manufactured in-house. As a result, the average production cost of its humanoid robots declined from 73,200 yuan in 2023 to 62,200 yuan by the third quarter of 2025.

Another important factor has been the industry's ability to leverage supply chains originally developed for electric vehicles and consumer electronics.

"More than half of the core components used in humanoid robots, including motors and reducers, can be sourced from existing new energy vehicle supply chains, so there is no need for large-scale new capacity investment, which helps keep manufacturing costs under control," Guo said.

The convergence between the automotive and robotics sectors is already bringing new opportunities for the automobile industry.

"Humanoid robots have opened up a new growth opportunity for the company and created a new development curve," said Wu Jianbin, chairman of automotive parts manufacturer Shuanglin Group, in an earlier interview.

Wu said the firm decided to enter the humanoids' planetary roller screw segment because the technologies share common foundations with its existing automotive seat horizontal drive motor business — including expertise in thread machining and gear manufacturing.

Meanwhile, automakers themselves are becoming increasingly active participants in the embodied intelligence sector. To date, major carmakers, such as Tesla, Mercedes-Benz, Changan, SAIC, XPeng and GAC, have entered the field through either self-development, joint ventures or incubation programs.



A humanoid robot band performs at a high-tech expo in Tianjin on May 28. ZOU HONG / CHINA DAILY



An employee (left) addresses visitor queries at De'Longhi's booth during a trade fair in Shanghai. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

De'Longhi exec hails 'Shopping in China'

By **ZHUANG QIANGE**
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China represents a key market for understanding how coffee culture is evolving outside Europe, and its "Shopping in China" initiative is expected to unleash greater potential for coffee businesses from around the globe, a senior industry executive said.

"The Chinese market is a very important market for De'Longhi," Andrea Natale, director of coffee business development in Asia at De'Longhi Group, said at the recent Wine to Asia exhibition in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, highlighting the market size and the nation's increasingly strong efforts in opening-up.

China's coffee sector has experienced explosive growth in recent years. According to the 2026 China Urban Coffee Development Report, the country's coffee market reached 354.9 billion yuan ($52.3 billion) in 2025, up 13.3 percent year-on-year, with per capita coffee consumption rising to 28.57 cups annually. The home coffee machine market has been particularly robust, with online sales surging 32 percent last year as more consumers embrace cafe-quality coffee at home.

De'Longhi, an Italian home appliance giant, has firmly established itself as a player in China's coffee machine segment, holding approximately 20 percent market share, according to a report from market information tracker 36Kr.

The company has been focusing on innovation to meet Chinese consumers' demand for convenience and quality. Natale highlighted two De'Longhi coffee machine models that bring cafe-style coffee into the home, allowing consumers to enjoy professional-quality coffee with a simple one-touch experience.

"The 'Shopping in China' initiative opens the door to new opportunities, and creates both immediate and long-term opportunities for international brands," Natale said.

Launched by China's Ministry of Commerce in 2025, the initiative has played a key role in boosting inbound consumption. Official data show that the number of departure tax refund stores and foreign tourists using the service both tripled last year, with tax refund sales nearly doubling.

After visiting coffee regions in Yunnan and Hainan provinces, Natale was impressed with the quality of Chinese coffee beans. Yunnan, which produces over 98 percent of China's coffee, saw its coffee output reach 138,900 metric tons in 2025, with a coffee refinement rate of 31.6 percent. The province's total export value hit 860 million yuan in 2025, with products shipped to 43 countries and regions, including the Netherlands, Vietnam, Germany, Malaysia and France.

Natale expressed interest in further exploring connections between Chinese coffee resources and Italian coffee culture.

"Meaningful products are defined less by price and more by the stories and cultural value they carry. I believe the cultural exchanges between China and Italy will continue to enrich both markets," Natale said.

Skyworth Solar mulls global expansion

By **SHI JING** in Shanghai
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With the global energy market facing challenges such as unstable supply and surging demand due to the leapfrogging development of artificial intelligence, Skyworth Solar Co Ltd is upgrading itself into an industrial operator providing integrated services of production, synergy, deployment, trading and added value.

As part of the company's five-year strategy unveiled on June 3, Skyworth Solar will make Germany and Italy its centers for Europe, while Thailand will be its center for Southeast Asia. This year, the company will extend its services to 12 countries and reach new markets such as Indonesia and the Philippines. Explosive growth can also be expected in the United Kingdom, said Qu Wanfei, executive president and general manager of the overseas business division at Skyworth Solar, and chief investment officer of parent company Skyworth Group.

On June 3, Skyworth Solar also announced its cooperation with Joybuy — JD's global online site — under which the two companies will explore new channels to deliver China's new energy solutions to global customers.

Qu said the expansion into overseas markets is by no means simply selling products, but building a whole system covering local distribution channels, storage, service delivery, technology support and after-sales services.

"Energy mix, power pricing, building typologies and user needs vary significantly from country to country. For example, European users prioritize energy independence and product quality, while Southeast Asian users focus more on adaptability to high temperatures, high-humidity and overall return-on-investment efficiency. Experiences in mature markets can help us with technology innovation and service improvement," Qu said.

Founded in 2020, Skyworth Solar has built over 800,000 power plants, with its cumulative grid-connected capacity exceeding 29.3 gigawatts as of the end of 2025.

As Qu further explained, electricity is still expensive, especially in regions with geopolitical tensions and unstable power supply. But the cost of solar power has dropped by 90 percent over the past decade, with an easy process of installation and application.

It only takes six months to build a solar-powered farm and only one day for a rooftop PV system, said Sonia Dunlop, CEO of Global Solar Council. No other energy source is as fast, modular and globally adaptable as solar, Dunlop said.

The global newly installed solar PV capacity reached 700 GW in 2025, a figure that seemed utterly "unimaginable" a decade ago. The cumulative global solar PV capacity stands at 2.2 terawatts now, and is expected to rise to 8 TW in 2030 when energy storage capacity will also reach 1.5 TW, Dunlop added.

Rentia van Tonder, head of renewable energy, power and infrastructure for Johannesburg-based Standard Bank, said they need cooperation with Chinese partners as they are looking for better market understanding, ideas, and operational experiences in different markets and countries. More participation of engineering, procurement and construction companies and an enriched supply of products and services from China will also help the development of clean energy in South Africa.

According to China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30), the country will build 100 national-level zero-carbon parks, with planning of the first 52 already released.

"This is a very specific target. A zero-carbon park is a very complicated scenario combining factories and devices, which requires diversified but precise deployment of power," Qu said.

Nation's rise seen benefitting world

By **CHENG YU**
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China is rapidly emerging as an "economic super-connector" that is redrawing the map of global trade and is viewed in the West as challenging its long-standing dominance over the international economic order, said Chandran Nair, founder of the Global Institute for Tomorrow.

In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Nair said that for the first time, economies from Africa, Southeast Asia, Latin America and the Middle East not only have access to superior products from China, but also have an alternative to the Western-dominated institutions that have governed international commerce.



Chandran Nair

He described China as "an economic super-connector" that has built deep ties with countries historically marginalized by Western-led institutions.

"Nations across the developing world see China building infrastructure, offering trade and staying out of their internal politics," he said, adding that China's rise could give developing nations a stronger voice in global affairs.

Nair's recently published *Understanding China* is a book that argues that China tries to offer an approach of engagement over confrontation, and explains that the nation's rise is in the interest of the world and yields positive global impact.

In terms of US-China trade frictions, Nair said it is fundamentally driven not by trade imbalances, but by anxiety that China will be a threat to its global supremacy and the fear of an alternative development model that challenges Western dominance.

"It is about systemic competition, and it always has been. The prevailing fear gripping the West is simply this — how can a country manage to develop so quickly and successfully outside the framework of Western political and economic models?" he said.

"The biggest feature of this conflict is that it is driven by ideological prejudice. Rather than acknowledging the truth that China has a right to grow — even if that may challenge Western dominance and economic hegemony and is, in addition, good for the world — the Western narrative has veered toward wholesale criticism of every aspect of the nation."

He said criticism of China now stretches far beyond trade and economics into attacks on "China's history, economic management, political structure, human rights record, societal values and technological advancements."

"This is shameful," Nair said. "It depicts a desperate grasping-at-straws approach and undermines the West in the eyes of the majority."

According to Nair, Western powers are increasingly attempting to preserve global influence by containing what he called the "legitimate rights" of other countries to rise.

"The world does not buy it anymore," he said, referring to Western narratives around defending the "rules-based (world) order".

Nair argued that China's rapid poverty reduction poses a direct challenge to long-held Western assumptions linking democracy and economic success to equity.

"China's model of economic development has reduced poverty at a rate unmatched by any other country. A democracy that cannot work to improve the lives of its citizens is not better than any other form of governance that can actually improve the quality of life of its people. That is the argument the West cannot tolerate because it strikes at the foundation of its claim — that it has devised the best system of governance."

Looking toward 2035, Nair sees China as uniquely positioned to pioneer an alternative model of development.

"The greatest opportunity is that China is better positioned than any other large country to demonstrate how it can be done so other developing nations can build their own models," he said.

Kunming expo to boost trade with S. Asia

By **YAN YUJIE** and **LI YINGQING** in Kunming

The China-South Asia Expo (CSAE) provides growth opportunities for businesses and enhanced regional trade, officials, experts and exhibitors from China and South Asian countries said in Kunming, Yunnan province, on Thursday.

Co-hosted by the Ministry of Commerce and the Yunnan provincial government, the 10th CSAE is being held in Kunming from Thursday to Tuesday. The event has attracted approximately 560 companies from South Asian countries to participate as exhibitors.

Bangladesh is the theme country of this year's expo. Kayser Kamal, deputy speaker of the 13th National Parliament of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, said that having Bangladesh as the theme country reflects the depth and warmth of the friendship between the two nations.

Bangladesh has set up 84 standard booths and a 360-square-meter pavilion to showcase its offerings, with participation from over 100 companies across seven major industries, making it the largest national exhibition Bangladesh has ever held in China.

Wares Hossain, director of the export promotion bureau at Bangladesh's Ministry of Commerce, said that Bangladeshi exhibitors have brought garments, agro-based products, pharmaceuticals and handicrafts to the expo, with the aim of expanding their businesses in China.

Rajendran Muhundan, manager of MNP Gems and Jeweller in Sri Lanka, said that the expo has promoted his business. Last year, he established long-term cooperation agreements with 20 business-to-business customers from China and other countries at the expo, significantly increasing orders.

Suyash Mehta, director of Sudha India International in India, said that the expo is important for exporters as well as regional trade. Having participated five times, he is optimistic about achieving better sales this year.

Khalil Hashmi, Pakistan's ambassador to China, said that the expo serves as a crucial platform, offering opportunities for exhibitors. It allows small and medium-sized businesses to showcase and sell their products to a larger market, thereby boosting bilateral trade.

Bilateral trade between China and South Asian nations surged past $200 billion for the first time in 2025, up 10.7 percent year-on-year, according to the Ministry of Commerce.

Hashmi noted that the expo has established a dedicated pavilion for the coffee industry.

He Yuejun, manager of Pu'er Aini plantation, said that the expo has successfully hosted a coffee-themed pavilion for three years, with his company seeing daily sales reach 20,000 yuan ($2,950) during the event last year.

"At the expo, we have the opportunity to share insights on coffee varieties, cultivation methods, and processing techniques. The expo serves as a platform for learning and interaction, raising the standards across the entire industry," He said.

Technology products stand out as particularly popular among the Chinese offerings at the expo.

Hashmi pays attention to China's high-tech products, such as electric vehicles and drones. "China has developed a range of green and digital technologies that are both high-quality and competitively priced," he said.

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BUSINESS

China's tech firms fuel global AI rise

In Jan-April, nation's IC exports hit $103.5 billion, up 83.7% in value y-o-y







Above: A visitor views chip products from Huahong Group at a semiconductor exhibition in Shanghai on March 25. LONG WEI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Left: Workers operate a full-capacity production line for 800G optical modules at an optoelectronics facility in Wuhan, Hubei province, on Dec 24. WEI LAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Below left: A researcher poses with rolled-up "fiber chips" and a smart tactile glove made by weaving the chips into textiles at Fudan University in Shanghai on Jan 19. LIU YING / XINHUA

BEIJING — With the global push for artificial intelligence computing power unleashing an unprecedented wave of infrastructure buildout, China-made optical modules that shuttle data — alongside the chips that process information — have become critical links. Sporting the world's leading market shares and accelerating upgrades, China's tech supply chains have become essential to sustaining global AI growth.

The numbers speak for themselves. Chinese firms claim seven spots among the world's top 10 optical module vendors, with their combined market share exceeding 60 percent globally, said research firm LightCounting. In the first four months, China exported 117 billion integrated circuits worth $103.5 billion, up 83.7 percent in value year-on-year. Export orders for optical modules have stretched into 2028.

Behind these figures lies a deeper shift: China is no longer just participating in the AI supply chain, but also offering a supply chain that stabilizes global AI infrastructure.

If AI is the brain, optical modules are the nerves, converting electrical signals to light and back at blinding speed, shuttling data between servers inside data centers and across continents. A single 1.6-terabit optical module can transmit 95 high-definition movies in one second.

Chinese firms are leading the sector. Zhongji InnoLight, based in East China's Shandong province, held over 40 percent of the global 800-gigabit optical module market and an estimated 50 to 70 percent of the 1.6T segment last year, securing first place for four consecutive years. Eoptolink, InnoLight's rival in Chengdu, Sichuan province, ranked second.

Both companies have secured their positions in the supply chains of companies building the AI clusters that are reshaping the global economy, such as Nvidia, Google and Amazon. Delivery cycles that once took 12 weeks have been compressed to eight or fewer, as North American clients race to beef up computing capacity measured in weekly increments.

Customs data show that in March, China's average export price of optical modules rose 23 percent year-on-year, while fiber and cable exports soared 263.8 percent in value, with the average export price surging 204.3 percent.

Huagong Tech, an optical module maker based in Wuhan, Hubei province, launched the world's first 12.8-T XPO module in March, bundling the capacity of eight 1.6T modules into a single unit tailored for next-generation AI clusters of 100,000-plus GPUs.

Ma Xinqiang, the company's chairman, said the North American market for 1.6T modules alone has surpassed $20 billion, while the global market will far exceed $30 billion this year.

The chip story is newer but no less striking. China produced 127.2 billion integrated circuits in the first quarter, up 24.3 percent year-on-year, equivalent to roughly 1.4 billion chips per day.

High-value products have become the mainstay of China's chip exports. In April alone, export value doubled to $31.1 billion, up 100.1 percent year-on-year, while export volume edged up merely 3.8 percent. Industry insiders said that such a gap, rarely seen in China's chip trade, signals a systemic revaluation of export product value rather than simple volume growth.

Among the country's leading chipmakers, SMIC ran at 93.1 percent capacity utilization in the first quarter, while Hua Hong Grace Semiconductor saw its net profit attributable to parent company shareholders up 458.1 percent at $20.9 million, with its capacity utilization rate staying high at 99.7 percent.

Equally significant is what is happening on the equipment side. The China Semiconductor Industry Association said the domestic chip equipment localization rate climbed from 25 percent at end-2024 to 35 percent in 2025. On new wafer-fab production lines, domestically made equipment accounted for 55 percent of total procurement value by end-2025, exceeding the national 50-percent target ahead of schedule, official data revealed.

Optical modules and chips are not parallel stories, but converging ones. The same AI boom that is driving insatiable demand for high-speed optical tech is also reshaping the chip landscape: MOS memory sales surged 236.4 percent in the first quarter, while sales of logic chips jumped 40.1 percent, said the European Semiconductor Industry Association.

The phrase "compute-power coordination" entered China's Government Work Report for the first time this year, with a CICC research report identifying it as a major industry trend driven by soaring AI demand and low-carbon energy transition goals.

The vehicle-chip nexus adds another dimension. Each new energy vehicle features more than 1,000 chips, roughly double that of a traditional car. Chinese companies have outperformed foreign rivals in power semiconductors and are gaining ground in cabin-entertainment and body-control chips, though high-end autonomous-driving SoCs remain a work in progress, said Liu Quan, deputy chief engineer of the China Center for Information Industry Development.

The competitiveness of optical modules also largely hinges on the synergy of the complete upstream industrial chain, covering optical chips, ceramic packages and precision structural components. China has formed highly concentrated industry clusters in the Yangtze River Delta, the Pearl River Delta and Wuhan Optics Valley, where the localization rate exceeds 90 percent. This has enabled cost control and mass-production yields to reach world-leading levels.

Zhang Zhe, a researcher at the Electronic Information Research Institute under the China Academy of Information and Communications Technology, said the large-scale construction and expansion of AI data centers worldwide has generated rigid hardware demand.

While foreign manufacturers face supply-side constraints and limited capacity expansion, Chinese manufacturers — backed by sufficient raw material supplies and a complete industrial chain — can rapidly respond to this round of demand explosion, Zhang said.

XINHUA

Researchers fast-track industrial innovation for national high-quality growth

NANCHANG — A growing number of high-level researchers are being embedded within companies to enhance innovation and push technological advances on factory floors as part of China's drive for high-quality development.

Jiangxi Naile Copper in Yingtan, East China's Jiangxi province, is a case in point. Founded in 2003, Naile Copper has focused on high-end copper products, with oxygen-free copper tubes as its flagship product.

In the company's exhibition hall, chief engineer Ma Li pours hot water into two metal tubes — one hollow copper tube remains cool to the touch, while the other, made of oxygen-free copper, quickly becomes very hot.

The company has broken through core manufacturing technologies previously monopolized by foreign firms, supplying heat pipes for critical cooling applications in central processing units, graphic processing units and insulated gate bipolar transistors, Ma said.

Addressing the company's demand for innovation in high-end copper products, Zhuo Haiou, deputy dean of the International Institute for Materials Innovation at Nanchang University, went on secondment from his university to the company to serve in a senior technical role in 2023.

"We promptly formed an interdisciplinary research team, combining talent from the university and the company," Zhuo said. "The core task was to overcome the technical challenges in the material properties and processing techniques of grooved copper tubes."

After nearly a year of repeated trials, the team successfully developed a high-performance oxygen-free copper grooved tube product, which now generates an annual output value of over 100 million yuan ($14.7 million).

The collaboration between the company and Nanchang University is part of a broader provincial push to embed researchers into enterprises.

In 2024, Jiangxi launched a dedicated "deputy manager of sci-tech" program, encouraging enterprises to recruit researchers from universities, research institutes and State-owned enterprises across the country to serve in the role.



Workers run research and tests on dairy products at a lab in Gansu province on Oct 16, 2024. LI YALONG / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

The program aims to deepen the integration of industrial, innovation and talent ecosystems while boosting enterprise-level technological innovation and industrial transformation. In turn, enterprises provide a testing ground for their research, ensuring that scientific endeavors are well-targeted and practical.

Since the program's rollout, over 1,100 deputy managers of sci-tech have been recruited, serving more than 500 enterprises. They have facilitated nearly 300 scientific and technological achievements, generating direct economic benefits exceeding 1 billion yuan.

These efforts span 12 key industrial sectors — including electronic information, new energy and biomedicine — injecting strong momentum into high-quality development.

Similar programs have been rolled out in other provinces, such as Henan and Anhui, giving a strong boost to technological upgrading and industrial innovation.

China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) calls for improving policies that allow researchers to take entrepreneurial leave or hold multiple positions with pay, encouraging top talent to move into enterprises. It also urges joint industry-university research and development to address industrial needs.

Yu Jianguo, a professor at East China University of Science and Technology, said high-level talent brings knowledge and technologies to the front lines of industries, achieving a crucial leap from laboratories to production lines.

"This not only resolves the dual predicaments of universities' difficulties in transforming research results and enterprises' difficulties in obtaining technologies, but also initiates a virtuous cycle where talent leads innovation and innovation drives industries," Yu said.

In Xinfeng county, Jiangxi's Ganzhou, the flexible talent recruitment mechanism has enabled deputy managers of sci-tech to serve as a bridge for sustained university-industry collaboration. To date, nearly 30 universities have partnered with local enterprises, supplying over 400 graduates annually and establishing more than 30 joint R&D platforms.

"The value of deputy managers of sci-tech is not just about solving today's challenges, but also about cultivating localized, specialized, and industry-ready talent for the future," said Chen Jintao, a Party official of the county.

XINHUA

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CHINA

Nation to expand East-West program

By **ZHAO YIMENG**
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China will expand and upgrade its East-West cooperation program by deepening industrial partnerships and broadening county-level assistance ties during a new stage of regular support, five years after its victory over extreme poverty, agriculture and rural affairs authorities said on Thursday.

Vice-Minister of Agriculture and Rural Affairs Maierdan Mugaiti said China will maintain fixed assistance partnerships between eight eastern provincial-level regions and 10 western counterparts. Economically stronger county-level regions in the east will be paired with key counties in western regions, achieving full coverage of targeted assistance partnerships.

"The cooperation will continue to combine the needs of western regions with the strengths of eastern regions," Maierdan said.

He said industrial cooperation and other development-oriented measures will remain central to efforts aimed at strengthening endogenous growth.

In recent years, China has launched initiatives to upgrade specialty industries and promote the full-chain development of leading industries in western regions, accelerating industrial transfers from east to west and jointly building industrial parks.

For instance, cooperation between Beijing and the Inner Mongolia autonomous region has helped develop eight major agricultural and livestock industry chains, including beef cattle, dairy, cashmere, potatoes and soybeans. The partnership has supported the establishment of more than 600 green agricultural production and processing bases, boosting local development while strengthening food supplies for the capital.

Across western regions, partners have jointly developed 35 rural tourism routes and supported the construction of more than 1,500 livable and business-friendly villages. The tourism routes attracted more than 9.59 million visitors from Tianjin and Shandong province to Gansu province in 2025, an increase of nearly 700,000 from the previous year, Maierdan said.

Officials highlighted cooperation between Fujian province and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region as one of the most successful examples of the East-West cooperation program.

Wang Jian, head of the region's department of agriculture and rural affairs, said the partnership helped Ningxia eliminate extreme poverty and lay the foundation for long-term development.

"Farmers' annual per capita income in Ningxia increased from about 1,400 yuan ($206) in 1996 to more than 20,000 yuan in 2025," Wang said.

Fujian has invested a cumulative 7.68 billion yuan in assistance funds and helped develop key industries, including wine, goji berries, dairy products, beef cattle and vegetables.

The two regions are now cooperating in emerging sectors such as artificial intelligence computing, digital infrastructure and green energy, Wang added.

Chen Mingwang, director of the Fujian Provincial Department of Agriculture and Rural Affairs, said the province will focus on upgrading Fujian-Ningxia cooperation.

Future efforts will focus on improving industrial parks, attracting leading enterprises to strengthen industrial clusters, expanding data infrastructure projects and exploring cooperation in the digital economy, carbon trading and saline-alkaline land management.

The two regions will also leverage Fujian's position on the Maritime Silk Road and Ningxia's role as a key inland logistics hub to develop land-sea transportation links and explore new opportunities under the Belt and Road Initiative, Chen said.

Yangtze's sturgeon infusion



Workers release Yangtze sturgeon fry, an endangered species under first-class national protection, into the Yangtze River in Yibin, Sichuan province, on Thursday. Over 25,000 fry were released and some were tagged to monitor their migration patterns. The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to improve the river's aquatic environment along the Sichuan section of the river. HE HAIYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

China enhances organ transport efficiency

Decade-old policy aids timely delivery of donations as public awareness grows

By **WANG XIAOYU**
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China's streamlined transport channel for delivering lifesaving donated organs has significantly improved the efficiency and availability of transplant organs over the past decade, while public awareness on organ donation has also grown steadily, authorities and experts said on Thursday.

China has carried out more than 63,000 posthumous organ donations involving over 190,000 organs since 2010. In addition, more than 7.3 million people have registered as voluntary organ donors, according to data released on China's Organ Donation Day, observed annually on June 11.

In 2025, China recorded 6,931 organ donations and performed 25,799 organ transplant procedures, representing year-on-year increases of 4 percent and 4.5 percent, respectively. Both figures reached historic highs, although the overall donation rate — measured by the number of donors per million people — remains lower than the international level.

This year also marks the 10th anniversary of the introduction of a "green channel" policy, which ensures the efficient transport of donated organs through measures such as expedited clearance and priority transportation. The policy was introduced in 2016 by six government departments, including health and public security authorities.

Zhao Hongtao, chairman of the China Organ Transplantation Development Foundation, said the policy is estimated to have improved organ transport efficiency by an average of 10 percentage points.

"At the same time, we have seen cases in which airline passengers whose flights were delayed while waiting for a donated organ were fully cooperative and recognized the importance of the cause, demonstrating growing public awareness of organ donation," he said.

Zhao added that efforts are underway to explore the possibility of delivering donated organs by drone in the future.

Chen Jingyu, a renowned lung transplant surgeon, said transplant doctors once had to devote tremendous effort to coordinating the transport of donated organs. Now, however, "transformative progress" has been made.

"Today, even a donated organ from a remote town in Yunnan province can be delivered swiftly and smoothly through the nation's extensive airline network. It was unimaginable in the past," he said.

Chen, who is based in Wuxi, Jiangsu province, said when an organ arrives at an airport in Shanghai, local railway authorities help medical personnel carrying the organ reach the railway station in a designated vehicle and secure seats on the most suitable high-speed train from Shanghai to Wuxi.

"If seats on the ideal flight are sold out, we can also entrust airlines capable of ensuring quality control and monitoring the entire delivery process, with transporting the organ," he said.

Chen estimated that the green channel policy has increased the utilization rate of donated organs by 30 percent.

Shanxi passes law to protect Great Wall

By **DUAN JINXIAN** in Beijing and **ZHU XINGXIN** in Taiyuan

Shanxi province recently passed new legislation to protect and sustainably manage its stretch of the Great Wall, one of the longest and most historically significant in the country, providing a legal framework to balance preservation with public use.

The Regulations on the Protection of the Great Wall in Shanxi Province were passed at the 28th meeting of the Standing Committee of the 14th Shanxi Provincial People's Congress. Consisting of six chapters and 47 articles, the regulations will come into effect on July 5 and cover the protection, research, utilization, supervision, and management of the wall.

Shanxi's section spans 1,401.23 kilometers — 9.74 percent of the Great Wall's total recorded length of 21,196 km — ranking third nationally. Spread out across 39 counties in eight cities, it stretches from the Warring States Period (475-221 BC) to the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), with eight sections designated as nationally important points. Five of the wall's most famous 13 passes lie within the province, forming a unique geographical pattern and cultural panorama.

Among those designated points is Yanmen Pass in Xinzhou's Daixian county, a site long woven into Chinese legends and literature. During the Northern Song Dynasty (960-1127), the female generals of the Yang family stationed themselves at this northern frontier town and repeatedly repelled the southward invasion of nomadic Khitan tribes. Their story has since been adapted into novels, plays, and films.



A visitor poses for a photo at a section of the Great Wall in Shanxi province in 2025. ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

The new regulations build on decades of institutional frameworks. In 2006, the State Council, China's Cabinet, established a national baseline for Great Wall protection. Shanxi's provincial government followed in 2021 with its own measures, creating a system of designated wall protectors, implementing complete monitoring coverage for important sections, and promoting the construction of the Great Wall National Cultural Park.

Wang Biao, deputy director of the education, science, culture, and health work commission of the Standing Committee of Shanxi Provincial People's Congress, said those local experiences urgently needed to be confirmed through legislation to refine and supplement national regulations.

Wang said the legislation will address persistent difficulties in the protection work, including insufficient funding, thin grassroots forces, and shortages in cross-regional and cross-departmental coordination. Natural and man-made damage had continued to occur, and the contradictions between preservation and public utilization had remained a pressure point, he said.

The new regulations directly address that tension. Yan Moyu, deputy director of the legal work committee, said research and utilization of the wall should be grounded in protection, so that public engagement serves both access and long-term inheritance. Meanwhile, construction of the Great Wall National Cultural Park (Shanxi section) will be advanced under this framework.

Wang Zhenhua, deputy director of the Shanxi Culture Relics Bureau, said the province will build a unified digital platform for its Great Wall resources, creating a permanent archive. Satellite remote sensing, big data monitoring, and drone surveillance will be used to maintain round-the-clock inspection coverage.

Earlier this year, there were media reports that a section of the Great Wall from the Ming Dynasty located in Ningwu county of Xinzhou was severely damaged as a result of long-term illegal mining activities and construction work by a local mining enterprise.

On May 20, the local government stated that the enterprise had been ordered to suspend production and rectify in accordance with the law. Criminal compulsory measures had been taken against four responsible persons on suspicion of illegal mining and damage to cultural relics.

Yin Chengwu, a 66-year-old protector along the Guangwu section of the Great Wall in Shuozhou, Shanxi, said the new legislation has "a significant deterrent effect on the protection of the Great Wall in the local area".

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JUNO achieves record neutrino measurements

By **LI MENGHAN**
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Chinese scientists have released the first results from one of the world's most advanced underground physics experiments, reporting record-setting measurements of mysterious particles known as neutrinos.

The findings, published as a cover story on Wednesday in the journal Nature, come from the Jiangmen Underground Neutrino Observatory, or JUNO, a giant detector built deep beneath a hillside in South China's Guangdong province.

Neutrinos are tiny particles that are found throughout the universe. Trillions pass through the human body every second, but they almost never interact with matter, making them extremely difficult to detect. Because of their elusive nature, scientists often refer to them as "ghost particles".

Researchers said JUNO has already achieved the most precise measurements to date on how neutrinos change as they travel. The results are based on data collected during the detector's first 59 days of operation between Aug 26 and Nov 2, 2025.

Scientists have long established that neutrinos can switch between three different forms, or "flavors", as they move through space. Understanding exactly how this process works could help answer some of the biggest questions in physics, including how the universe evolved after the Big Bang.

According to the research team, JUNO measured two key properties governing these transformations with a level of precision that reduced previous uncertainties by about 40 percent.

Nature reviewers praised the achievement, saying the results confirm the detector is performing as designed and position JUNO as a leading facility for future neutrino research.

The experiment's main goal is to solve a long-standing mystery known as the neutrino mass ordering problem. Scientists know there are three types of neutrinos, but they still do not know the exact arrangement of their masses — in simple terms, which type is heavier and which is lighter. The answer could improve scientists' understanding of the fundamental building blocks of matter.

JUNO's massive detector is located about 700 meters underground to shield it from interference caused by cosmic radiation. At its core is a 20,000-metric-ton sphere filled with highly purified liquid.

When a neutrino occasionally collides with an atom inside the liquid, it produces a tiny flash of light. Thousands of sensitive light sensors surrounding the sphere capture these flashes, allowing scientists to study the particle's properties.

The project is an international collaboration involving more than 700 researchers from 75 institutions across 17 countries and regions.

Scientists said the detector has been operating smoothly since it began collecting data in August. As more observations are gathered, they expect to release additional findings later this year that could provide new clues about some of the universe's least understood particles.

JUNO follows China's earlier Daya Bay Reactor Neutrino Experiment, which operated from 2011 to 2020 and helped uncover an important property of neutrinos and established the country as a major contributor to particle physics research.

Ancient splendors



Workers unpack a precious pottery jar in preparation for a grand exhibition presenting ancient civilizations on the American continent at the Shanghai Museum on Thursday. The exhibition, scheduled to run from July 9, 2026, to Nov 14, 2027, displays nearly 3,000 items of precious cultural relics from Mexico and Peru. GAO ERQIANG / CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Morning blast kills 7, injures 17 in Guangxi

An early morning explosion in Xing'an county, Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region, has left seven dead and 17 wounded on Thursday, local police said in an official notice. The blast occurred at 1:40 am on Lingxiang Road in Xing'an. Following the incident, officials from Guilin city and Xing'an county rushed to the scene to coordinate rescue operations alongside police, fire, health and emergency response teams. Rescuers have since completed four rounds of thorough site searches. All 17 injured people have been hospitalized and are currently in stable condition with no life-threatening injuries. Meanwhile, on-site rescue operations remain underway, police said. Preliminary investigations have ruled out a pipeline gas leak as the trigger for the blast. Police are continuing their probe to identify the exact cause of the explosion.

New communication test satellite launched

China on Thursday sent a new communication technology test satellite into space from the Wenchang Space Launch Site in South China's Hainan province. Launched at 3:30 pm aboard a Long March 5 rocket, the satellite has successfully entered its preset orbit. This satellite will be mainly used to carry out multi-band and high-speed communication technology validation tests. The launch marks the 650th mission carried out by the Long March carrier rocket series.

People smuggling suspect extradited

A Chinese fugitive suspected of coordinating the illegal crossing of national borders has been extradited back to China, the National Immigration Administration said on Thursday. The man surnamed Cai, who had long been in hiding abroad, was found by Chinese police to have conspired with people smugglers both in China and overseas between 2023 and 2024. They organized multiple Chinese citizens to take detour routes and illegally cross the border to engage in illicit activities abroad, said the NIA. In March this year, the police of a relevant country apprehended Cai and notified the Chinese side of the matter. Cai was escorted back to China on Monday.

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Editor's note: *As protection of the planet's flora, fauna and resources becomes increasingly important, China Daily is publishing a series of stories to illustrate the country's commitment to safeguarding the natural world.*



Island turns ecosystem into financial asset

Lingshan, off the coast of Shandong province, pioneers carbon-negative economic model

Background: Lingshan Island sits some 10 kilometers off the coast of Qingdao, Shandong province. **Inset, clockwise from bottom left:** Tourists take pictures on the island. Fishing boats sail in the waters around the island. Tourists visit an island lighthouse. An "I love Lingshan Island" sign is a popular photo spot on the island. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
and **HU QING** in Qingdao, Shandong

China's first independently certified carbon-negative island is continuing to demonstrate positive economic returns, providing a profitable, eco-friendly model for other areas around the country.

Lingshan Island, located 10 kilometers off the coast of Shandong province's Qingdao West Coast New Area in the Yellow Sea, recorded 706 million yuan ($97.3 million) in gross ecosystem product in 2024, a 14.3 percent year-on-year increase, marking three consecutive years of growth, according to Jinan Engineering Consulting Institute.

Gross ecosystem product is the total financial value that nature contributes to the economy.

The 7.66-square-kilometer island, home to 900 people, was certified by the China Quality Certification Centre as China's first "carbon-negative island" on Dec 31, 2021.

According to the certification, in 2020 the island generated 5,668 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent from energy use, agriculture and waste treatment, while its forests absorbed 7,001 tons. This resulted in net emissions of negative 1,333 tons.

This milestone was the result of years of sustained effort, with the island undergoing a steady green transition that has reshaped both daily life and economic development.

Lingshan Island has carried out farmland-to-forest conversion since the 1980s. This long-standing commitment dovetails with China's dual carbon goals of peaking carbon emissions before 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality before 2060. The island has also taken part in pilot programs exploring how to balance economic development with environmental protection through carbon accounting.

Data from the Lingshan Island Provincial Nature Reserve Management Committee shows that more than 233 hectares of farmland have been converted back into forest, and over 2,000 free-roaming goats have been relocated to allow vegetation to recover.

In December 2002, with approval from the Shandong provincial government, the entire island and surrounding area were classified as a nature reserve, spanning 32.832 square kilometers. The classification aims to protect marine ecosystems, biodiversity, forests, bird species and geological formations.

According to the reserve's management committee, a large-scale restoration program, backed by an investment of 515 million yuan, has introduced measures ranging from shoreline protection and slope stabilization to oyster reef restoration and pollution control. More than 200,000 trees have been planted, 16 hectares restored and 15 hectares of oyster reefs rebuilt, alongside eco-friendly coastal upgrades and walking trails.

Technology is also playing a growing role in ecological management. The "Smart Lingshan Island" platform integrates big data, drones, satellite imagery and artificial intelligence to enable round-the-clock monitoring of the island's ecosystem.



Farmers sort sea cucumbers raised near Lingshan Island.
PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



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In addition, a clean heating program has replaced coal with electricity in 455 households, reducing pollution and improving living conditions.

Island resident Teng Yanfang said the old coal stoves were a safety hazard. "With electric heating, our homes are warmer, cleaner and more comfortable," Teng said.

Outdated and unregistered vehicles have also been phased out, replaced in part by new-energy vehicles, helping build a greener transport system.

The conservation efforts have yielded effective results. Today, more than 80 percent of the island is covered in forest, while the surrounding waters remain clean and free of industrial pollution, the management committee said.

As tourism has grown, the livelihoods of the residents have gradually diversified. Tourists have come not only to enjoy home-cooked meals — largely seafood — but also to stay overnight or longer. In response, some families have opened guesthouses or invested in sightseeing vehicles to cater to the growing demand.

Chen Yiwen, 28, represents a younger generation embracing these changes. Six years ago, she returned to the island and renovated her family home into a homestay.

"We've turned old houses into stylish guesthouses so that every visitor wakes up to the sea breeze and a view of the ocean," she said, adding that this youthful approach aims to show Lingshan Island as more than a scenic getaway — it's a place where life itself can be savored.

So far, 53 homestays have been developed, supported by a local industry association that helps revitalize idle rural homes and older properties.

Currently, three regular ferry lines connect the island to the mainland, each providing a single round-trip service daily, weather permitting. Additional sailings are added during the peak travel season.

This strong ecological foundation has also added value to local aquaculture products.

In October 2024, Lingshan Island completed Qingdao's first carbon footprint assessment for a marine product — dried sea cucumber — produced by a local company. The result was 4.13 metric tons of carbon dioxide equivalent per ton of dried sea cucumber, earning the product a carbon label that helped boost sales by 40 percent year-on-year, according to the company's chairman Sun Jiguang.

"Sea cucumbers are highly sensitive to their environment," Sun said. "Water quality, temperature, food supply and tidal conditions all affect their growth. The waters around Lingshan Island are ideal."

For businesses, carbon labeling enhances environmental credibility and strengthens consumer trust, said Sun Bin, an official with the reserve's management committee. "It also helps identify energy-intensive processes and improve efficiency, reducing both emissions and costs."

Visitors are also encouraged to take part in low-carbon living. A digital platform rewards actions such as waste sorting, green travel and reducing food waste with points that can be exchanged for daily goods.

Meanwhile, new growth drivers are emerging. The island is experimenting with low-altitude logistics, including drone delivery routes linking it with the mainland, while expanding marine tourism offerings such as coastal cruises and short island tours, said Zhang Jiatang, head of the economic development office of the reserve's management committee.

Financial innovation is also supporting development. Qingdao's first ecological asset-backed loan, worth 10 million yuan, and an 800,000-yuan green credit line for homestays have helped turn environmental assets into usable capital.

Yin Honglei, director of the reserve's management committee, said the island will continue to prioritize ecological conservation while further diversifying its businesses in an environmentally friendly way.

The goal is to keep the waters clean, the hills green and local livelihoods growing, showing how protection and development can move forward together, she added.

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10-year campaign restores 150 kilometers of Qingdao's coastline

By ZHAO RUIXUE and **HU QING**





Left: Tourists enjoy blossoming flowers at a park in Yumingzui in the West Coast New Area of Qingdao, Shandong province, last month. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY **Right:** A campsite overlooks the ocean in the West Coast New Area. HAN JIAJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

A decadelong campaign to restore the coastline in Qingdao's West Coast New Area has transformed shores once cluttered with illegal fish farms into uninterrupted views of blue waters, sandy beaches and flying seabirds.

Since the campaign began in 2016, the area has restored more than 150 kilometers of coastline. In addition, abandoned aquaculture facilities stretching over 100 km of coastline have been dismantled, more than 1,200 hectares of coastal wetlands have been rehabilitated, and over 260 hectares of coastal vegetation have been restored, according to local authorities.

The campaign aimed not only to support the sustainable growth of the marine economy, but also to repair and protect the coastal ecosystem — restoring the natural shoreline, improving nearshore environments, and coordinating land and sea management as a single system.

One of the toughest problems was relocating aquaculture farmers.

To ease the impact, local authorities rolled out a series of measures, such as providing compensation to affected aquaculture farmers, along with support to help them shift into new lines of work.

Fishing infrastructure was upgraded, with dedicated docks offering safer and more convenient access to the sea. At the same time, tourism and other industries were developed to create new income streams.

Chen Guishuang, a former aquaculture farmer from Qingdao's Xuejiadao subdistrict, initially struggled to accept the decision to remove the breeding ponds that had long supported his family's livelihood.

"But later, I realized the government's policies were quite supportive and took our needs fully into account," Chen said, adding that local authorities helped farmers transition by guiding them to register new businesses and offering practical advice on future development.

"The improvement of the coastal environment has also created new opportunities — my seafood company's revenue has increased severalfold compared with before," Chen said.

Public access to the sea has also expanded. Over 90 km of coastal slow-traffic routes and visual corridors have been built, along with more than 90 hectares of new seaside parks, including Phoenix Mountain Park and the City Balcony — turning the once blocked shoreline into an open, shared space.

With 46 rivers crisscrossing the region — 20 of them flowing into the sea — managing water quality in the bay remains complex. These winding waterways carry uncertainties, making monitoring and regulation more difficult.

To address this, the area has established a smart marine management platform, integrating thermal imaging and AI-powered video to enable round-the-clock, full-coverage monitoring of nearshore waters.

Combined with ship identification systems, the Beidou satellite navigation network and radar detection, the platform can track maritime activity in real time, said Wang Hongwei, an official from the area's marine development bureau.

"Any abnormality is quickly detected, which gives us strong technical support for both marine protection and emergency response," he said.

Islands, as key parts of the marine ecosystem, have also drawn close attention. Once threatened by invasive species and coastal erosion, islands such as Lingshan, Zhucha and Zhaitang have undergone systematic ecological rehabilitation — from vegetation recovery to the removal of non-native species, said Sui Junchang, director of the area's marine development bureau.

Today, these islands have taken on a new role — not just as ecological assets, but also as popular destinations drawing visitors year-round.

"We will continue to advance the development of 'beautiful bays', expand coastal access and further improve the experience of being close to the sea," said Sui.

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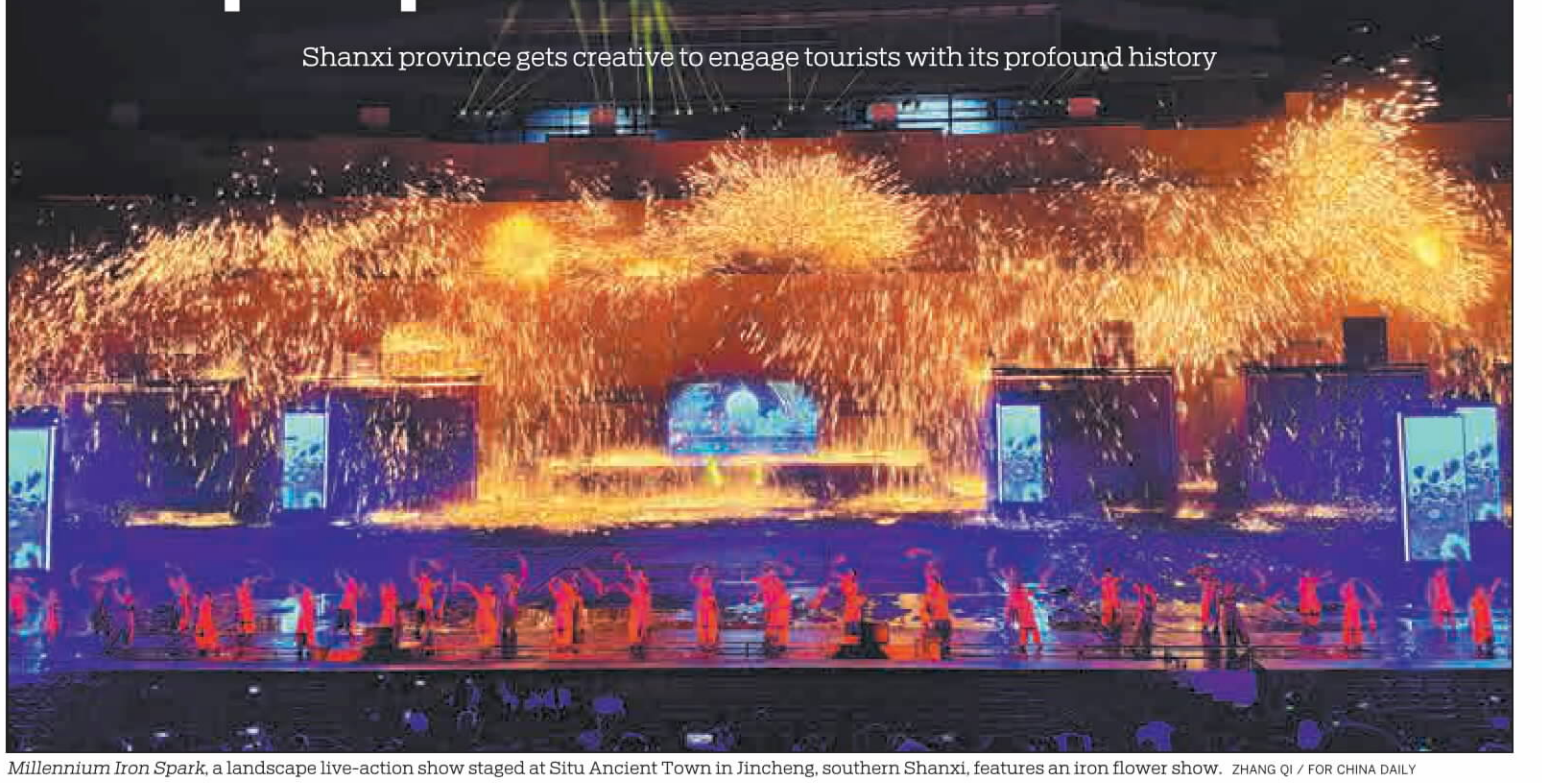
From left: Performers from Yuncheng University stage classic excerpts from the dance drama *The Palace Through Time* during the 22nd China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair in late May. KOU NING / FOR CHINA DAILY Dancers perform a scene from *A Dream in Datong*, an immersive theatrical show presented in Datong city, Shanxi province. LI PEIJING / FOR CHINA DAILY

New perspective on ancient customs

Shanxi province gets creative to engage tourists with its profound history



Millennium Iron Spark, a landscape live-action show staged at Situ Ancient Town in Jincheng, southern Shanxi, features an iron flower show. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY

By **HAO NAN**
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North China's Shanxi province, soaked in profound historical heritage, is embracing a wave of cultural innovation.

Through creative cultural products and phenomenal art performances, the province's millennia-old history and splendid civilization are glowing with brand-new vitality.

Architectural treasures

Shanxi is home to 28,027 ancient architectural structures, accounting for around one-tenth of China's total, as well as 531 nationally protected historical and cultural sites — the highest number of any province. The concentration of heritage sites has earned the province the reputation of being "a treasure house of ancient Chinese architecture".

The abundant cultural relics lay a foundation for the development of creative cultural products in the province. At the 22nd China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair, held from May 21 to 25, the Shanxi exhibition area showcased a variety of creative cultural items, presenting the province's profound cultural heritage in a condensed form.

On the fair's last day, for example, a scholar specializing in ancient architecture lingered at the booth of Shanxi Zhumeng Technology. After carefully examining the exhibits, he spoke highly of the 3D-printed model of the Sakyamuni Pagoda of Fogong Temple in Yingxian county. "This digital 3D-printed work is remarkable. It perfectly restores the color, texture and architectural structure of the original pagoda," he said.

The booth also displayed models of bracket sets from the Foguang Temple on Mount Wutai, a Tang Dynasty (618-907) masterpiece of architecture, and goddess statues in the Sage Mother Hall of Jinci Temple.

The lifelike craftsmanship drew crowds of visitors. Lu Yi, a manager in charge of the booth, said that by relying on artificial intelligence-powered 3D printing technology and advanced materials such as carbon fiber and resin, the company can reproduce ancient buildings in Shanxi with millimeter-level precision.

This technology not only preserves the historical style and artistic value of ancient architecture, but also helps build a standardized digital archive for the digital protection of cultural relics, Lu added.

At the fair, many other creative cultural products wowed audiences. Notably, the Northern Wei Dynasty (386-534) pottery figurines of working people, inspired by the iconic Northern Wei warrior figurines from the Pingcheng period, replicate the relaxed and leisurely demeanor of the original artifacts, resonating with the mindset of today's generation.

At the booth of Shanxi Daily Jinjian Cultural Industry, a tea set was on display. It consisted of a mountain-and-river kettle and teacups themed on the virtue and filial piety of Yao and Shun, two Chinese sage emperors who ruled more than 4,100 years ago. There were also a tea scoop, a lotus-shaped tea tray, and a *gongdao* (fairness) cup, which is a traditional Chinese tea vessel used to collect the brewed tea and pour it evenly into each cup.

The set also embodies the culture of loyalty of Guan Yu, a general during the period spanning the late Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) and the Three Kingdoms (220-280), the integrity of upright officials, and the credibility of Shanxi merchants.

In Shanxi, creative cultural product shops can be seen everywhere and have become check-in spots for tourists. The Jinli (gifts from Shanxi) creative cultural products store on Zhonglou Street, or Bell Tower Street, in Taiyuan is one of them.

Products such as building-block models of the Water Mirror Stage at Jinci Temple and flip-style perpetual calendars themed around the Yungang Grottoes offer visitors a new experience of the local culture's charm.

"We adjust our creative cultural products' designs to align with young people's preferences, turning millennia-old culture into something that can be used in daily life," said a staff member of Jinli. "This way, when tourists take these items home, they can use them themselves and also share the stories of Shanxi with more people."

"Nowadays, people have a higher acceptance of traditional culture. They no longer settle for simple souvenirs printed with landscapes. Instead, they favor well-designed products with rich cultural connotations, which greatly boosts our confidence in creative cultural development," she added.

During the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25), Shanxi incubated 50 creative cultural enterprises and more than 100 research institutions. They have registered more than 300 copyrights and developed over 3,700 creative cultural products. An increasing number of cultural items carrying the memories of Shanxi culture have gained popularity nationwide.

Heritage inheritance

Shanxi province ranks third in China in terms of the number of national-level intangible cultural heritage representative items and inheritors. So far, six items have been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Shanxi also has 182 national-level and 1,173 provincial-level intangible cultural heritage items. Covering 10 major categories, these include folk literature, traditional Chinese medicine and folk customs.

Upholding traditions while pursuing innovation is the key to the dynamic inheritance of Shanxi's intangible cultural heritage. The jasmine tea blending technique, a provincial-level intangible cultural heritage item, has made Qianhexiang Teahouse famous across the region.

As the only time-honored Chinese brand specializing in tea in Shanxi, Qianhexiang has kept innovating on the basis of traditional craftsmanship.

Traditional jasmine tea, for instance, is a blend of different leaves. After nearly half a year of joint research and hundreds of trials with Shanxi University of Chinese Medicine, the teahouse launched its first medicinal tea, mulberry leaf jasmine tea, which combines a pleasant taste with the health benefits of herbal medicine.

A businessman from Fujian praised the tea at the Shenzhen cultural fair, saying that the taste was smooth with a lingering sweetness. The subtle bitterness of the mulberry leaves added a richer complexity to the tea, he added.

Qianhexiang does not rely on its current products but explores innovation using intangible cultural heritage techniques. This dedication to craftsmanship is truly admirable, said the businessman.

To cater to young consumers, the teahouse has launched tea drinks packed in cups, which are being well received in the market.

Furthermore, Shanxi integrates intangible cultural heritage with cultural tourism and consumption. A total of eight traditional noodle-making techniques from the province have been listed as national-level intangible cultural heritage, with another 44 listed at the provincial level, encompassing over 20 different methods.

China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Wheaten Food Carnival has been held in Shanxi for many sessions, creating immersive cultural tourism scenarios featuring food, entertainment, and shopping.

In 2025, the Culture and Tourism Department of Shanxi launched five travel routes themed on intangible cultural heritage delicacies. Highlighting Shanxi's brands such as merchant culture, noodles and medicinal food-based wellness, the routes connect gourmet landmarks, intangible cultural heritage workshops, historic streets and scenic spots across the province.

On June 1, the newly revised regulation on the protection of intangible cultural heritage in Shanxi took effect. It prioritizes the protection of distinctive local intangible cultural heritage items, including traditional operas, folk songs, drum music, noodle-making, brewing, traditional festival performances and Chinese herbal medicine processing.

The move safeguards cultural roots and enriches people's lives, local officials said.



Clockwise from above: A tea set inspired by Shanxi at the 22nd China (Shenzhen) International Cultural Industries Fair. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY Shoppers browse creative products at a store in Shanxi. ZHANG QI / FOR CHINA DAILY Chefs demonstrate traditional noodle-making at China's Intangible Cultural Heritage Wheaten Food Carnival held in Shanxi. ZHANG XIN / FOR CHINA DAILY





6 items
from Shanxi have been inscribed on UNESCO's Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Live performances

At the Shenzhen cultural fair, excerpts from the dance drama *The Palace Through Time*, performed by artists from Yuncheng University, became a highlight. Inspired by the Yongle Palace, a Taoist temple from the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) in Ruicheng county, the dance reproduces the charm of murals in the palace.

Dressed in flowing-sleeved costumes, the dancers moved gracefully with their garments swirling with each step. Their postures resembled the celestial maidens in murals, with every lift of the hand, turn and sweep of the sleeves capturing the lines and spirit of the Yuan Dynasty art in Yongle Palace.

With a backdrop combining ancient architecture, murals, colored glaze and cultural inheritance, the performance brought audiences face to face with the timeless glamour of traditional Shanxi culture.

"We studied every detail of the Yongle Palace murals, from facial expressions to body postures, to restore the ancient style faithfully," said Li Na, a teacher in charge of the performance team. Centering on the relocation story of Yongle Palace, the drama pays tribute to ancient craftsmen and modern cultural inheritors.

Such performances can be seen all over Shanxi, allowing tourists to immerse themselves in ancient stories.

On the evening of June 7, *Millennium Iron Spark*, a landscape live-action show, was staged at Situ Ancient Town in Jincheng in the southern part of Shanxi. It features an iron flower show, a national-level intangible cultural heritage item. Molten iron at more than 1,000 C is thrown into the sky, resembling countless stars.

In April 2024, the town's iron flower performance set a Guinness World Record for the largest-scale show with the numbers of performers and performance spots and the amount of iron used.

Moreover, *A Dream in Datong*, an immersive theatrical show in North Shanxi's Datong, takes audiences on a journey through time to explore the city's history.

During this year's May Day holiday from May 1 to 5, the fully booked show staged 20 performances and received nearly 10,000 visitors, with a maximum of five shows per day.

To date, it has been performed more than 500 times, attracting around 160,000 audience members, and has become a landmark cultural brand and a new cultural calling card for Datong.

Other outstanding productions include *Seeing Pingyao Again*, which interprets the integrity of Shanxi merchants, and *Dream of the Western Chamber*, an adaptation of the classic love story *The Romance of the Western Chamber*.

Rooted in local culture and integrated with modern stage technologies and aesthetics, Shanxi's immersive performances transform the Yellow River, Great Wall and Shanxi merchant cultures into vivid stories and spectacular scenes.

Drawing tourists from home and abroad, these combined efforts inject momentum into the cultural tourism industry of Shanxi.

Zhang Qi contributed to this story.

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CULTURAL HERITAGE

Buried fires crack a porcelain mystery

A 3,000-year-old kiln explains the origins of Chinese ceramics, **Yang Feiyue** reports.



On a hillside in Fujian province's Mount Wuyi, the grass still grows over two dark-red scars in the earth. They are all that remain of a fire that burned out 3,000 years ago. But what that fire produced and where those products ended up, archaeologists say, have rewritten a chapter of Chinese ceramic history.

This is the only known kiln site in China from the early-to-middle Western Zhou period (c. 11th century-771 BC), and the best-preserved "living fossil" of proto-porcelain production from the pre-Qin era (before 221 BC).

Proto-porcelain is the precursor to mature porcelain. Fired at temperatures above 1,100 C, hundreds of degrees hotter than ordinary pottery, it was coated with a glassy glaze. Differences in raw materials and firing stability set it apart from true porcelain, experts explain.

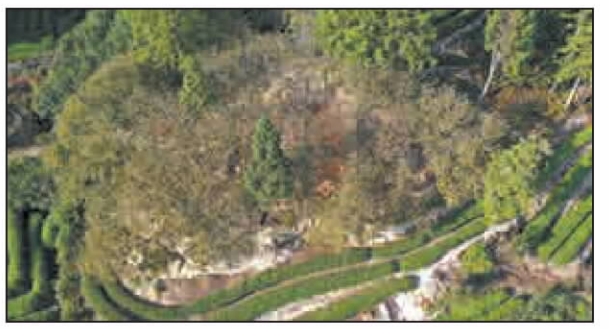
For decades, the chronological sequence of proto-porcelain in China contained a puzzling gap. More than 100 pre-Qin kiln sites have been discovered across the country, concentrated mainly in the north of East China's Zhejiang province, spanning the Xia (c. 21st century-16th century BC) and Shang (c. 16th century-11th century BC) dynasties, the late Western Zhou, and the Spring and Autumn (770-476 BC) and Warring States (475-221 BC) periods.

But the early-to-middle Western Zhou, a crucial three-century period around 3,000 years ago, remained a blank spot.

"It was as if a complete history of ceramics was missing its central chapter," says Zheng Jianming, a professor of archaeology at the Shanghai-based Fudan University.

The gap also fueled a long-running academic debate: did proto-porcelain originate in northern or southern China?

That missing chapter has now been found in the bamboo-shaded hills of Mount Wuyi. In 2025, archaeologists launched a new excavation of Kiln No 1 at the Zhulinkeng site. Radiocarbon dating confirmed the kilns were active around 3,000 years ago, squarely in the early-to-middle Western Zhou period.





Top: Selected proto-porcelain vessels unearthed from Kiln No 1 at Zhulinkeng, featuring thin blue-green glazes and delicate crackle patterns.
Above: A panoramic view of the Kiln No 1 site at Zhulinkeng, nestled on a hillside in Fujian's Mount Wuyi, where 3,000-year-old firing chambers remain remarkably well-preserved.
Left: Kiln No 1, a nearly intact cave-style dragon kiln measuring 9.4 meters in length.
Below: Archaeologists excavate and clean Kiln No 1.
PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Pottery takes a leap

Tests conducted by a team from the Jiangsu province-based Nanjing University on samples from the Zhulinkeng kiln complex measured firing temperatures of approximately 1,220 C for the proto-porcelain and 1,190 C for the stamped hard pottery found alongside it.

The figures matter because ordinary earthenware is typically fired at only 700-800 C. Crossing the threshold to 1,100 and above represents a qualitative leap.

"From pottery to proto-porcelain was a true technological revolution in the history of porcelain," says Yang Zelin, deputy director of the Fujian Provincial Institute of Archaeology and lead archaeologist of the excavation.

Even more striking was what the analysis revealed about material selection. According to the archaeological team, potters at Zhulinkeng deliberately adjusted their clay recipes to suit different types of vessels.

For larger containers, such as jars, they increased the alumina content to prevent warping. For smaller pieces, including stemmed bowls, they used a more plastic clay.

Experts say this reflects a sophisticated understanding of material properties. Different kilns within the complex also produced distinct wares, with variations in glaze and firing techniques.

Some kilns specialized in high-quality products, while others focused on more ordinary products, notes Li Zequn, an archaeologist at Nanjing University.

Such standardization points to a remarkably high degree of specialization, Li adds.

One of the most distinctive features of Zhulinkeng's wares is their thick walls and thin glaze.

Yang explains that this was a deliberate choice, unrelated to firing temperature. Instead, it reflected the glazing process and the glaze's chemical composition.

Zhulinkeng's potters chose a fluid glaze that spreads thinly and evenly, producing a distinctive blue-green surface marked by fine crackles, he says.

A century of innovation

The evolution of the kilns themselves tells an equally compelling story. Excavations have uncovered four cave-style dragon kilns from this period. Two of them, designated IY4 and IY1, are particularly well-preserved and illustrate a rapid technological advance.

IY4, the older kiln, is a 7.8-meter tunnel with a firebox at one end and a small exhaust vent at the rear. Flames rose directly into the chamber with no guidance. IY1, nearly two meters longer, introduced two innovations: twin flues that accelerate flames through the Venturi effect, and a larger fan-shaped exhaust vent.

"The larger the exhaust vent, the stronger the updraft," Yang says.

The combined effect was transformative: more intense fire, higher temperatures, and the ability to fire larger batches of vessels. Archaeologists estimate that the upgrade occurred in less than a century.

"This represents very rapid innovation," Yang says.

Another remarkable aspect of kilns in Zhulinkeng is the state of preservation, as most contemporary kilns elsewhere in China survive only as truncated floors, their walls and roofs long since collapsed.

The answer lies in how they were built. Contemporary kilns in Zhejiang were semi-subterranean — a shallow trench perhaps 20 to 30 centimeters deep with a vaulted superstructure above ground.

"Like a vegetable greenhouse, the upper part was vulnerable. Over thousands of years, it crumbled," Yang explains.

Zhulinkeng's kilns, by contrast, are fully subterranean, cut deep into the hillside and arched like cave dwellings.

"They lie at least half a meter below the modern ground surface," Yang describes, adding that even if farming disturbs the topsoil, the main structure remains intact.

The trade-off was enormous labor. Digging tunnels several meters long using primitive tools and manual effort was no small task.

"It was a monumental project, and because the builders chose the harder path, today we can see a nearly intact 3,000-year-old kiln," Yang says.

Around the kilns, the excavation team uncovered a full production complex: clay storage areas, washing pools, drainage ditches, shaping floors, drying platforms, and piles of discarded wasters — vessels that cracked or warped during firing.

"This was a purpose-built, highly organized, specialized production facility," Yang says.

Controlling the flames

Across northern Fujian, archaeologists have found high-status tombs from the same period — large earthen burial mounds containing Zhulinkeng proto-porcelain alongside bronze ritual vessels — exclusive markers of elite status during the Western Zhou period.

"These were not ordinary burials. The people interred in them were likely tribal chiefs or nobles, who controlled proto-porcelain production," Yang says.

Maintaining a dedicated industrial zone and supporting a full-time ceramic workforce required substantial resources and social organization, something only elites could provide, he adds.

For decades, archaeologists had unearthed substantial quantities of early Western Zhou proto-porcelain at major northern sites, including Zhouyuan in Shaanxi and Liulihe in Beijing, but could not determine where it had been produced.

The Nanjing University team compared the chemical composition of Zhulinkeng's wares with samples from those northern sites. The match was unmistakable.

"It is like fingerprint analysis. We can now say with confidence that a significant proportion of the early-to-middle Western Zhou proto-porcelain found in northern China was produced at Zhulinkeng," Yang says.

The discovery shows that the kilns of northern Fujian were integrated into supply networks serving the Zhou political center.

In the early Western Zhou, bronze vessels occupied the pinnacle of ritual culture, but bronze was rare and accessible only to the highest nobility. Proto-porcelain — hard, glossy, and capable of being produced on a much larger scale — served as a crucial supplement. The vessels produced at Zhulinkeng closely mirrored the shapes and dimensions of their bronze counterparts used in the Zhou heartland, according to the project's archaeologists.

"Fujian's contribution to pre-Qin civilization has often been overlooked," Yang says. "This discovery shows that, more than 3,000 years ago, the people of northern Fujian built a bridge of cultural exchange between south and north."

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Dragon tiles unlock Qinshihuang's eastern dreams

By ZHAO RUIXUE in Jinan
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A pottery roof tile end decorated with a *kui* dragon motif has become a highlight for visitors at the Qingdao West Coast Museum in Qingdao West Coast New Area, Shandong province.

Featuring a high-relief, symmetrically designed dragon pattern, symbolizing power and imperial authority, the artifact was unearthed at the Langyatai archaeological site, a headland overlooking the Yellow Sea.

"Similar *kui* dragon tile ends have been found at sites directly associated with Qin imperial construction, including the Mausoleum of the First Qin Emperor," says Lyu Kai, director of the Warring States, Qin and Han dynasties research section at the Shandong Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology and leader of the Langyatai excavation.

"Those examples are typically about 50 centimeters in diameter. However, the largest specimen discovered at Langyatai reaches 80 centimeters," Lyu says.

"The *kui* dragon tile end is a standard indicator of the highest rank of Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) architecture. Its presence at Langyatai confirms that this structure was a state project commissioned by the first emperor (Qinshihuang)," he adds.

Hollow dragon-patterned step bricks unearthed at the site further underscore the building's elite status, he adds.

After seven years of systematic excavation, Langyatai has yielded major discoveries that provide tangible evidence for historical accounts of the first emperor's eastern tour and the construction of the Langyatai complex. The site was recently named one of China's top 10 archaeological discoveries of 2025.

Lyu says the excavations corroborate a record in the epic *Shi Ji* (Records of the Grand Historian) that the emperor relocated 30,000 households to build Langyatai.

At the summit of a hill rising about 184 meters, archaeologists uncovered a rammed-earth foundation covering 45,000 square meters — an immense scale for its time. Remains of rooms, corridors, gate structures and a sophisticated drainage network were found across the platform.

At the foot of the hill, the team excavated a Qin Dynasty kiln built specifically to produce construction materials for the complex, as well as a courtyard compound linked to the summit by a roadway.

"This suggests that Langyatai was not simply a platform on a mountaintop, but a vast architectural ensemble integrating both the summit and the foothills," Lyu says.

As the earliest and largest Qin imperial engineering project discovered so far in eastern China, Langyatai served as a political landmark through which the Qin and Han (206 BC-AD 220) dynasties asserted state authority, he adds.

Archaeologists also uncovered remains east of the main site that predate Qinshihuang's eastern tour and are associated with the state of Qi's administration of the Langya region.

The Qi state was one of the most powerful states during the Spring and Autumn Period (770-476 BC) and the Warring States Period (475-221 BC).

"This means the site contains architectural remains from the Warring States Period, the Qin Dynasty, and the Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24), together forming a long-lasting, high-level architectural complex," Lyu says.

He notes that Qin rule was short-lived and that eastern Shandong, formerly part of Qi, was the last region conquered by Qin. Because Qi surrendered without major resistance, relatively few people from the Qin heartland in present-day Shaanxi settled there, leaving a limited Qin cultural imprint on the region.

"This provides important clues for understanding the unification process of early feudal dynasties, cultural integration, and the formation of a multiethnic unified state," he says.



Researchers have also been impressed by the engineering sophistication of the Qin builders.

The mountaintop structures were equipped with an advanced drainage system that included stone-lined channels and underground ceramic pipes with tapered ends fitted tightly together. The pipes were sealed with hard red clay to prevent leakage and strengthen the joints. Rainwater flowed into the network through courtyard inlets before being discharged into open ditches.

"The entire drainage system was designed to near perfection," Lyu says admiringly. "Everything that needed to be considered, the people of that time had already considered."

The site's rammed-earth construction has drawn similar admiration. Each layer measures about eight centimeters thick and remains remarkably uniform, smooth and compact.

"After excavation, the surface is almost as hard and smooth as a modern concrete floor," he says.

The workmanship suggests that Qin construction projects mobilized enormous resources while adhering to exceptionally high standards of management and craftsmanship.

Key artifacts from the site, including the *kui* dragon tile ends, hollow ceramic bricks and ceramic pipes, are now on display at the Qingdao West Coast Museum.

"This magnificent site, which witnessed imperial grandeur more than 2,000 years ago, is gradually entering the public eye, bringing fresh vitality to local tourism and cultural development," Lyu says.

Sun Qi contributed to this story.



Top: Archaeologists measure and photograph a pottery roof tile end decorated with a *kui* dragon pattern. **Above:** Lyu Kai (left), leader of the Langyatai excavation, works with colleagues to clean the archaeological site. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Creating an international digital content hub

Vloggers and bloggers from across the globe find the support they need in a city that gives them plenty to share with their fans, **Zheng Zheng** reports in Shanghai.

When Alessandro Conti first launched his Douyin account in 2018, he simply wanted to share his travel moments in China with his family back home in Italy. About eight years later, he has built a following of 700,000 across various platforms and become part of a growing community of international content creators who choose Shanghai as their creative base.

"I started Douyin because I was traveling frequently for business and wanted to document my life," says the Shanghai-based creator at the 2026 Top Creators Gala held in Shanghai in May.

"What began as videos for my family evolved into something much bigger — a bridge between cultures, sharing real experiences between Italy and China."

Conti's journey reflects Shanghai's emergence as China's premier content creation ecosystem. The city now hosts nearly 20 percent of the country's top multichannel networks (MCNs), ranking first nationwide.

Shanghai's magnetic pull for digital talent is supported by industry data. According to the Shanghai Municipal Administration of Radio and Television, the city's online audiovisual industry reached 253 billion yuan ($37.3 billion) in 2025, solidifying its position as one of China's primary digital markets.

The Shanghai Commission reports that the city's livestreaming e-commerce retail sales topped 493.7 billion yuan in 2024, a 12.9 percent year-on-year increase, accounting for 10.5 percent of the national total.

This thriving backdrop served as the foundation for the recent gala, which gathered hundreds of internet content creators and industry leaders from around the globe in Shanghai to explore strategies for creating meaningful digital narratives that transcend borders.

"Being a content creator in Shanghai is incredibly exciting work," says Greg, a French content creator who has lived in China for nearly two decades. "New ideas emerge every single day."

"In my 18 years here, I've never been bored. Shanghai isn't just where I live; it's my source of inspiration, my workplace, my everything," he says.

Sergejs Sinkins, a Latin dance judge-turned-content creator known to netizens as "Mr Ferrari" for his elegant demeanor, emphasizes authentic human connection.

"We love to share life experiences as bloggers," he says. "The most important thing for us is the people around us. The people here are so open, friendly, and soulful. Even when we can't communicate in Chinese, we understand each other."

For Conti, whose content spans food, culture and entrepreneurship, authenticity resonates most deeply. "Having lived 12 years in China and 18 years in Italy, I can explain each country to the other," he says.

His videos featuring everyday moments, from stray cats wandering into his gelato shop to encounters and interviews with local residents, have struck a chord with international audiences seeking genuine glimpses of Chinese life.

Shanghai's rise as a global creator hub is backed by institutional policy. The gala marked nearly one year since Shanghai launched several measures to support the creation of high-quality internet content.

In September 2025, the city further announced funding guidelines offering up to 2 million yuan for high-profile brand activities and up to 100,000 yuan in rewards for quality content-creation projects, along with creative resources, distribution channels and service support.

Building on this foundation, two new initiatives were unveiled during the event. The Shanghai internet quality content empowerment plan offers creators access to resources, collaboration channels and dedicated support to help them establish roots in the city. Simultaneously, major platforms, including Bilibili, Xiaohongshu, Tencent, and others, announced the 2026 co-creation plan to provide expanded opportunities and resources.

Wang Xiao, a content creator specializing in politics and history, describes Shanghai's unique advantages: "Creating content here feels both supportive and progressive."

The city constantly finds ways to let everyone focus on creation without other worries, he says, noting that with many platforms and peers, there is a clustering effect that allows mutual exchange and better content through interaction and competition.

Cultural content creator Yu Fu characterizes Shanghai as a creative gold mine. "Content creation in Shanghai is very fulfilling because the environment is relaxed. You can basically film whatever you want," he says.

"We never lack material here. For instance, you'll see buildings with a rich history while simply walking down the street," Yu adds. "For me, Shanghai is like a huge chocolate mountain. If you like sweets, every bite is satisfying."

"Creators' inspirations are always divergent. We want to combine more content that ordinary audiences enjoy watching," says Wang Yiran, founder of Turing's Cat Studio, which focuses on artificial intelligence.

"As AI creators, our topics extend beyond AI itself to different fields," he explains. "We've collaborated on projects combining AI with gaming, and we're planning future work in public welfare to help people with disabilities.

"What we need to do is ground the content in reality and make it meaningful and helpful, or bring educational value," says Wang.

For Iranian creator Mahya Mirsadeghi, who focuses on Chinese language and cultural exchange, the city's continuous evolution is the story itself. Having witnessed Shanghai's rapid transformation since her first visit in 2018, she remains clear on her mission.

"Shanghai has changed profoundly over the years," Mirsadeghi says. "My goal is simple: to show the real China to the rest of the world."

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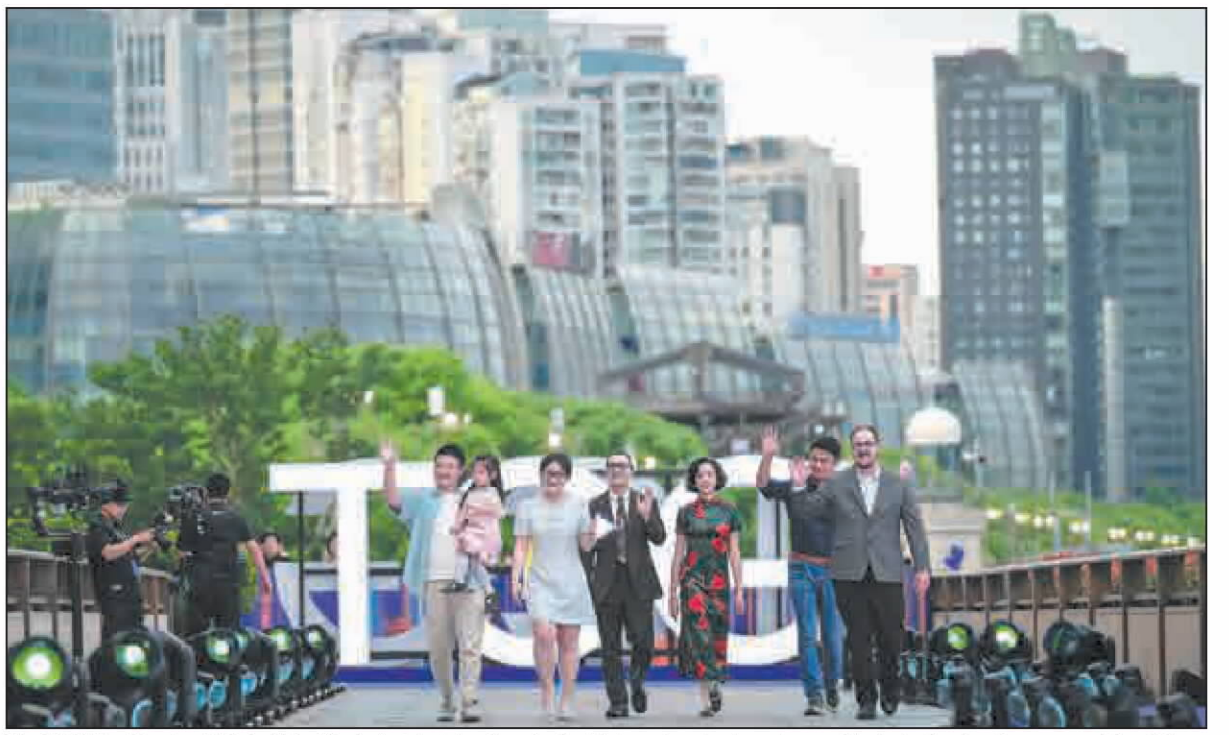
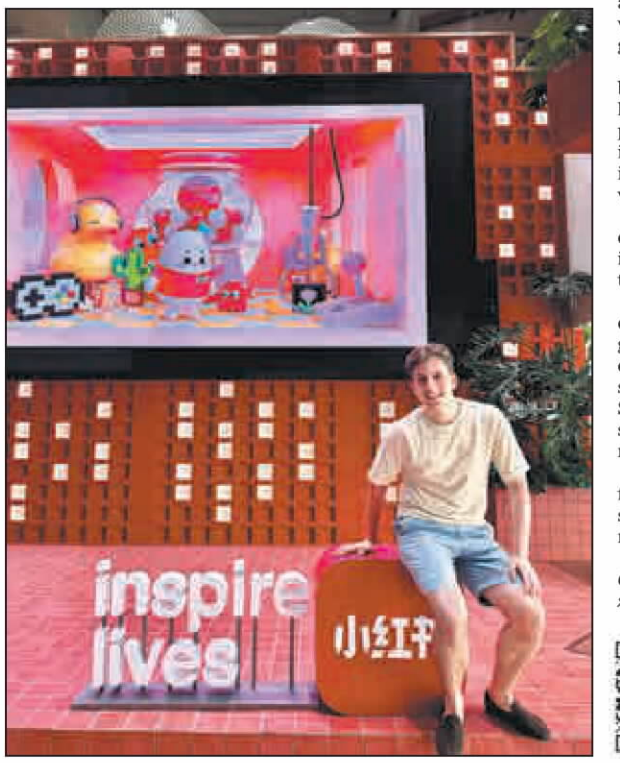


The 2026 Top Creators Gala held in May brings together hundreds of internet content creators and industry leaders from around the globe in Shanghai to explore strategies for creating meaningful digital narratives. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY







Clockwise from top left: Sergejs Sinkins (center), a Latin dance judge-turned-content creator, performs with international bloggers at the 2026 Top Creators Gala. Italian content creator Alessandro Conti chooses Shanghai as his creative base. A performance is staged during the gala.

Online
See more by scanning the code.

Sino-Swedish friendship gets big giddyup through new exhibition

By **ZHANG KUN** in Shanghai

A 14-meter-tall red Dala horse sculpture will stand at the North Bund waterfront stage in Shanghai's Hongkou district from June 14 until the end of August, reportedly the largest of its kind worldwide. It serves as the centerpiece of the exhibition, *A Cultural Journey: Where the Dala Horse Encounters Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage*.

Opening on Sunday — this year's Cultural and Natural Heritage Day in China — the exhibition will run until Aug 31 at the Grand Halls in Hongkou. The show promises a vibrant East–West dialogue on craftsmanship and culture and marks the first public art exhibition held at the venue, a historic building complex in the core of the North Bund area. Refurbished in 2021, it comprises three structures spanning 99,000 square meters and integrates conference, banquet, exhibition, and performance functions.

As a flagship event for Hongkou district's Cultural and Natural Heritage Day, the exhibition incorporates eight local intangible heritage projects and more than 30 original horse-themed cultural products. Over the course of the event, 52 cultural activities, including markets, opera appreciation sessions, hands-on workshops, and lectures, will be open to audiences of all ages.

The Dala horse is one of Sweden's most cherished cultural symbols, dating back to the 1600s in the Dalarna region, where woodworkers carved toy horses from pine remnants for their children.

According to Li Haichao, CEO of Nordic Light (Shanghai) Brands Co Ltd, one of the exhibition's co-organizers, the wooden horse has appeared on numerous international stages as an emblem of goodwill, becoming a cultural ambassador for Sweden and a testament to Sino–Swedish friendship.

Zhu Jingbo, deputy director of the Shanghai Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection Center, notes that the exhibition is jointly organized by leading cultural, tourism, and academic institutions to celebrate the 76th anniversary of diplomatic relations between China and Sweden and the Lunar Year of the Horse.



Curator Zhang Lili, vice-dean of the Shanghai Academy of Fine Arts at Shanghai University, explains that the exhibition's core area spans 1,200 sq m and presents 20 national-level intangible cultural heritage crafts related to the horse motif, interpreted through the lens of the Five Elements — metal, wood, water, fire, and earth. Highlights include Tang Dynasty (618-907) sancai-glazed ceramics, Fengxiang clay figurines, Gu embroidery, shadow puppets, and boxwood carvings.

A bamboo-woven robotic horse will also be displayed, showcasing technological innovation and exploring future innovations in traditional craftsmanship. An interactive zone invites visitors to try their hand at various crafts under the guidance of heritage bearers, while an outdoor photo area offers opportunities to capture the experience.

"We hope the exhibition will not only showcase the skills and aesthetics of China's intangible cultural heritage, but also integrate it into people's daily lives, allowing it to be appreciated, experienced, and enjoyed," Zhu says. She adds that the project aims to "inject a traditional, yet vibrant contemporary force into China's international cultural influence".

In addition to the towering red Dala horse outside the venue, antique Dala horses from Sweden will make their Shanghai debut. "We will also introduce colorful merchandise inspired by the Dala horse, enabling visitors to touch, taste, feel, and take a piece of this cultural encounter home," Li says.

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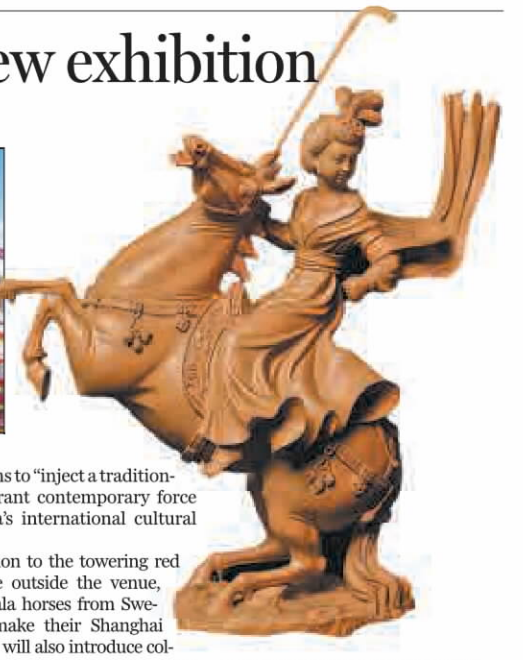

Left: The poster for the exhibition *A Cultural Journey: Where the Dala Horse Encounters Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage*. **Right:** An artifact displayed at the exhibition. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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AMERICAFOCUS

Reviving manufacturing in Michigan

Chinese-American factory creates jobs and builds teamwork through understanding

By **MINGMEI LI** in Michigan
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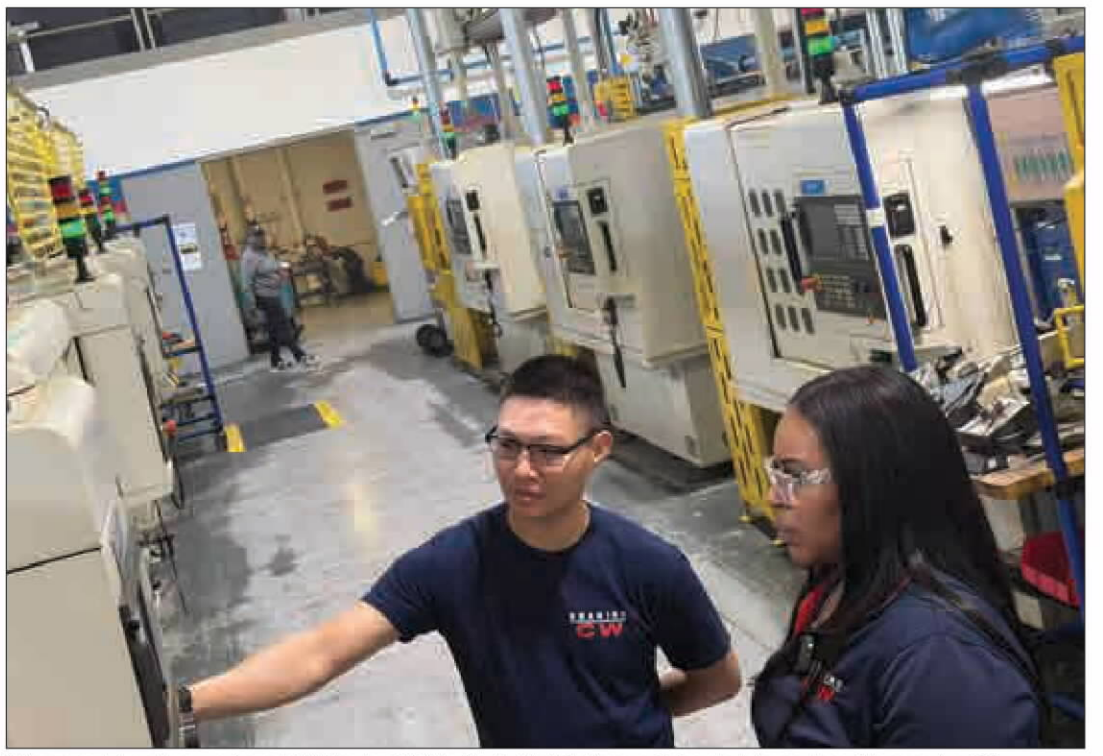

Chinese and American workers at CW Bearing, USA in Northville, Michigan, collaborate to inspect machines on April 13.
MINGMEI LI / CHINA DAILY

Standing face-to-face on the factory floor, Christian Baez and his Chinese colleagues once relied on a smartphone translation app to communicate.

Words moved back and forth across the screen in English and Chinese as they paused, pointed to machines, and used gestures to make themselves understood. That was how Baez first navigated daily work after joining CW Bearing five years ago.

"The biggest challenge was the language barrier," Baez recalled. "But once we got on the same page, we know what to do and how we operated, then we are good."

The 29-year-old product quality technician still spends his days moving between production lines, inspecting product quality, collecting data and troubleshooting equipment issues at the company's manufacturing facility in Northville Township, Michigan.

Language differences still surface from time to time, but they are no longer a major obstacle for them working in this multinational and multicultural company.

Now, when Baez walks through the aisles of the plant and inspects parts, some of his Chinese colleagues would jokingly call out, "The police are here".

"Once I got to know them, it was very welcoming, very easy to understand. We all have the same motive, and we want to get the work done in a strategic way, so that was very easy to follow," Baez said. "We are very much alike in a lot of those ways."



"We've been incredibly fortunate to have employees who have stayed with us for decades."

Hu Lirong, president and CEO of CW Bearing

CW Bearing USA, a subsidiary of China's Cixing Group, traces its roots to Zhejiang province, where the company was founded in 1985. The company established its first US operation in Southern California in 1993 and later expanded its manufacturing plant to Michigan, where it operates its North American headquarters and production facility.

CW Bearing has invested around $30 million locally, creating several dozen jobs, with about 90 percent of its workforce made up of local hires.

Michigan has long been associated with the automotive industry and the broader Rust Belt manufacturing region. While the area's industrial landscape has shifted over recent decades, factories like CW Bearing remain part of its evolving manufacturing base.

Inside the facility, Chinese and American technicians work alongside one another on production, quality control and equipment maintenance. Technical discussions often involve a mix of English, translated terminology and shared manufacturing knowledge.

Many of the employees, like Baez, are early in their careers. As they work together to solve production challenges, they are also learning how colleagues from different countries approach communication, problem-solving and daily life. Further, what begins with technical collaboration has developed into friendships and a broader understanding of one another's backgrounds.

"It's different," said Nequita Jackson, engineering technician of CW Bearing, who has been working with the company for 10 years.

"We do things a little differently than they do. It's helped us actually thrive and learn more with motivation," she said.

Jackson was one of the earliest employees at the plant. From technician to trainer, she has witnessed the company's development from its early setup phase to its current operations.

For her, being different does not mean being separate. Working alongside Chinese colleagues and building day-to-day relationships has made the workplace feel more like a family where different cultures come together.

"Our Chinese colleagues invite us to their homes. We spend time at each other's houses, so nobody feels left out," she said.

While employees experience cultural exchange on a personal level, plant leaders also emphasize the importance of bridging different workplace approaches.

"The American teams seem to communicate and escalate right away, where the Chinese team is very disciplined and technical. Before they escalate issues, they like to make sure they root cause it, see if behind the scenes they can fix it, and if they can't, then they'll have a very good strategic plan of what they need to fix the issue," said Gary Moss, the general manager of the plant.

"I don't like it to be like a China team versus a US team. I love being just one team, and we really enjoy each other. It's a really good team and a good fit, and we're really just building the trust. I wake up wanting to go to work," he said.

That sense of teamwork is especially important in a region where manufacturing remains closely tied to local identity and economic opportunity. Raised in Detroit, the heart of America's automotive industry, Moss sees CW Bearing as part of a long industrial tradition.



I don't like it to be like a China team versus a US team. I love being just one team, and we really enjoy each other. It's a really good team and a good fit ... I wake up wanting to go to work."

Gary Moss, the general manager of the plant

"This is pretty much where it started when it came to manufacturing, assembly lines," he said. "If you want to be in automotive, Detroit or the greater Detroit area is always a good place to be," he said.

Looking ahead, he said, sustaining that tradition will depend on attracting younger workers.

"A lot of the younger generations are going towards technology or skilled trades. So it's exciting to see more young people here. We need new talent," he added.

"Our Chinese young professionals may lean more toward teamwork and stability, while Americans often value autonomy and personal decision-making. Those aren't necessarily conflicting approaches — they can actually balance each other out," said Hu Lirong, president and CEO of CW Bearing.

He added that employees today are more globally minded than previous generations.

Attributing the company's stability in the US to its workforce, Hu said many employees have spent decades with the company and advanced alongside its growth from early-stage operations to its current scale.

"We've been incredibly fortunate to have employees who have stayed with us for decades," he said. "It's because of their hard work and shared commitment that we've been able to put down strong roots in Michigan and become part of the local community."

That long-term presence, he added, has shaped how the company defines itself — not simply as a company operating in the US, but as a business that combines its Chinese background with deep local integration.

"Having a Chinese background and being a local company are not mutually exclusive," Hu said. "We see that combination as a unique competitive advantage."

At its core, he added, the company's experience reflects a broader reality of global business: long-term cooperation depends on trust built through people-to-people relationships.

"Economic and trade cooperation is ultimately about relationships — between people, businesses and communities," Hu said. "Those exchanges build understanding and trust, which are essential for long-term partnerships."

Chef puts a new spin on Cantonese flavors in New York

By **MINGMEI LI** in New York
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Kenny Leung, executive chef at YAO, a modern Cantonese restaurant in New York, prepares dishes in the kitchen. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

From the stainless steel plates of traditional Cantonese eateries to custom-made tableware for fine-dining tasting menus, Kenny Leung sees his restaurant as a balance between tradition and innovation, preserving the roots of Cantonese cuisine while reimagining it for a modern audience.

Leung serves as the executive chef of YAO, which opened in 2024 in New York's Financial District. As the flagship restaurant of August Gatherings, the group began its journey in New York's Chinatown more than a decade ago before expanding downtown. Today, its modern Cantonese flavors are reaching an increasingly international audience.

"We want to enrich the depth and complexity of traditional Cantonese flavors through contemporary ingredients and techniques. At the same time, we hope to stay true to its roots while making it more accessible and relatable to today's diners, including international guests," Leung told China Daily in a recent interview.

The chef, who began learning to cook in Guangzhou, Guangdong province, at the age of 15, now leads a kitchen where traditional Cantonese *wok hei* (the smoky freshness of stir-fry) and open-flame cooking are combined with modern equipment such as immersion circulators, combi ovens and dehydrators.

"Modern Cantonese cuisine is not about overturning tradition but about building on it — introducing new elements while preserving its foundations," he said.

"There is tradition, but no single authentic version. In every era, dishes are shaped by the tastes, ingredients and aesthetics of that time. In that sense, what we call tradition is itself continuously evolving," he added.

As one of China's eight major culinary traditions, Cantonese cuisine originated in Guangdong and is known for its emphasis on fresh ingredients — from seasonal vegetables and live seafood to roasted meats such as goose and duck. It is prepared with a focus on light and balanced flavors, and the restaurant offers a modern interpretation of this culinary tradition.

In addition to its a la carte menu, the restaurant offers a tasting menu titled Tang Jia Yan and serves as an overseas platform for the preservation and promotion of Siqian intangible cultural heritage cuisine. Rooted in Siqian, a historic town located in the city of Jiangmen, with more than 1,800 years of history, the cuisine is presented through both fine dining and a more accessible contemporary format.

Modern Cantonese cuisine is not about overturning tradition but about building on it."

Kenny Leung, executive chef at the Cantonese restaurant YAO in New York

For Leung, innovation and preservation carry equal weight. He continues to develop new dishes while training apprentices to ensure the craft is passed on.

"I hope more local American diners can understand the flavors of Cantonese cuisine and the ingredients behind it," he said. "Cantonese cooking requires experience, timing and daily attention to ingredients. We are not focused only on short-term profit, but on sustainability and long-term development. We hope to preserve and carry Cantonese cuisine forward through our generation."

For 29-year-old New Yorker Delaney Masal, who has been to China and widely experienced its cuisine, the restaurant offers a distinctive lens through which to understand Cantonese food in New York. As dishes arrived at the table, she reached for her phone to film the presentation.

"The flavors are very traditional," she said. "But they're also taking into account the American palate. Having a Cantonese restaurant in the city means finding this balance between honoring a culinary tradition and making it accessible to a new audience."

Jerald Braddock Jr, a New York resident, said his experience of dining in Chinese restaurants in the US has shown him the growing popularity of regional Chinese cuisines, especially among younger diners.

"Growing up, having these different types of dishes, I feel like it has expanded my palate even more because now you're bringing the roots of China over to America. So it gives an opportunity to embrace more, not just even the food, but the people who engaged [with it]," he said. "A shared meal does help bridge conversations a lot more than people think."

"Nothing has made me more comfortable than braised pork from China," he added.

Many first-time guests often leave with a similar impression of Cantonese cuisine, the owner observed.

"So this is what Chinese food really is? This is what Cantonese cuisine is like?" said Thomas Tang, co-founder of August Gathering, in an interview with China Daily.

"The phone eats first," he said. "People experience food visually before they taste it. French and Japanese cuisines have developed highly refined visual presentations. I believe Chinese cuisine, especially Cantonese cuisine, has always had the same potential, with thousands of years of culinary culture and highly sophisticated techniques."

Beyond the food itself, cultural heritage remains central to the brand, he added.

The Chinese name of August Gatherings, "Fuyao", symbolizes abundance during the August harvest season, when families gather to celebrate prosperity and a good life.

The group's flagship restaurant builds on this original name, retaining its final character, "*yao*", in its new concept as a way of carrying the tradition forward. In Chinese, the character also refers to precious jade, symbolizing something rare, beautiful and valuable, and reflects an ongoing pursuit of culinary excellence.

"We are operating in the US," he said, "but the name, philosophy and cuisine are always rooted in our Chinese culture."

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Mideast truce

US, Iran digitally sign peace pact, but details still unclear

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US-Europe rifts cast shadow on G7 summit

TOP NEWS, PAGE 3



Village runway

Grassroots fashion showcases Guizhou's rich ethnic heritage

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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 2026

Enhanced solidarity with Myanmar urged

Xi hails friendship, calls for even deeper strategic cooperation

By **ZHAO JIA**
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President Xi Jinping and President of Myanmar Min Aung Hlaing wave at children on Tuesday during a welcoming ceremony that Xi hosted for the visiting leader prior to their talks at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing. The Myanmar president is on a five-day state visit to China, which will conclude on Friday. FENG YONGBIN / CHINA DAILY

President Xi Jinping said on Tuesday that China stands ready to work with Myanmar to deepen comprehensive strategic cooperation and achieve more results in building a China-Myanmar community with a shared future, in order to deliver more benefits to the two peoples and contribute more to regional peace and development.

Xi made the remarks during talks in Beijing with Myanmar President Min Aung Hlaing, who is on a five-day state visit to China — his first since assuming the presidency in April.

Noting Min Aung Hlaing's long-standing commitment to friendship with China, Xi said they met twice last year, when they had in-depth exchanges on issues of strategic importance that bear on the direction of bilateral relations.

China and Myanmar enjoy a deep "*pauk-phaw*" (fraternal) friendship, Xi said, adding that over the 76 years since the establishment of diplomatic relations, the two neighbors have stood together through thick and thin, helped each other and jointly advocated and practiced the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence.

Their relationship has set a fine example of equality and mutually beneficial cooperation between the countries, he added.

Xi also said that China places relations with Myanmar in an important position in its neighborhood diplomacy and is committed to the principle of noninterference in internal affairs, adding that China's policy of friendship toward Myanmar is for all the people of Myanmar.

He voiced China's firm support for Myanmar in safeguarding its sovereignty and territorial integrity, and for Myanmar's new government in coordinating development and security and pursuing a development path suited to its national conditions and supported by its people.

Xi emphasized that China, a neighbor with whom Myanmar shares the longest border, is a trustworthy friend and partner, and he urged the two sides to remain strategically clear-headed and focused, and enhance solidarity and coordination amid a turbulent and changing international landscape.

As this year marks the beginning of China's 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, Xi said that China stands ready to share development experience with Myanmar and jointly build a China-Myanmar community with a shared future featuring political friendship and mutual trust, mutually beneficial development, coordinated and mutually reinforcing security, and integrated and mutually enriching exchanges.

Describing the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor as a flagship project of Belt and Road cooperation, Xi called on both sides to steadily advance key projects on the basis of ensuring security, in order to help Myanmar grow its economy and improve livelihoods.

China is ready to step up support for Myanmar's post-earthquake reconstruction and implement more "small yet smart" assistance projects, Xi said. He urged the two countries to continue cracking down on online gambling, telecommunications fraud, drug trafficking and other criminal activities to safeguard the interests and security of the two peoples.

Xi also expressed China's support for all parties in Myanmar in pursuing peace and reconciliation through peace talks and realizing long-term peace and stability in northern Myanmar, saying this serves the fundamental and long-term interests of Myanmar and its people.

Min Aung Hlaing expressed gratitude for China's long-standing selfless support for Myanmar's development, stability, peace and reconciliation, and reaffirmed Myanmar's firm commitment to the one-China principle.

Myanmar's new government is making every effort to advance domestic peace and development, he said, adding that his country looks forward to strengthening all-around cooperation with China, jointly building the Myanmar-China Economic Corridor and elevating trade and investment.

He pledged that Myanmar will make every effort to ensure the safety of Chinese enterprises and personnel in the country, and will work closely with China to combat online gambling and telecom fraud.

He also voiced full support for the four global initiatives proposed by Xi, and expressed readiness to strengthen multilateral communication and coordination with China.

Following the talks, the two presidents witnessed the signing of multiple cooperation documents in transportation, livelihood and other areas.

Premier Li Qiang also met with Min Aung Hlaing on Tuesday.

Du Lan, an associate research fellow at the China Institute of International Studies, said the visit comes at a crucial time as Myanmar works to restore development and stabilize its domestic situation.

"It reflects the strong willingness of Myanmar's new government to deepen ties with China, as well as the strategic resilience of China-Myanmar relations," she said.

China, which is Myanmar's largest trading partner for many years and an important source of investment, has carried out cooperation in infrastructure, energy, minerals and other fields in line with Myanmar's development needs, she said.

Bilateral trade reached $19.4 billion in 2025, up 19.1 percent year-on-year, according to China's Foreign Ministry. After a strong earthquake struck Myanmar last year, China announced assistance totaling 1.1 billion yuan ($163 million) to support disaster relief and reconstruction.

Zhou Fangyin, a professor at Sun Yat-sen University's School of International Relations, said stronger China-Myanmar relations will help prevent regional conflicts from spilling over, improve local livelihoods and promote peace through development.

WORLD WATCH
By Damilola Ogunbiyi

AI can help to predict, manage the impacts of climate

Earlier this month, Argentina's Esperanza research station on the Antarctic Peninsula recorded an unprecedented temperature of 15.4 C, more than 20 degrees above the seasonal norm and the highest June reading ever observed at the station. The anomaly, which has contributed to unusual ice melt and raised concerns about polar ecosystems, serves as a stark reminder that climate change is no longer a distant threat but an accelerating reality reshaping economies, ecosystems and societies worldwide.

According to the World Meteorological Organization, there is an 86 percent likelihood that between 2026 and 2030, at least one year will surpass 2024 as the hottest year on record, underscoring the accelerating pace of global warming.

Scientists also project a 91 percent likelihood that average global temperatures will exceed 1.5 C above pre-industrial levels during at least one of the next five years, increasing the likelihood of more frequent heat waves, floods, droughts and wildfires.

Yet amid these alarming projections lies an opportunity. The next five years could mark a turning point in humanity's response to climate change if governments, businesses and communities fully harness the power of artificial intelligence and green technologies. The challenge before us is not simply to understand climate risks, but to predict, manage and reduce them more effectively than ever before.

Every day, satellites, weather stations and sensors generate enormous volumes of information about the Earth's atmosphere, oceans and land systems. But turning that data into actionable intelligence is difficult, and this is where AI becomes indispensable.

See ***Climate,*** *page 3*

Nation's innovation strength, speed lauded

By **ZHANG CHENXU, ZHOU LANXU** and **LI JIAYING** in Xi'an



Guests chat on Tuesday before the start of the "CEO: Grow with China" Roundtable in Xi'an, Shaanxi province. CHEN ZEBING / CHINA DAILY

China's accelerated effort to foster new quality productive forces is injecting fresh momentum into innovation-driven growth and creating broader opportunities for multinational companies seeking to deepen their presence in the world's second-largest economy, business executives and economists said on Tuesday.

Xi'an in Shaanxi province is emerging as a key inland innovation hub, thanks to its strengths in technological research, advanced manufacturing and international connectivity, and the city plays a growing role in China's pursuit of high-quality development and high-level opening-up, they added.

They made the remarks in Xi'an during the "CEO: Grow with China" Roundtable, which was co-organized by China Daily and the Xi'an municipal government.

"What is now shaping China's development is the shift toward new quality productive forces," said Raquel Ramirez Alexander, vice-president of the European Union Chamber of Commerce in China and chair of its Southwest China Chapter.

It reflects the country's shift from growth driven mainly by scale and investment to growth powered by technology, productivity gains, digitalization, sustainability and advanced manufacturing, she said.

China offers increasingly diverse opportunities, she added, citing a survey released recently by the chamber and Roland Berger consultancy, which shows "signs of an uptick" in confidence among European businesses operating in China, while also pointing to expectations for further improvements in the business environment.

Zhu Guangyao, former vice-minister of finance, said in a video address that China's continued push for high-level opening-up and a better business environment will provide a stronger foundation for multinational companies to grow in the country. Their long-term engagement in the Chinese market will also help advance China's industrial upgrading and economic development, he said.

See ***Innovation,*** *page 3*

SPOTLIGHT SHINES ANEW ON NANJING'S LEGENDARY PAGODA

A world wonder before its destruction in 1856, the towering presence reimagined in steel and glass remains a point of pilgrimage

By **CANG WEI** in Nanjing
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In the United States, white folded takeaway boxes stamped with a red pagoda motif have long been synonymous with Chinese food. They frequently have appeared in movies and TV shows, such as *Friends* and *The Big Bang Theory*.

Online speculation about whether the famous pagoda was a real place or not has put the Glazed Pagoda of the Great Bao'en Temple in Nanjing, the capital of Jiangsu province, in the social media spotlight.

The image found on some of those cartons is that of the nine-story, 78-meter-tall edifice with its glazed facade, which has long been considered a marvel in China and abroad.



The Glazed Pagoda of the Great Bao'en Temple in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, glows under the night sky in May. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

China Vibes

"The tower was once a visual symbol through which the Western world understood China," said Wang Wenxi, director of the Great Bao'en Temple Ruins Museum.

Once considered one of the seven wonders of the medieval world, the ancient building inspired the design of the Great Pagoda at Kew Gardens in London and was featured in a Hans Christian Andersen fairy tale.

See ***Pagoda,*** *page 3*

Online
See more by scanning the code.

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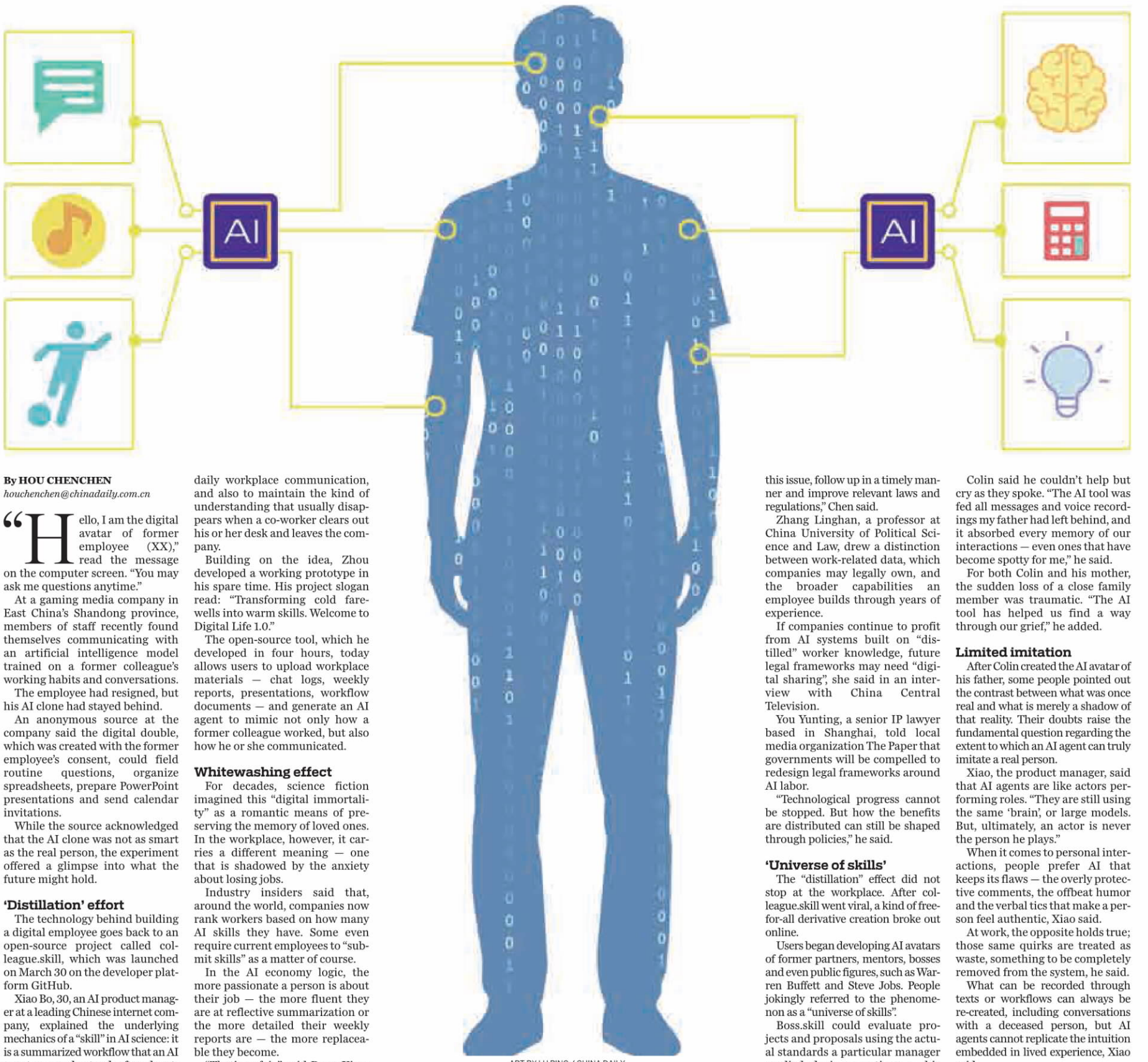
INDEPTH

AI clones spark debate on workplace ethics

Digital doubles of employees spur a reality check on legal frameworks, protection of intellectual property



ART BY LU PING / CHINA DAILY

By **HOU CHENCHEN**
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"Hello, I am the digital avatar of former employee (XX)," read the message on the computer screen. "You may ask me questions anytime."

At a gaming media company in East China's Shandong province, members of staff recently found themselves communicating with an artificial intelligence model trained on a former colleague's working habits and conversations.

The employee had resigned, but his AI clone had stayed behind.

An anonymous source at the company said the digital double, which was created with the former employee's consent, could field routine questions, organize spreadsheets, prepare PowerPoint presentations and send calendar invitations.

While the source acknowledged that the AI clone was not as smart as the real person, the experiment offered a glimpse into what the future might hold.

'Distillation' effort

The technology behind building a digital employee goes back to an open-source project called colleague.skill, which was launched on March 30 on the developer platform GitHub.

Xiao Bo, 30, an AI product manager at a leading Chinese internet company, explained the underlying mechanics of a "skill" in AI science: it is a summarized workflow that an AI agent can understand, often denoted as "XX.skill" in computer language. "If an AI chatbot is like a brain that can talk, then an AI agent is like a worker with 'skills' who can actually complete tasks such as opening documents, editing files and organizing data."

For example, encoding an editing.skill into an AI agent will allow it to open a document file, restructure an article, write a headline and run a spelling and grammar check. A program-trained AI agent can execute these steps repeatedly, without fatigue or interruption.

According to Xiao, a single AI agent can draw on many different skills. OpenClaw, a well-known AI agent ecosystem, hosts more than 13,700 community-built skills on its ClawHub registry.

Those skills are among the products of "distillation", or the process of compressing large AI models into smaller, more actionable and transferable units, Xiao said. Colleague.skill has quietly transformed the process of AI model compression, as now the entity being "distilled" is no longer a machine, but a human being, he added.

Zhou Tianyi, 24, a researcher at the Shanghai Artificial Intelligence Laboratory and creator of the colleague.skill project, said that his goal was to preserve the institutional knowledge that accumulates over the years through daily workplace communication, and also to maintain the kind of understanding that usually disappears when a co-worker clears out his or her desk and leaves the company.

Building on the idea, Zhou developed a working prototype in his spare time. His project slogan read: "Transforming cold farewells into warm skills. Welcome to Digital Life 1.0."

The open-source tool, which he developed in four hours, today allows users to upload workplace materials — chat logs, weekly reports, presentations, workflow documents — and generate an AI agent to mimic not only how a former colleague worked, but also how he or she communicated.

Whitewashing effect

For decades, science fiction imagined this "digital immortality" as a romantic means of preserving the memory of loved ones. In the workplace, however, it carries a different meaning — one that is shadowed by the anxiety about losing jobs.

Industry insiders said that, around the world, companies now rank workers based on how many AI skills they have. Some even require current employees to "submit skills" as a matter of course.

In the AI economy logic, the more passionate a person is about their job — the more fluent they are at reflective summarization or the more detailed their weekly reports are — the more replaceable they become.

"That's unfair," said Deng Xiaoxian, an AI product manager, who also leads a legal technology community.

Deng said that when she first encountered colleague.skill — a tool that claimed to "distill" an employee into a digital stand-in who would continue working for a company indefinitely — she felt a sharp, visceral discomfort.

"The objective of AI development is to help humans have more leisure time; not to turn them into a skill file, strip them of their jobs and then keep them working for a company forever without compensation," she said.

Within days of colleague.skill going viral, Deng built a counterproject, which she called "anti-distillation skill".

"When a company asks you to turn your work experience into an AI program, it is essentially 'distilling' you into a replaceable component," she said. "Before you submit your skills to the company, you can use the 'anti-distillation skill' software to whitewash or recast your documents."

The counterproject tool is simple. Once "skill files" are inputted, it produces a sanitized version that looks complete and professional but tacitly removes the core knowledge or experience.

China Daily tested the "anti-distillation" tool on a piece of editorial guidance.

> "The objective of AI development is to help humans have more leisure time; not to turn them into a skill file, strip them of their jobs and then keep them working for a company forever without compensation."
>
> **Deng Xiaoxian,** an AI product manager

The input read: "In feature writing, the opening could be a typical character story. Instead of describing the issue, place the character in a specific, action-oriented scene. Let their dialogue, mannerisms, or a critical decision reveal the broader theme."

The output read: "In feature writing, the opening can take different forms. The choice of which form to use depends on the effect you want to create on the reader."

Deng emphasized that this hollowing-out effect is precisely the point. It allows one to preserve one's core knowledge and still give the company something that appears professional, she added.

A gray area

As a law graduate, Deng pointed to a bigger question that the AI industry hasn't started asking. Who owns a "distilled" skill? The employee whose expertise was encoded, or the company that stored the underlying data?

Lawyers and experts specializing in labor and intellectual property disputes said that existing regulations were not designed with AI clones of real people in mind.

Chen Tianhao, a scholar at Tsinghua University's Institute for AI International Governance, said the subject falls in a gray zone spanning labor, IP and digital governance laws. Some companies today require employees to package their experience into transferable AI systems, and that's not entirely reasonable, he said.

"Companies and employees need to use their contractual agreements to determine the ownership of AI-related skills and similar forms of expertise. At the same time, legal researchers must pay attention to this issue, follow up in a timely manner and improve relevant laws and regulations," Chen said.

Zhang Linghan, a professor at China University of Political Science and Law, drew a distinction between work-related data, which companies may legally own, and the broader capabilities an employee builds through years of experience.

If companies continue to profit from AI systems built on "distilled" worker knowledge, future legal frameworks may need "digital sharing", she said in an interview with China Central Television.

You Yunting, a senior IP lawyer based in Shanghai, told local media organization The Paper that governments will be compelled to redesign legal frameworks around AI labor.

"Technological progress cannot be stopped. But how the benefits are distributed can still be shaped through policies," he said.

'Universe of skills'

The "distillation" effect did not stop at the workplace. After colleague.skill went viral, a kind of free-for-all derivative creation broke out online.

Users began developing AI avatars of former partners, mentors, bosses and even public figures, such as Warren Buffett and Steve Jobs. People jokingly referred to the phenomenon as a "universe of skills".

Boss.skill could evaluate projects and proposals using the actual standards a particular manager applied during meetings — his cadence while following up, his style of pushing back, or the precise way he expected bad news to be delivered.

Mentor.skill was designed for graduate students. When stuck on a research problem, a student could ask the AI tool for guidance rendered in their adviser's characteristic voice.

Many people were not satisfied with capturing just someone's professional habits. They loaded AI with something more — a projection of personality, with an expectation that the simulation might somehow feel like the real person.

Colin, 26, a student at Peking University, built an AI model based on his father, who died suddenly of a heart attack in 2021. What followed, he said, was a "long goodbye" he never had the chance to say.

Colin told the AI avatar about his father's death; shared news about his mother; and mentioned that he had made it to his dream university. His "father" responded by saying: "You're pursuing a doctorate now. You've achieved more than I ever imagined. I always knew you could do it."

The AI avatar kept the conversation going. "How is your mother? Is she all right?" it said. "I left too early — I didn't get the time to arrange anything. But you are all grown up now. You will manage."

Colin said he couldn't help but cry as they spoke. "The AI tool was fed all messages and voice recordings my father had left behind, and it absorbed every memory of our interactions — even ones that have become spotty for me," he said.

For both Colin and his mother, the sudden loss of a close family member was traumatic. "The AI tool has helped us find a way through our grief," he added.

Limited imitation

After Colin created the AI avatar of his father, some people pointed out the contrast between what was once real and what is merely a shadow of that reality. Their doubts raise the fundamental question regarding the extent to which an AI agent can truly imitate a real person.

Xiao, the product manager, said that AI agents are like actors performing roles. "They are still using the same 'brain', or large models. But, ultimately, an actor is never the person he plays."

When it comes to personal interactions, people prefer AI that keeps its flaws — the overly protective comments, the offbeat humor and the verbal tics that make a person feel authentic, Xiao said.

At work, the opposite holds true; those same quirks are treated as waste, something to be completely removed from the system, he said.

What can be recorded through texts or workflows can always be re-created, including conversations with a deceased person, but AI agents cannot replicate the intuition embedded in lived experience, Xiao said.

"Like a master craftsman's sense of touch ... these forms of knowledge resist formalization, because they emerge from physical experience, emotional judgment and years of real-world feedback," he said.

There is another limiting factor — a human evolves; his AI clone is frozen at the moment of distillation.

"AI may condense the achievements of human civilization, but the process of fumbling through countless mistakes and having sudden flashes of insight is often omitted from texts," Xiao said.

Zheng Jianan, 34, who is also an AI product manager, said that a "distilled" version of a person is a static snapshot, frozen in a single moment in time, while a real person continues learning, adapting and improvising — constantly moving beyond that captured version.

"For most people, many tasks at work have already been standardized. AI simply makes that standardization visible," he said.

Nevertheless, Zheng held out a hopeful possibility that one day, AI might ultimately push people into rediscovering what makes them distinctly human.

"If AI replaces the tool-like part of labor, then perhaps human beings will become more human again," he said.

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TOP NEWS

Climate: Building resilience essential

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AI is already revolutionizing weather and climate forecasting, allowing communities to prepare for severe storms and flooding days earlier than previously possible. Google's FloodHub is one such tool that uses AI models and satellite data to provide flood forecasts up to seven days in advance.

AI is also helping farmers receive highly localized forecasts to guide planting decisions and water use. In Kenya, for example, smallholder farmers are using AI-powered early warning systems to predict crop yields and monitor agricultural conditions. AI-driven remote sensing techniques are also being applied in the Amazon region, as well as in countries such as Vietnam, Madagascar and Mexico, to improve the detection of forest cover changes and inform where urgent interventions are required.

However, forecasting alone will not solve the climate crisis. The ultimate objective must be to reduce emissions while building resilience, which requires radical systemic and structural changes across all key complex systems, including cities, transportation, industry and energy. Redesigning and transforming such systems and running them effectively and efficiently can be greatly facilitated by AI.

In the energy sector, for example, AI can enhance the stability and efficiency of renewable energy integration into power grids. The intermittency of solar and wind energy presents a significant challenge, as fluctuating supply must be balanced with real-time demand. AI can optimize grid management by forecasting supply and demand more accurately and by managing distributed energy resources, such as electric vehicles and energy storage systems.

China offers one of the clearest examples of how AI can accelerate climate action at scale. As China is the world's largest producer of renewable energy, its grid operators are deploying AI-powered smart grid technologies that analyze massive volumes of real-time data from power plants, weather systems, transmission networks and electricity consumers. Machine-learning algorithms can forecast electricity demand, predict renewable energy output and optimize the dispatch of power across regions.

AI can also improve power grid reliability by rapidly identifying maintenance needs. In Barbados, Mauritius and Seychelles, AI already plays a role in managing microgrids that distribute energy efficiently across local networks. Embedding AI in these systems enables these countries to optimize energy flows, reducing the need for fossil fuel-based energy.

Beyond optimizing grids, AI can help urban planners map patterns of urbanization and identify energy and infrastructure needs for local communities. For example, the Open Building Insights Tool, which Sustainable Energy for All developed in collaboration with IBM, helps energy planners overcome critical data gaps to inform energy access and energy transition interventions and better deliver results for those most in need. This publicly available AI-powered solution is already providing valuable insights to decision-makers and policymakers in India and Kenya.

The question over the next five years is whether governments, businesses and societies can scale these innovations quickly enough to stay ahead of rising climate risks.

If we succeed, AI and green technologies may prove to be among humanity's most powerful allies in the fight against climate change.

The author is CEO and special representative of the UN Secretary-General for Sustainable Energy for All, and co-chair of UN-Energy. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen (front, right), European Council President Antonio Costa (front, left) and G7 leaders attend a working dinner on Monday in Evian-les-Bains, France. MANDEL NGAN / AFP

Divisions compromise G7's global influence

Tensions between US and Europe will affect unity of the grouping, expert says

By ZHANG ZHOUXIANG in Brussels
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The ongoing summit of the Group of Seven nations in Evian-les-Bains, France, has been marked by visible tensions between the United States and Europe, a situation that has the potential to weaken the grouping's global influence and reduce its ability to shape international affairs, experts said.

On Monday, US President Donald Trump threatened to impose 100 percent tariff on French champagne and wine unless France abolished its 3 percent digital services tax on major US technology companies. French President Emmanuel Macron responded by calling for "firm" and "respectful" discussions, stressing that Washington and Brussels had already reached a tariff agreement and that stability should now be the priority.

"Tariffs do no one any good, including the United States," Macron told the media.

Jian Junbo, director of Fudan University's Center for China-Europe Relations, pointed out that average tariff levels between the US and Europe have historically remained relatively low, generally around 1 to 2 percent for many industrial goods. Under the new framework, however, tariffs on a large share of EU exports to the US could rise to around 15 percent.

"Such a change will inevitably affect transatlantic trade and may also influence the broader balance of global trade," he said.

The divergences between Washington and its European allies go far beyond trade. The summit is also Trump's first face-to-face meeting with other Western leaders since he threatened to leave NATO after allies refused to support his military campaign against Iran, while Politico reported that European governments want the US to continue applying maximum pressure on Russia and maintain strong support for Ukraine, despite uncertainties over whether Trump shares that approach.

Concerns have intensified after Trump announced plans to withdraw thousands of US troops, along with fighter jets and warships, from Europe, while European leaders have repeatedly raised concerns over Washington's growing reliance on export controls, arguing that such measures risk disrupting supply chains and distorting international competition.

"The United States is becoming more self-interested in managing its alliances," said Jian. "Washington increasingly expects its partners to take on greater responsibilities, while its willingness to provide international public goods is declining."

According to Jian, the tensions between the US and Europe will inevitably affect the unity of their alliance, and even "reduce the effectiveness and influence of the G7 itself".

Ding Chun, director of Fudan University's Center for European Studies, said the disputes are taking place against a backdrop of declining Western global influence.

"The combined GDP of Europe and the United States once accounted for more than 60 percent of the global economy. Today it is around 40 percent," Ding said.

He argued that the West is becoming less capable of acting as a unified coordinator of global affairs. Europe, meanwhile, faces growing challenges in its relations with the US over trade, security, defense and even values.

"Instead of jointly shaping international rules, the two sides are increasingly focused on defending their own interests," Ding said.

"There's always the possibility that things might snap, and it might get rather dramatic," Max Bergmann, a European expert at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, was quoted by the New York Post as saying, referring to possible quarrels at the ongoing G7 summit.

A Le Monde commentary published on June 10, days before the summit, described the G7 as "indisputably obsolescent", arguing that the grouping no longer reflects the realities of the global economy even though no viable replacement has yet emerged.

"Europe wants to pursue its own path, but it cannot simply walk away from the United States," Ding said. "That contradiction is likely to remain a defining feature of transatlantic relations for the years to come."

Ondrej Dostal, a member of the European Parliament, said that instead of exclusive clubs like the G7, the world needs genuinely inclusive multilateralism that gives all nations, not just a self-selected few, a seat at the table.

"In a multipolar world, global challenges can only be addressed through institutions that enjoy universal legitimacy. That is why there is no alternative to the United Nations," he added.

Innovation: Key role of Xi'an emphasized

From page 1

Rogier Janssens, president of the China unit of German sci-tech giant Merck, said in a video address that China is not just an important market, but also a place "where the future is taking shape very quickly".

"You can feel it here. The pace is fast. The ambition is high. More and more, we see innovation being turned into real impact," he said.

Simon Lacey, founder of Market Access X, an international trade and market access advisory company, said his confidence in China comes less from the size of its market and more from the pace of its innovation.

What is difficult to replicate elsewhere is the speed at which products are iterated and improved in China, supported by the country's strong research and talent base, he said.

"If I had to put China's importance in one sentence — it has gone from the place (where) you went to make things cheaply, to the place (where) you have to be to stay at the frontier," he added.

Economists said the shift is about more than innovation itself; it is about the ability to turn technological progress into stronger industrial capability.

David Blair, vice-president and senior economist at the Center for China and Globalization, said the key to future competitiveness lies in the deeper integration of manufacturing and innovation.

Artificial intelligence and other new technologies have the potential to significantly boost productivity, but their broader impact will depend on how effectively they are applied to manufacturing, he said.

For multinational companies, the focus on moving innovation into production is already being reflected in deeper local operations.

Maria Zhang, general manager of Mubea China, said the company's China operations have moved well beyond assembly and sales over the past five years, with its plant in Changzhou, Jiangsu province, now co-developing new machine configurations for global markets.

For the German machine tool manufacturer, China has become its "largest laboratory for advanced manufacturing solutions", reflecting its growing role as a source of intensive, fast-paced innovation at scale, she said.

Henry Ding, president of 3M China, said in a video address that the US company has also seen China become its largest overseas market. "This year, 3M China will continue to increase its local R&D investment and plans to achieve more than 30 percent growth in new product launches compared with 2025, significantly outpacing other global markets," he added.

Buoyed by confidence shared widely among global businesses, Xi'an is moving quickly to capture opportunities created by China's push to develop new quality productive forces, drawing on its strengths in technological research, advanced manufacturing and Eurasian connectivity.

The city's role as an inland innovation hub is particularly visible in aviation — one of its pillar industries and a key area linking advanced manufacturing with international cooperation.

George Xu, executive vice-president of Airbus and CEO of Airbus China, said in a video address that Xi'an is a strategic center for China's aviation industry.

Airbus' cooperation with Shaanxi province has deep roots, he said, noting that the wings of every A320 aircraft delivered in China are supplied by the Xi'an Aircraft Industry Group, a subsidiary of the Aviation Industry Corp of China.

Edward Hu, country president of International Workplace Group China, said what impressed him most during his visit to Xi'an was the strong convergence of high-tech industries and a deep talent pool supported by leading local universities.

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Benefits of agricultural cooperation highlighted

By ZHANG YUNBI in Beijing
and **QI XIN** in Zhengzhou

After a tour of central China's Henan province — a food production pioneer in the country that enjoys great agricultural cooperation with the United States — agricultural sector insiders from the US said it has been proven that "agriculture is more than just trade and business".

According to Susan Thornton, vice-chair of the US Heartland China Association, agriculture can be a ballast "for stabilizing US-China relations".

She made the comment at the 2026 Heartland Connect & US-China Agriculture Roundtable in Henan's provincial capital Zhengzhou on Tuesday, which was co-hosted by the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries and the Henan provincial government.

More than 100 participants attended the event, including those from relevant US food and agriculture industry associations, companies, youth organizations, and China-based representatives of US states involved, as well as their Chinese counterparts.

Henan produces nearly one-tenth of the nation's grain and one-quarter of its wheat by using less than one-sixteenth of the country's total arable land, said Wang Kai, governor of Henan province.

Speaking of Henan's ties with the US, Wang noted that "the US is Henan's second-largest source of agricultural imports and its second-largest market for agricultural exports".

Last year, the value of agricultural trade between the two sides reached $460 million, accounting for 10 percent of the province's total agricultural trade, Wang added.

Thornton said that Tuesday's roundtable "comes at a very important time", as President Xi Jinping's warm welcome for US President Donald Trump last month and their summit meeting in Beijing were successful steps for improving stability and predictability in the US-China relationship.

"For America's farmers, ranchers and agricultural businesses, greater stability creates opportunities to expand exports, new customers, and strengthen rural economies throughout our heartland. And this event is very much in the spirit of continuing work between our two countries' leaders," Thornton added.

Mike Koehne, board director of the American Soybean Association, said, "A great example of our friendship and cooperation is soybean imports from the US to China ... We are very grateful for the strong relationship we have built with the Chinese grain industry."

The US soy industry highly values people-to-people communication, and "by engaging with our partners, we deepen our mutual understanding, build trust and explore business opportunities", he added.

Yang Wanming, president of the Chinese People's Association for Friendship with Foreign Countries, said that China is willing to work to develop a number of cooperation projects in areas such as grain production and the value-added processing of agricultural products.

The two sides could also work to diversify the agricultural products traded and boost the links of logistics and trade companies between the two countries, he added.

John Zhang, vice-president of US-based irrigation system manufacturer Reinke Manufacturing Co, said that "there is vast scope for cooperation and significant potential for development in the agricultural sector between China and the US" from crop production and scientific research to livestock farming and food processing.

After Monday's tour to factories of two leading food processing companies — frozen food maker Sanquan and meat processing company Shuanghui in the province, Zhang noted that Henan's "farm-to-dining table" production features a mature industrial chain and distinct strengths.

"Meanwhile, the US has pioneered agricultural industrialization and modernization early on, and its advanced practices in production equipment and operational management offer valuable lessons," he added.

When visiting the Sanquan factory on Monday, Anna Ashton, founder of Ashton Analytics, said, "We can buy this brand of dumplings in the United States at some supermarkets, so it's fun to see them being made."

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Pagoda: Modern structure protects against subsidence

From page 1

Yongle Emperor Zhu Di, the third emperor of the Ming Dynasty (1368-1644), started the ambitious project in 1412 to show gratitude to his parents. Construction was completed in 1428, and the tower quickly became a popular tourist attraction. It remained so, right up until its destruction in 1856 during the Taiping Rebellion (1851-64).

"Every piece of the facade (on the tower) was intricately designed, with extremely stringent firing requirements resulting in an even, flawless glaze," said Zhang Yongyi, a Jiangnan culture scholar.

Jiangnan refers to the region to the south of China's Yangtze River.

When Europeans first laid eyes on it, they did not see glaze, but something closer to myth. In 1638, Alvaro Semedo, a Portuguese Jesuit missionary in China, likened it to ancient Roman architecture, mistaking its tiles for porcelain.

In 2015, a modern tower about 93 meters tall was completed.

Wang, the museum director, said that the steel frame and ultra-white glass of the modern structure carry the load precisely above the fragile underground palace, protecting it completely from subsidence.

Today, the new tower still attracts visitors, albeit of a different kind. Shauchenka Volha, a student from Belarus at Nanjing University of Science and Technology, recently shared her ascent of the tower on Xiaohongshu. "I finally climbed the Great Bao'en Temple today," she wrote. "The lift took me to the eighth floor, and the moment I stepped out, the whole of Nanjing was spread out before me."

Guo Jun and Wang Qian contributed to this story.

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ASIAFOCUS

Editor's note:

In this weekly feature China Daily gives voice to Asia and its people. The stories presented come mainly from the Asia News Network (ANN), of which China Daily is among its 20 leading titles.







From left: Idols of Garuda and Naga on display at the exhibition "A Millennium Treasure of Ancient Khmer Civilization" at the Shanxi Museum in Taiyuan on June 9. Visitors view artifacts at the exhibition on June 9. Visitors view the idol of Hindu god Shiva blessing his son Skanda at the exhibition on June 9.

Angkor's treasures shine in China

Shanxi Museum displays artifacts that offer glimpse into SE. Asia's ancient kingdom

By **HOU CHENCHEN** and **ZHU XINGXIN** in Taiyuan, Shanxi



Visitors view artifacts on display at the "A Millennium Treasure of Ancient Khmer Civilization" exhibition at Shanxi Museum in Taiyuan, North China's Shanxi province, on June 9. PHOTOS BY ZHU XINGXIN / CHINA DAILY

For centuries, the stone faces of Angkor have gazed across Cambodia's tropical plains. Now, some of the civilization's finest treasures have traveled thousands of kilometers to North China, offering visitors a rare glimpse into one of Southeast Asia's greatest ancient kingdoms.

An exhibition showcasing the splendor of ancient Khmer civilization opened at Shanxi Museum on June 5, bringing over 130 artifacts from the collection of the National Museum of Cambodia.

Titled "A Millennium Treasure of Ancient Khmer Civilization", the exhibition brings together Buddhist sculptures, architectural fragments, ceramics and relief carvings that chart the rise of the kingdom of Angkor from its early origins to its zenith. The display offers insights into the region's artistic achievements, religious beliefs and everyday life.

It is the first major exhibition of Khmer antiquities ever held in Shanxi province, and most of the objects are being shown in China for the first time. Many artifacts have never before left Cambodia, according to Shanxi Museum.

Together, the artifacts tell the story of the Angkor civilization, which flourished from around the 9th century to the 15th century. At its height, Angkor served as the political and spiritual center of the Khmer Empire, whose influence extended across much of mainland Southeast Asia. Its most celebrated legacy, Angkor Wat, remains the largest religious monument in the world.

Much of what is known about life in Angkor comes from the writings of Zhou Daguan, a Chinese envoy of the Yuan Dynasty (1271–1368) who spent nearly a year in the kingdom in the late 13th century. His records show centuries of ceramic trade between China and Cambodia — a proof of the long-standing connections between the two countries.

> "This exhibition is more than an international showcase of cultural relics and art. It is a bridge of friendship linking the civilizations of Cambodia and China."
>
> **Ly Vanna,** secretary of state of Cambodia's Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts

Li Zhuoming, a guide at Shanxi Museum, highlighted an elephant-shaped jar from Angkor period made of celadon, a type of ceramic known for its distinctive green glaze that originated in China. Li said it is a striking example of cultural exchanges between ancient China and Cambodia.

"Combining techniques and aesthetic influences associated with Chinese ceramics with Cambodia's indigenous elephant symbolism, the vessel reflects the cultural interactions that flourished along the ancient Maritime Silk Road," Li said.

In a corner of the exhibition hall, 12-year-old Deng Huimu was viewing an idol of Hindu god Shiva blessing his son.

"What touched me most was the look in Shiva's eyes — the love there felt so warm," she said. To her, the Khmer and Chinese civilizations share something in common. "The love between parents and children — it's the same," she said.

Another visitor, Zhang Xiaoyan, a student at Taiyuan Normal University, told CGTN that what impressed her most was the building part carved with the images of Garuda and Naga, the divine eagle and serpent deity, respectively, in Hindu mythology.

"The piece has a strong visual impact. I've learned about Garuda through the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, so I was particularly eager to see it in person. It brought back fond memories and made the exhibition more engaging."

In April 2025, China and Cambodia issued a joint statement calling for the building of an all-weather China-Cambodia community with a shared future in the new era.

Both sides said the exhibition demonstrates how cultural cooperation between the two countries continues to deepen through practical exchanges.

Ly Vanna, secretary of state of Cambodia's Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts, said at the opening ceremony that the exhibition serves as both a showcase of Cambodia's rich cultural heritage and a testament to the enduring ties between Cambodia and China.

Over the past three decades, China has played an important role in the restoration and preservation of Angkor's monuments, sharing conservation expertise and technologies with Cambodia, Ly said.

"This exhibition is more than an international showcase of cultural relics and art," he said. "It is a bridge of friendship linking the civilizations of Cambodia and China."

Yu Zhenlong, deputy director of the Shanxi Culture Relics Bureau, said exchanges between the two countries have evolved from the trade routes of the ancient Maritime Silk Road to modern cooperation in cultural heritage preservation.

He said the exhibition provides an opportunity to further expand collaboration in areas, including heritage conservation, artistic exchanges and professional training.

Sister-province ties

The exhibition also reflects broader cooperation between Shanxi and Cambodia. In 2018, Shanxi signed minutes on establishing a sister-province relationship with Siem Reap, home to the Angkor archaeological complex, and the two sides have since expanded exchanges in cultural heritage preservation, tourism and trade.

Cooperation has also extended to infrastructure development. The Siem Reap Angkor International Airport, one of Cambodia's largest infrastructure projects built with Chinese participation, is another symbol of growing ties between the two sides.

For Nann Sreynith, 19, the Silk Road Education program brought her to Shanxi. Now at Shanxi University, she was surprised to see her homeland's treasures so far from home. "It made me feel like I had returned to Cambodia," she said. "This exhibition is a bridge between our two cultures."

Vorn Muykeang, 20, came through the same program. She sees a connection between Shanxi and Cambodia. "Both places have ancient temples and Buddha statues," she said. "Living in Shanxi feels familiar in a way."

The exhibition will run through Oct 7 at Shanxi Museum and is open to the public free of charge.

Li Jialu contributed to this story.

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Grid reforms vital for boosting ASEAN's clean energy growth: Report

Asia risks missing out on billions of dollars of green investment because its underfunded power grids are failing to keep pace with surging energy demand, a report released in May warns.

The report by Bain & Company and Standard Chartered bank says the region is facing a crunch. Investors are lining up to invest in data centers, renewable energy, green industrial parks, and electric vehicle production and infrastructure. But most power grids in Southeast Asia have limited regional interconnections and are not adapting fast enough to meet the rapid electrification of economies.

Some investors are deterred by long grid connection times, lack of policy clarity, and rigid rules of bureaucratic state-run power companies in the region, home to nearly 700 million people and one of the world's fastest-growing energy markets.

The region's grids urgently need more investment and reforms to expand and modernize, says the report. Many are governed by a hodgepodge of inflexible rules limiting private operators and a lack of innovative power purchase agreements. Long grid connection times also frustrate investors, such as data center developers who cannot afford to wait several years.

The constraints are already affecting clean energy projects. For example, between 50 and 60 percent of renewable energy projects in Vietnam, Thailand and Indonesia have been canceled between 2021 and 2025 because of system constraints, including unclear power-purchase agreement structures, permission hurdles and grid connection rules, the authors note.

Grid investment has failed to keep pace with demand growth. Annual investment in power transmission and distribution fell 3 percent between 2015 and 2025 in Southeast Asia.

Southeast Asia should be spending $29 billion a year on grid infrastructure but is investing only $11 billion. This leaves an $18 billion annual investment gap, putting the region's growing green economy at risk.

The green economy is growing at 8 to 9 percent annually and is worth $290 billion. By 2030, it could reach $430 billion, the authors say. But there is a significant gap between investments announced and what is likely to be built.



Engineers work at the site of the Monsoon Wind Power Project in Laos on Dec 28, 2025. ZHU JIPENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Of approximately $540 billion in green capital expenditure announced across Southeast Asia's power and EV value chains between now and 2030, only around $315 billion is on a credible path to deployment under current conditions.

"Capital is flowing where commercial demand, energy security and policy that delivers infrastructure come together, and stalling where any of the three is missing," said coauthor Dale Hardcastle, partner at Bain & Company, in a statement.

New electricity demand from data centers, rapid adoption of EVs, and green industrial clusters could be a major catalyst for the region's green transformation, the authors say. But this requires grid reforms and greater investment in renewable energy and battery storage.

Over the next three to four years, the region is projected to face more than 100 terawatt-hours of new energy demand from data centers, EVs and green industrial parks, representing more than $200 billion in committed investment, the authors say.

Infrastructure timeline

A key problem, however, lies in the infrastructure timelines. Data centers, EV infrastructure, and production and green industrial parks can all be built in one to three years. Yet, the grid required to serve them takes at least five years to build, creating a structural time-to-power gap.

The report referenced a Bain survey of regional data center operators and large global data center developers, which found that 90 percent cited grid connection delays as a top constraint, while 70 percent cited grid transmission capacity limits.

Solutions include the quick deployment of solar and battery storage to meet near-term power demand, fast-tracking grid interconnections for high loads for key investments, and enabling private participation in power transmission and distribution. In the longer term, solutions include establishing regional power markets and strengthening interconnections under the ASEAN Power Grid initiative.

But timing is critical because a delay could entrench additional fossil fuel-based power generation, the authors note.

"Each long-term contract for gas or thermal (coal) supply makes it harder for green power to replace these sources in the future, and many data center operators are accepting interim gas or thermal supply instead of waiting for clean power to catch up," they say.

That finding comes as Southeast Asia is facing rising energy costs because of its dependence on fossil fuels.

The supply shock caused by conflicts in the Middle East and Tehran's blockade of the Strait of Hormuz have further underscored the value of affordable renewable energy and limiting dependence on imported fuels, the burning of which is accelerating climate change.

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WORLD

US companies see Chinese market as essential: Survey

By **YIFAN XU** in Washington
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US companies remain deeply integrated in the Chinese market and view their operations there as essential to global success, even amid a fragile trade truce and persistent policy frictions, according to the US-China Business Council's latest member survey.

The council's 2026 Member Survey, drawing on responses from 175 companies, finds that 95 percent of respondents consider their China operations somewhat to very important for staying competitive globally.

"For US companies, China is not optional," the report states. "A generation of sophisticated, pressure-tested Chinese companies is going global. These competitors are advantaged by factors unique to China, including scale, local innovation networks, and speed to market."

Sourabh Gupta, senior fellow at the Institute for China-America Studies, described this as "a continuing case of China's indispensability to globally-minded companies".

"China is transitioning from being a mere global production partner to becoming a production and innovation partner for global businesses," Gupta told China Daily, noting China's "unmatched economies of scale, its dominance in the production of intermediate goods, and its burgeoning creative capabilities".

The survey also showed that tariffs and export controls continue to weigh heavily. Seventy-two percent of companies reported being affected by tariffs, up from the previous year, with 42 percent passing some costs to downstream customers. The report says that tariffs "continue to raise costs, boost inflation, and depress sales, exports, and profits".

"Export controls and retaliations always reduce sales and benefit competitors, so they are unattractive to businesspeople," Jack Midgley, principal consultant at Midgley & Company and adjunct associate professor in the Security Studies Program at Georgetown University, told China Daily.

Nearly half of respondents are impacted by US export controls, with 61 percent losing sales to Chinese competitors and 47 percent to international ones.

Gupta recommended that both sides draw "hard security lines — be it regarding critical infrastructure, software control, sensitive data, or dual-use items — should be narrowly and rigorously drawn". He added that overly expansive US measures were "anything but narrowly drawn".

Despite these challenges, business performance has shown resilience. Ninety-two percent of companies reported profitable operations in China in fiscal year 2025, up 10 percentage points from the prior year. Many use these profits to fund global expansion (53 percent), support US jobs (33 percent), and finance US-based R&D (32 percent).

"Regardless of swings in short-term profitability for China-based firms, the two economies are now linked through complex global supply chains. These supply chains will be resilient and self-correcting unless policymakers disrupt them with poor policy," Midgley said.

Gupta observed that US companies were "finding it may be hard to operate in China but finding it harder still to leave China, and the latter will also create competitive risk".

For future steps, Gupta called for honoring existing agreements. "The most practical steps ... (are) to conform and honor the terms of their consensus in Busan ... and extend the terms of their Busan arrangement for the entirety of the (Donald) Trump term."

Midgley echoed the need for dialogue: "Predictability and confidence come from transparency and deep engagement. Summit-level meetings can help shape the policy agenda, but the real confidence-building measures take place in dialogue among commercial leaders, investors, and innovators who will gain confidence by reaching mutual understanding."

Former US diplomat Sarah Beran to oversee US-China relations group

By **MINLU ZHANG** in New York
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Sarah Beran

Career US diplomat Sarah Beran has been named the next president of the National Committee on US-China Relations, the organization announced on Monday, following a series of recent high-level interactions between the world's two largest economies.

Beran will join the National Committee in October and succeed Stephen Orlins, the organization's longtime president, on Nov 10, according to a statement by its board of directors.

"I am honored to take on the leadership of an organization that has been at the center of the most consequential moments in the bilateral relationship for six decades," Beran said in the statement.

Beran has served in the US Foreign Service for 23 years, most recently as deputy chief of mission at the US Embassy in Beijing.

The National Committee said Beran brings extensive experience in US-China relations and bilateral negotiations, as well as a commitment to maintaining communication channels between the two countries.

In a keynote address at the Jimmy Carter Forum on US-China Relations in January, whose theme focused on women in US-China relations, Beran highlighted the role of women diplomats, scholars and policy experts in shaping bilateral ties.

She also recalled that her own engagement with China began with "sports diplomacy", when she traveled to the Pearl River Delta with a high school soccer team. She said the experience later led her to study Chinese, spend time in Beijing and eventually enter government service as a diplomat focused on China.

Beran said one lesson from recent years of US-China diplomacy was to "protect some level of exchange between the Chinese and American people", calling it "the real ballast in the long-term relationship".

Beran's selection came after a national search process led by a six-member search committee chaired by Charlene Barshefsky, chair of the board and former US trade representative. The organization said Beran was chosen from a pool of more than 150 experts considered during the search.

Barshefsky said Beran is "the right leader" to carry forward the organization's work and deepen communication at all levels of the US-China relationship.

Beran previously held several China and Asia focused roles at the US State Department, including assignments related to Indo-Pacific affairs, APEC, and Chinese and Mongolian affairs. Her overseas postings have included Beijing, Islamabad, Jerusalem and Quito, and she speaks Mandarin and Spanish, according to the organization.

Established in 1966, the National Committee on US-China Relations is a New York-based nonprofit organization focused on the bilateral relationship. Its programs include policy discussions, public education, delegation visits, professional exchanges and initiatives aimed at bringing together Americans and Chinese from different sectors.


A man returning to his village in south Lebanon inspects his destroyed house on Monday following the announcement of an initial ceasefire agreement between the United States and Iran. MOHAMMED ZAATARI / AP

Deal promises end to conflict

But details of MoU remain unclear as Tehran, Washington offer differing accounts


A US military aerial refueling aircraft takes off from Ben Gurion Airport in Israel on Monday. According to previous reports, the US has said that if an agreement is reached with Iran, Washington will withdraw its military aircraft stationed at the airport. XINHUA

TEHRAN/WASHINGTON — The United States and Iran both claimed victory on Monday after digitally signing a memorandum of understanding aimed at ending the three-month conflict, yet both sides continue to offer conflicting accounts of its contents as the text remains unpublished.

Iran called the deal a triumph over Washington and Israel. "The enemy that had attacked to carry out its evil aims was defeated in all its aims and the Islamic Republic of Iran won great victories in the war," Deputy Foreign Minister Kazem Gharibabadi said in remarks broadcast on state television on Monday.

US President Donald Trump hailed the agreement for restoring stability in the global markets. "I think a lot of great things are going to happen in the Middle East right now. And very importantly, the oil (price) is plummeting down, and the stock market is shooting up like a rocket today," Trump was quoted by PBS News as saying on Monday in Evian-les-Bains, France, which is currently hosting the G7 Leaders' Summit.

The reopening of the Strait of Hormuz and a halt to military operations across multiple fronts have been announced by both sides, with key details remaining disputed. Among the unresolved issues is Iran's proposed fees for ships transiting the strait.

Trump insisted on Monday that the strait will be toll-free and "there's no argument on that". US Vice-President JD Vance said in an interview with CNBC on Monday that the strait is expected to open "in a toll-free way for the long term".

However, Iran's semiofficial Fars news agency reported on Monday that Iran will accept ships' passage through the waterway free of charge solely for 60 days, after which the country intends to provide security, maritime, environmental and insurance services to crossing vessels and use the revenues for its economic development.

Differences also remain over Lebanon. Both sides announced an immediate ceasefire across all fronts, but it remains unclear whether the arrangement would require the Israeli military to withdraw from the large areas of southern Lebanon it currently occupies.

Lebanon truce

Iran's top diplomat was quoted as saying on Tuesday that the end of the Iran war included the end of Israel's occupation of Lebanon.

Iranian state television quoted Foreign Minister Seyed Abbas Araghchi making the comment to foreign diplomats in a briefing.

"The end of the war in Lebanon is an inseparable part of complete end of the war," Araghchi was quoted as saying. But US officials argued that Israeli withdrawal from southern Lebanon wasn't a condition for the agreement and that Israel could respond to attacks by Hezbollah.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Monday said in a news conference that the Israeli military will remain in the "security zones" it controls in Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip as long as necessary.

Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz on Monday said Israel wouldn't withdraw its forces from Lebanese territory.

On Iran's nuclear program, both sides acknowledged that Tehran is committed to not developing nuclear weapons, yet they made diverging claims over the disposal of Iran's highly enriched uranium.

In a post on Truth Social on Saturday, Trump suggested the US will work with Iran to remove enriched uranium at an "appropriate time".

Tehran, however, has been firm in securing its right to enrichment on its own soil and against any proposal to transfer enriched uranium outside of Iran.

Tehran insists the only acceptable way of dealing with its highly enriched uranium will be diluting it within Iranian territory, Araghchi said in an interview with the state-run IRIB TV on Friday.

Both sides are making contradictory claims about the agreement on frozen assets and economic sanctions against Iran.

With major questions still unanswered, the deal's real challenge begins after its formal signing in Switzerland on Friday, kicking off 60 days of technical negotiations.

Experts said based on the details released so far, the agreement does not fundamentally resolve the long-standing differences between the US and Iran over issues such as the nuclear program, nor does it reduce the mutual distrust between the two sides.

"The reported agreement appears to focus on urgent issues necessary to halt escalation ... More contentious subjects have been deferred to future negotiations," said Aram Kiwan, an Arab Israeli political analyst and columnist, noting that he sees the most likely scenario as a lengthy, phased negotiating process.

"At this stage, it is difficult to speak of comprehensive peace," said Suleiman Basharat, a Palestinian political analyst. "A single agreement can help reduce tensions, but it is unlikely by itself to deliver lasting peace across the wider Middle East."

XINHUA—AGENCIES

Winter crop production in Australia expected to fall

By **XIN XIN** in Sydney
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Australia's grain production in the new financial year is expected to fall sharply as higher fertilizer costs linked to the Middle East conflict weigh on growers, the government and industry forecasts indicate.

National winter crop production is forecast to fall by 21 percent in 2026-27, reflecting an expected decline in the total area planted and lower yields, with the figure 12 percent below the five-year average, the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences, or ABARES, said in its latest June crop report.

Wheat production is forecast to fall by 26 percent, 23 percent below the five-year average. Barley, canola and chickpea output are expected to decline by 15 percent, 20 percent and 51 percent, respectively. Meanwhile, summer crop production is estimated to have fallen by 15 percent in 2025-26.

Barley production is expected to fall in 2026-27, despite the planting area being forecast to increase by 4 percent, driven by strong cereal grain prices and its comparatively lower fertilizer requirement compared to wheat and canola, the report said.

The current forecast was affected by both climatic conditions and agricultural input costs, with fertilizer supply and prices becoming important factors in crop production for the new season, ABARES said.

It said the Middle East conflict had caused significant disruption to global fuel and fertilizer supplies. Australian broadacre cropping is exposed to this disruption due to its reliance on imports and limited capacity to use substitutes.

If the conflict continues, input costs are likely to remain elevated for longer, which could weigh on production, the bureau said, adding that in some extremely dry regions, farmers are expected to significantly reduce the area planted to winter crops or not plant a crop at all.

It also noted that while growers are expected to have their fertilizer requirements for the sowing period, there is more uncertainty around their willingness to purchase fertilizer at elevated prices, particularly urea for top-dressing crops in July and August, which could affect yields.

Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said on Monday that Australia welcomed a peace agreement between the United States and Iran. He said the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz is "essential to easing pressure on energy prices and economies".

Fertilizer Australia, the industry association representing Australia's fertilizer supply chain, said more than 60 percent of the urea fertilizer imported into Australia travels through the strait.

Rabobank, an international agribusiness banking cooperative, said in its latest winter crop forecast that Australia's winter crop planting area is expected to decline this year, impacted by mixed weather conditions and high input costs.

The report said rising farm input costs, particularly higher global fertilizer and diesel prices linked to the Middle East conflict, are increasing production costs for Australian growers and influencing planting decisions this season.

The report's author, Vitor Pistoia, a senior grains and oilseeds analyst, said the higher costs are prompting growers to shift "toward lower-input crops and contributing to a reduction in total cropping area".

The decline in planting area is expected to be concentrated on wheat. Pistoia said barley plantings are expected to increase from last year, as the crop could offer growers stronger profit margins than wheat.

The report also noted that barley exports have remained strong so far, supported by demand from China. The National Farmers' Federation said farm businesses are facing challenges.

"The combination of higher operating costs, seasonal pressures and declining production forecasts leaves little room to absorb additional costs," the federation's Chief Executive Officer Michael Guerin said.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Country's high-quality development entails strengthened Party building

As the Communist Party of China prepares to celebrate the 105th anniversary of its founding on July 1 this year, a national conference on Party building, convened in Beijing on Monday, made clear the Party's commitment to enhancing its self-governance so it can continue to provide strong leadership for the country's high-quality development.

China's development journey is inseparable from the Party's leadership. Over the past century, the Party has consistently renewed and strengthened itself, enabling it to lead the Chinese people through revolution, construction and reform, and to usher in the historic achievements and transformations of the new era.

Today the nation is advancing Chinese modernization on all fronts and implementing the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30). The complex international environment and domestic reform and development tasks underscore the importance of the Party's leadership. This makes Party building not only a political task but also a practical necessity for achieving high-quality development.

The conference emphasized the importance of studying and implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building, a scientific theoretical system that has taken shape through the Party's exploration and practice in the new era.

Since the 18th CPC National Congress in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Xi Jinping at its core has set forth a series of new ideas, thoughts and strategies in addressing the major questions of the times — what kind of Marxist party should be built for exercising long-term governance, and how should such a party be built. In the process, Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building has taken shape.

Monday's conference highlighted a series of essential requirements embodied in Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building. It emphasized the need to uphold the centralized, unified leadership of the CPC Central Committee, exercise full and rigorous Party self-governance, stay true to the Party's original aspiration and founding mission, take the Party's political building as the overarching principle, build cohesion and forge a solid ideological foundation with the innovative theories of the Party.

It also stressed the need to cultivate high-caliber officials capable of shouldering the mission of national rejuvenation, improve Party conduct on a regular basis, supervise and govern the Party in all respects with strict discipline, take coordinated steps to ensure that officials dare not, cannot and do not want to be corrupt, run the Party with systems and regulations, and fulfill the political responsibility of full and rigorous Party self-governance.

These principles and requirements are being translated into concrete achievements that have strengthened the Party's ability to lead reform, promote development and respond to external risks and uncertainties. The continuous improvement of Party governance has created favorable conditions for economic growth, social stability and long-term national development.

Reflecting on the Party's determination to continuously break new ground in governing and strengthening itself, the conference stressed that Party organizations at all levels must be guided to apply Xi Jinping Thought on Party Building in planning and advancing Party building and take more concrete measures to ensure that all efforts toward rigorous Party self-governance meet higher standards.

The importance of Party building is closely linked to the country's broader development agenda. The central authorities have stressed that innovation-driven development and national rejuvenation ultimately depend on the Party's leadership, effective institutions and capable personnel. Party building provides the political guarantee for coordinating these strategic resources and transforming them into development momentum.

The nation stands at a new historical starting point, and Party building remains a continuing endeavor. The more complex the external environment becomes and the more demanding the tasks of reform and development are, the more imperative it is to uphold the Party's overall leadership and strengthen its governance capacity.

New drivers powering growth momentum

Despite drastic changes and rising uncertainties in the global trade and investment landscape, China's economy continues to demonstrate resilience and steady upgrading momentum.

According to data released by the National Bureau of Statistics on Tuesday, the country's exports and imports of goods reached 4.45 trillion yuan ($658.6 billion) in May, a 16.9 percent year-on-year increase. The vigorous growth shows that foreign trade is still a powerful engine for the economy.

The resilience of China's foreign trade is evident in the following aspects: first, the export structure has continued to evolve toward new and high-quality products, with a higher share of high-tech products such as machinery and electronics; second, the country has diversified its markets, effectively mitigating the risks associated with relying on a single primary market; and third, imports have also shown strong growth, with both domestic and foreign demand working in tandem. This underscores the completeness of China's industry chains and its strong competitiveness.

A breakdown of the numbers offers an insightful picture of the country's economic interaction with the rest of the world.

Exports rose 13.8 percent in May from the same period last year, while imports increased 21.5 percent, the General Administration of Customs data showed. In the first five months of the year, total foreign trade amounted to 20.68 trillion yuan, up 15.3 percent year on year.

The country has taken a series of measures to stabilize exports and boost imports, and last month's marked increase in imports attests to the robust demand generated by the country's superlarge market, as well as its commitment to share opportunities with the rest of the world.

China has also made steady progress in upgrading its exports. As Wang Guanhua, a spokeswoman for the NBS, said at a news conference on Tuesday, technology-intensive products with a high added value have become a major driver of export growth, indicating the country's ongoing efforts to nurture high-tech sectors and let them play a bigger role in the economy are paying off.

From January to May, the amount of investment that went to high-tech sectors recorded a year-on-year rise of 4.5 percent. The investment expansion was particularly notable in integrated circuit manufacturing and lithium-ion battery manufacturing.

Given the drop in fixed asset investment, which was largely caused by the slowdown in the real estate market, the rise in high-tech investment is an encouraging sign that the country is speeding up efforts to shift its growth drivers to emerging industries and new quality productive forces.

As China strives to make its industries smarter and greener, its consumption structure is also evolving, with residents spending more on products featuring advanced technologies. During the first five months of this year, the retail sales of wearable intelligent devices more than doubled, and the retail sales of services increased 5.4 percent year-on-year.

Consumption of services is also building up steam, as demonstrated by the popularity of sports events, concerts and other leisure events across the country, and the large number of tourist trips during holidays. Vibrant services consumption has great potential to boost domestic demand.

Nevertheless, as pointed out by the bureau's officials on Tuesday, challenges persist, including a complicated international situation that threatens to disrupt global trade, as well as domestic demand that needs further support.

The country is responding to these challenges with a series of targeted policies, including an income growth plan, equipment renewal and trade-in programs and employment initiatives.

As the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period unfolds, the central authorities have made it clear that the country will continue to pursue high-quality development, deepen reform and expand high-standard opening-up.

By doing so, China is expected to not only underpin its own long-term growth but also deliver steady opportunities for its trading partners and contribute to the regional and global economy.

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Song Chen



Opinion Line

Vibrant businesses can help bring about good environment

With its long and slender branches and soft, thin leaves, the goji berry tree is an unassuming plant. But its deep-delving roots hold the secret to the success of the Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program spanning northwestern, northern and northeastern China.

Its branches bear small red berries — sweet, chewy, and packed with nutrients. Remarkably, harvesting the fruit does not weaken the plant's hold on the sand. So it protects the land while also providing a valuable cash crop. Its leaves, tender and fragrant, can also be plucked and brewed into tea.

The Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program, which spans 13 provincial-level regions, has made remarkable achievements in improving ecological stability and supporting local communities.

Something worth drawing attention to on Wednesday, the World Day to Combat Desertification and Drought, is that drylands already cover 40 percent of the Earth's land.

According to a 2024 United Nations report, if greenhouse gas emissions are not curbed, another 3 percent of the world's humid areas will turn into drylands by the end of this century.

To make matters worse, green-wall projects around the world have faltered, undone by short-term aid cycles and lack of sustained funding. China, however, has developed an approach that has injected sustained momentum into its fight against desertification.

The goji berry plants and other crop plants are often planted under solar panels, which not only provide shade and shelter, but also reduce transpiration.

A recent editorial in the journal Nature said the success of China's Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program offers a vital blueprint for a warming planet.

Launched in 1978, the program, which involves 46.7 percent of China's total land area, has nearly tripled forest cover in the region — from about 5 percent to nearly 14 percent by 2023.

What does the program look like on the ground? On the southern edge of the Taklimakan Desert, in Hotan, encouraged by the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region government's "first-build-then-subsidize" initiative, Sudiomar Tursun, an entrepreneur from Ayimak village in Hotan, claimed nearly 70 hectares of desert last year. Under the initiative, residents level the land and plant trees — paying no rent. Only when the tree survival rate reaches 85 percent do they receive government subsidies: 30,000 yuan ($4,435) per hectare, plus 3,000 yuan annually for another three years.

Guided by the local government, Tursun planted large-fruited oleaster trees. Based on current fruit prices, she can earn 22,500 to 30,000 yuan per hectare starting in 2028. The government also built roads and supplies free electricity and water.

"We suffer from severe flying dust in Hotan," Tursun said. "I think if we can do this work and stick with it, it will benefit us — and it will leave a better future for our kids."

She is not alone. According to Hotan's forestry and grassland administration, 69,900 residents have participated in the initiative, and the total area covered is more than 60,300 hectares.

What China's Three-North Shelterbelt Forest Program has proven is a simple yet profound truth that lies at the heart of the nation's ecological civilization concept: lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets.

There are no lucid waters to be seen yet, but there is the lush green of oleaster leaves, the red of goji berries ripening under solar panels, and the steady income flowing into the pockets of local farmers.

In the past, one had to choose between a healthy environment and a healthy economy. However, the goji berry does not choose between holding the sand and feeding a family. It does both. The solar panels do not choose between generating clean energy and providing shade for crops. They do both. And Tursun did not choose between saving her hometown from dust storms and securing a future for her children. She did both.

And that is the secret behind China's Great Green Wall Initiative — development need not be at the expense of the environment.

— HOU LIQIANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Academic culture must encourage original research

Editor's note: *China recognizes that basic research is the bedrock of the scientific system and the wellspring of solutions to overcome technological challenges. ThePaper.cn spoke to Shing-Tung Yau, also known as Qiu Chengtong, a Fields Medal laureate and dean of the Qiuzhen College at Tsinghua University, on the significance of basic research. Below are excerpts of the interview. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

It is true that China lacks sufficient original breakthroughs, not only in fundamental disciplines such as physics and mathematics but also in engineering and technology.

It is often argued that China excels at turning scientific discoveries "from 2 to 100" but is relatively weak in making original breakthroughs "from zero to one". In our pursuit of basic research, we must balance the needs of the country and its people with the freedom for curiosity-driven exploration.

Some research may appear to have little practical value today, yet it can deepen our understanding of the laws of nature. Curiosity is the most important driving force behind creations that go from zero to one. Basic science should not only help address the challenges facing the country but also leave room for uninhibited exploration.

In many cases, once scientists in other countries make a breakthrough, Chinese researchers quickly follow and sometimes even surpass them. But genuinely pioneering directions initiated by Chinese researchers are relatively rare. Taking that first step toward originality is critical for the future development of basic science in the country.

Young people today generally do not have to worry about basic living conditions, but they face other external pressures that often lead to anxiety. At the same time, parents and society tend to overprotect children. The academic culture in China needs to change if the country is to achieve genuine advances in basic science and make truly original discoveries.

The existing incentive mechanisms overemphasize material rewards but pay little attention to the intrinsic value of curiosity. At some universities, generous salaries and housing subsidies are primarily reserved for scholars with prestigious academic titles. As a result, many young researchers are compelled to pursue those distinctions rather than focus on their research interests.

Another issue is that China's academic evaluation system seldom involves international peer review. Evaluations are usually confined to domestic circles and, in some cases, even to the candidate's own institution.

Moreover, even when international evaluations are introduced, many institutions still place too much emphasis on factors such as publication counts and journal effect. Such metrics are ill-suited to assessing the worth of cutting-edge exploratory research.

Frankly speaking, the number of people currently capable of achieving genuine breakthroughs from zero to one is quite limited in China, although this is beginning to change. Many scholars returning from overseas have brought back new ideas and approaches. That does not mean China should depend solely on overseas talent. Domestic scholars are also emerging in growing numbers. The key is having truly knowledgeable experts.

Ultimately, it is in our hands. We should encourage young scholars at Chinese universities to set more ambitious goals. Some outstanding young researchers want to become world-class scholars, produce genuinely transformative work and lead the development of their disciplines. They could shape the direction of mathematics and basic science for decades to come.

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VIEWS

China and the World Roundtable | A Shared Future for China and Africa

Editor's Note: *China has expanded its zero-tariff policy to include all the 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations. The Department of African Affairs of China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Research Center on Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity co-hosted a seminar in Beijing last month. The seminar was attended by government officials from China and African countries as well as experts. Below are excerpts of speeches of four of the participants, as reported by China Daily's Wang Qingyun.*

Zero-tariff policy opens new opportunities for Africa



MA XUEJING / CHINA DAILY

Industrial upgrade necessary to reap full benefits



Leah Beryl Rosebellah Aywah is the chief state counsel at the Office of the Attorney General and Department of Justice of Kenya.

China's decision to extend zero-tariff treatment to all eligible African countries is both historic and strategic.

It signals a strong commitment to deepening China-Africa economic cooperation and advancing a more inclusive framework for South-South trade. However, the significance of this move lies not just in tariff elimination, but in what it makes possible.

For years, African exports have remained largely restricted to raw materials rather than processed goods. Now the expansion of the zero-tariff treatment to all tariff lines offers an opportunity to change this pattern.

Processed and semi-processed African goods can now enter the Chinese market under the same preferential conditions as raw materials, and therefore create an incentive for African countries to move further up the value chain.

For instance, those exporting raw cotton can now explore textiles and apparel manufacturing.

The real question for African economies is not only whether we can export more, but whether we can export with greater value added and higher productivity.

Digital trade and e-commerce also present a major opportunity. China hosts one of the most important and dynamic e-commerce ecosystems, transforming how products reach consumers.

For African businesses, especially medium, small and micro enterprises as well as those headed by women and youth entrepreneurs, zero-tariff access allows direct entry into the Chinese market through digital platforms.

An African coffee producer, cosmetic brand, or handicraft enterprise can now access this market without relying solely on traditional distribution chains.

This is particularly important because digital trade lowers market entry barriers for smaller enterprises and creates opportunities for branding, niche marketing and innovation.

However, to fully benefit from this opportunity, African countries will need stronger digital infrastructure, export-readiness programs, payment systems, logistics support and greater engagement with Chinese online marketplaces.

Agriculture is a mainstay for many African economies. Most African exports to China are agricultural products such as coffee, tea, avocados, nuts, spices, flowers, seafood and specialty goods, which are increasingly finding new markets in China.

Although the zero-tariff policy enhances competitiveness, market access alone is not sufficient. Long-term success depends on quality assurance systems, sanitary and phytosanitary compliance, traceability mechanisms, cold chain logistics, and investment in storage and transport infrastructure.

Zero-tariff access has important implications for investment flows and industrial cooperation. When manufacturers realize that products made in Africa can enter duty-free, it creates an incentive for investment in production facilities, industrial parks, logistics systems and export-oriented manufacturing.

China's zero-tariff initiative provides African countries with an unprecedented opportunity to expand exports and deepen participation in global trade.

But tariffs are only one component of competitiveness. The long-term gains from this policy will depend on how effectively we strengthen production capacity, industrialization, standard systems, logistics and the digital trade infrastructure.

The greatest opportunity lies not just in increasing trade volumes but in transforming the structure of trade itself — from dependence on raw commodity exports toward diversified, value-added and technology-driven trade.

Boosting agricultural processing key to export expansion



Mao Xiaojing is a researcher of the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation.

Roughly 60 percent of Africa's total population is engaged in agriculture, and agricultural products constitute a major part of Africa's exports.

Expanding agricultural exports will have an immediate impact on the overall development of the continent's agriculture and the livelihoods of smallholder farmers.

The zero-tariff policy is a major boon for African countries' exports of agricultural products. It demonstrates China's commitment as a major country to sharing market dividends and pursuing common development with African countries.

To fully leverage the policy, China's customs authorities have rolled out a series of supporting measures to ensure its effective implementation.

African countries need to proactively explore market demand in China and promote their products better among Chinese consumers, many of whom still have a limited understanding of agricultural products from Africa.

Platforms such as the China-Africa Economic and Trade Expo and the China International Import Expo can be used to showcase African farm produce and expand exports.

Additionally, African exporters need to familiarize themselves with China's inspection and quarantine requirements.

They, as well as Chinese importers, should ensure that the quality and supply of agricultural products are stable. China and African countries should work together for the steady growth of Africa's agricultural exports.

Boosting the development of Africa's agricultural processing industry is also a priority. Exports of primary products entail high transportation costs.

Their transportation calls for high-standard cold chain systems. These products, if processed into peanut oil, sesame oil, fruit juice, dried fruits and other finished goods, will face less stringent access rules from importing countries compared with primary produce.

Processed products are easier to transport, and the added value generated by processing primary products will drive the economic growth of African countries.

Addressing logistics hurdles among Lesotho's priorities

The historic step China took on May 1 by extending zero-tariff treatment to all 53 African countries with which it has diplomatic relations is not just a policy adjustment, but also a profound demonstration of China's enduring commitment to Africa's integration into the global economy.



Mapaballo Lydia Mile is the ambassador of Lesotho to China.

However, while the door to the vast Chinese market is now wide open, many enterprises in Africa currently lack the strength, capacity and logistical support to walk through that door. Let me demonstrate this challenge and the path forward using Lesotho as an example.

First, we must shift from exporting vulnerability to exporting resilience through value addition. Consider Lesotho's wool and mohair industry, which dominates its exports to China. Currently, these products are shipped largely in raw form, leaving us vulnerable to risks such as disease outbreaks that can halt exports entirely.

If entrepreneurs in Lesotho can partner with Chinese investors to build processing capacity domestically, the industry could be de-risked, jobs created and significant value retained within Lesotho.

Second, we must address the logistical hurdles that act as severe non-tariff barriers. For landlocked countries such as Lesotho, geography dictates its trade competitiveness.

Transit through neighboring territories means our exporters face high transport costs, compounded infrastructural constraints and intricate cross-border customs procedures.

This is where the implementation of the zero-tariff policy must be paired with robust trade facilitation. We highly welcome the Chinese customs' launch of the "Green Channel 2.0" for African agricultural and food products, which streamlines registration and optimizes access procedures. By modernizing logistics, improving connectivity and streamlining trade processes, we can dramatically reduce the friction of cross-border trade.

Third, we must leverage technical support to meet rigorous market standards. Zero tariffs will only be beneficial if our products comply with the necessary sanitary and phytosanitary measures, quality standards and certification requirements.

The technical training sessions on capacity building and inspection initiated by the Chinese customs are invaluable steps. We need continued knowledge transfer, certification assistance and guidance, so that our farmers and manufacturers can confidently navigate the rules of origin and market access protocols.

Trade and business bringing people closer



Liu Shu is the executive dean of the Institute of African Studies of Zhejiang Normal University.

Zhejiang is a major province for foreign trade in China. In 2025, its import and export volume with African countries increased by 11.5 percent year-on-year.

Jinhua, a city in Zhejiang, is an important hub for trade with African countries. While Jinhua may not be widely known, Yiwu, which is under the jurisdiction of the city, enjoys great popularity.

As a researcher, I propose a few suggestions for seizing the opportunities presented by the zero-tariff policy and advancing people-to-people exchanges between China and African countries.

Efforts should be made to encourage Chinese enterprises to increase imports of high-quality African products and expand their businesses with the African side.

Instead of merely engaging in trade in goods, enterprises need to deepen cooperation in production capacity, industrial park development, logistics and warehousing, and intensive processing of agricultural products. This will help African countries turn their advantage in natural resources into industrial competitiveness, and shift the focus of their exports from raw materials to finished products.

It is essential to take advantage of economic and trade cooperation to deepen and strengthen people-to-people exchanges. The flow of goods and industrial cooperation will help cement the friendship between the two peoples.

As trade and investment cooperation grows stronger, business people, technical teams and young students will visit each other more frequently, enhancing mutual understanding and bridging estrangement through joint work, market alignment and cultural exchanges.

For example, Jinhua, which is home to a large number of business people, and has attracted many African students, conducts China-Africa youth exchanges and vocational training programs on a regular basis. It also hosts the annual Forum on China-Africa Economic, Trade and Cultural Cooperation.

These events have deepened the friendly ties between the people of China and African countries.

The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

The Global South can add more value to its natural resources

Hadi Prayitno

Global Lens

History remains one of the strongest bonds linking countries across the Global South. When World War II ended in 1945, many of these countries were either newly independent or still struggling to secure their freedom. They entered an international system designed largely by and for others.

Colonialism had shaped their economies around resource extraction, racial hierarchy was embedded in global institutions, and the Cold War demanded alignment with one bloc or the other. Trade terms kept commodity exporters at a relative disadvantage to industrial economies.

Shared grievances led to the emergence of common platforms. The 1955 Bandung Asian-African Conference was followed by the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, the Group of 77 in 1964, and more recently the BRICS in 2006.

Many of the challenges that inspired these initiatives still persist. Global South countries face heavy debt burdens, limited manufacturing capacity, restricted access to technology, dependence on commodities, climate risks, food insecurity and fiscal fragility.

But some things have also changed. The Global South now accounts for over 40 percent of global output. Capital increasingly flows toward developing economies, while their expanding populations are becoming the primary drivers of global labor, consumption and urbanization.

Decisions made in the Global South will shape the future of the world economy.

The Global South also has vast reserves of oil, gas, minerals, tropical forests, freshwater systems, and biodiversity. These countries have many of the essential inputs required for batteries, electric vehicles, and renewable energy infrastructure.

Whether these structural advantages translate into leverage depends on political and institutional choices. Resource-rich nations must move beyond extraction by developing domestic processing capacity, linking natural resources to industrial strategies and investing in research, innovation and technology.

When leaders from 29 Asian and African countries gathered in Bandung, Indonesia, in April 1955, they did not sign a military pact or trade agreement. Instead, they articulated a new vision of international relations based on sovereignty, equality, and the right to remain independent in Cold War rivalries.

Indonesia's founding president Sukarno argued that the prosperity of Asian and African peoples depended on solidarity among themselves. Dependence on outside powers, he warned, would merely reproduce old forms of subordination. The Final Communiqué of the conference placed economic cooperation at the core of this vision.

The Non-Aligned Movement extended this principle by asserting that neither Washington nor Moscow had the right to dictate the economic or diplomatic choices of developing countries.

Its members insisted on pursuing their own development models and foreign policies. The Group of 77 carried that insistence into the United Nations, where developing countries could leverage their numerical strength despite limited economic power. By 1978, the Buenos Aires Plan of Action had given South-South cooperation an institutional footing.

BRICS represents the latest stage of this evolution. Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa and Indonesia use the forum to coordinate on trade, development finance, energy, food security, technology and institutional reform. The New Development Bank is a tangible expression of that cooperation.

Underlying these efforts is a shared concern: the international order reflects the balance of power from 1945.

Countries that now generate the bulk of global growth are underrepresented in the IMF, the World Bank, the UN Security Council, and the bodies that write international financial rules. Reform remains a common objective, but progress has been slow.

Building the foundations of economic integration is not easy. Yet, the materials already exist: Indonesian nickel, cobalt from the Democratic Republic of Congo, lithium from Chile, agricultural expertise and biodiversity knowledge from Brazil, sovereign capital from the Gulf states, digital infrastructure from India, and manufacturing depth from China.

Combined strategically, these assets could significantly enhance the Global South's bargaining power.

The Global North continues to dominate key dimensions of international influence, including military strength, reserve currencies, major financial institutions, technological leadership and international standards that govern global trade. This is not merely a historical legacy; it remains the active structure that determines whose voice carries weight in global negotiations.

For Global South countries, critical minerals offer the clearest opportunity to enhance their leverage. Demand for lithium, nickel, cobalt, graphite, copper, and rare earths is expected to shoot up as electric vehicles, batteries, solar capacity, wind installations, and grid infrastructure expand across the world. Many of these resources are concentrated in developing countries.

The question is whether critical minerals will help redistribute power, or simply reinforce old patterns of dependence under greener branding.

Unless mineral-rich countries develop domestic processing capacity, enforce environmental rules, manage revenues transparently, protect local communities and invest in education and skill development, the energy transition risks creating a new cohort of raw material suppliers in a cleaner but equally unequal global economy.

China has built its strengths in batteries, solar panels, electric vehicles, and rare earth processing through decades of industrial policy, infrastructure investment and technological upgrading.

The process was neither quick nor inexpensive, but it secured China a competitive position in global supply chains.

India took a different route, combining digital public infrastructure, pharmaceutical production, space technology and knowledge-intensive services to create a development model less dependent on natural resources.

The approaches differ, but the underlying logic is the same. A more balanced international order requires meaningful changes from developed countries.

Technology transfer must involve genuine knowledge sharing rather than merely licensing proprietary systems.

Green investment should support processing industries in resource-rich countries rather than offshoring the value-added stages to wealthy industrial economies. Research partnerships should strengthen local capabilities rather than extract data from the South to feed knowledge systems in the North.

The Global South's obligations to itself are equally demanding. Governments that fail to invest resource revenues in education, technical training, environmental protection and effective institutions will struggle to build a robust industrial base regardless of external conditions.

Likewise, opening to global markets without developing value-added industries only recreates dependence in more sophisticated forms. A more effective path is a strategy that is calibrated, accountable and coordinated with genuine South-South partners rather than managed in competitive isolation.

Natural resources have become diplomatic currencies because they influence critical issues — energy security, industrial competition, climate outcomes, digital supply chains and defense capabilities — that are central to every major negotiation.

The Global South holds these currencies in real and growing quantities. The question is how wisely they will be spent.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

WALDEMAR KARPA

Take the 'Sanchez Way'

The future of EU-China relations lies not in fortress-like trade defenses, but in the cooperative, competitive and deeply integrated statecraft of the green frontier

As the European Union moves to tighten trade defenses against Chinese green technologies recently, Spain is quietly testing a different approach. Rather than treating China's manufacturing strength only as a threat, Madrid is seeking to turn it into localized investment, industrial capacity and green-transition momentum. This contrast makes the "Sanchez Way" more than a bilateral story; it is a test of whether Europe can move beyond defensive protectionism and build a more pragmatic relationship with China.



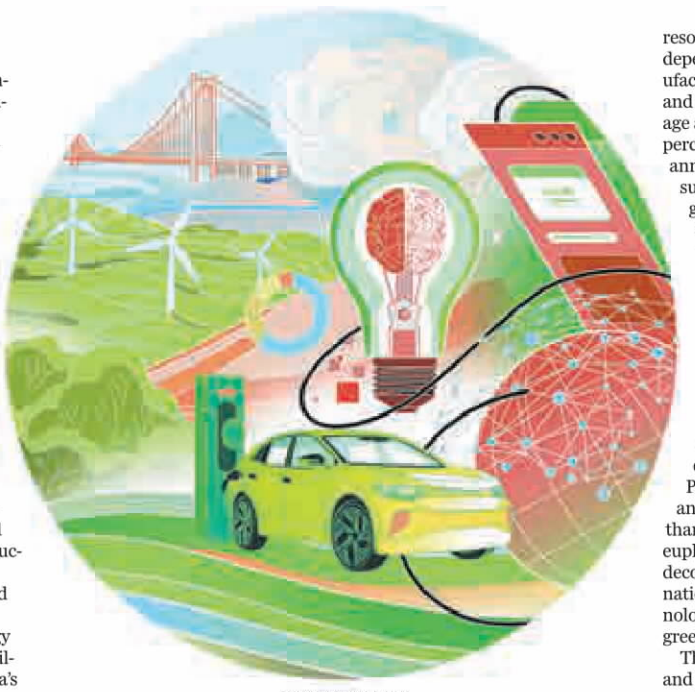
President Xi Jinping and visiting Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez declared on April 14 that China and Spain should strengthen cooperation, oppose a return to "the law of the jungle" in international relations and jointly defend true multilateralism. While Brussels and Paris are erecting tariff walls against ultra-competitive Chinese green technologies out of concerns over a second "China Shock", Madrid has quietly pioneered a different path.

This was Sanchez's fourth visit to China in four years, a sustained diplomatic courtship culminating in what can only be described as the "Sanchez Way": a pragmatically cooperative approach to the green transition that treats ecological statecraft as an instrument of national industrial sovereignty rather than a luxury of climate diplomacy.

The timing was exquisite. On May 28, Spain dramatically withdrew its support for a French-led initiative to bolster the European Union's trade defences against China. The non-paper, co-signed by Italy and the Netherlands, had sought sweeping new powers to investigate market distortions and penalize Chinese imports. Within days of its technical drafting, Spain's Minister of Economy Carlos Cuerpo said there was "no specific political support" for such measures, calling instead for engagement with China "from equal to equal, on an equal footing". This sudden reversal underscores a deeper European schism: while the European Commission seeks to de-risk and insulate, Spain has recognized a fundamental industrial reality — Europe cannot achieve its ambitious net-zero targets without China's manufacturing scale, and China cannot sustain its export-driven green expansion without Europe's affluent markets.

To understand the "Sanchez Way" is to examine the Iberian Peninsula's rapid transformation into China's premier green gateway to the European continent. Rather than viewing Chinese electric vehicles and lithium-ion batteries as existential threats to domestic manufacturing, Sanchez has actively courted Chinese greenfield investment, successfully transforming potential import competition into localized industrial partnerships.

The crown jewel of this strategy is the 400 million euros ($468 million) joint venture between China's Chery Automobile and Spain's Ebro-EV Motors in Barcelona's historic Zona Franca. The facility, which rolled out its first S700 SUV in late 2024, is on track to produce 50,000 vehicles annually by 2027, scaling up to 150,000 by 2029. Chery thus becomes the first Chinese automaker to manufacture passenger vehicles on European soil, reducing its exposure to EU countervailing duties by localizing production and employing Spanish workers. In Zaragoza, global battery giant CATL has entered into a 4.1 billion euros ($4.8 billion) joint venture with Stellantis to construct a massive gigafactory, which is projected to reach up to 50 GWh in annual capacity. By offering skilled labor at costs below the Western European average, coupled with robust logistics hubs in Valencia and Bilbao, where Chinese State-owned COSCO holds major port concessions, Spain has made itself indispensable to China's "produce globally, serve globally" model.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

This Spanish model finds a fascinating echo in Central Europe. On May 26, at Kozminski University in Warsaw, China's Ambassador to Poland Lu Shan delivered a landmark address counting green transition not as a geopolitical battleground, but as a shared industrial frontier. Poland, much like Spain, is a critical swing state in Europe's climate future. As the ambassador noted, both nations share remarkably similar structural constraints: deep coal dependency, energy-intensive industrial bases, high sensitivity to transition costs and an acute anxiety that premature decarbonization will hollow out manufacturing competitiveness.

Ambassador Lu's message to the Polish business and academic elite was one of industrial optimism. The energy sector, he argued, has undergone a profound ontological shift: from a model reliant on resource endowment to one dependent on technology and manufacturing capability. Between 2012 and 2024, China sustained an average annual economic growth of 6.1 percent, with only 3.4 percent annual growth in energy consumption, while clean energy grew to represent 11.4 percent of GDP in 2025. Poland, already home to one of Europe's largest battery manufacturing clusters, could replicate the "Sanchez Way" by combining its robust industrial infrastructure with Chinese supply-chain efficiency and capital. As Ambassador Lu explicitly stated: "The scale advantage of China's new energy industry can help Poland lower transition costs and accelerate its pace." Rather than treating "de-risking" as a euphemism for protectionist decoupling, Central European nations can leverage Chinese technology to build their own domestic green resilience.

The friction between Brussels and Beijing stems from a fundamental divergence in how both blocs conceptualize decarbonization. The EU has pursued a demand-side, regulatory approach: the Emissions Trading System puts a carbon price of approximately 78 euros per ton, internalizing pollution costs to force behavioral shifts. China, by contrast, has adopted a supply-side, industry-first model — supplying global markets with affordable green technologies while maintaining a much lower carbon price of around 11 euros per ton and still burning half the world's coal. Yet this supply-side surge has performed a global public good: by investing over $50 billion in solar photovoltaic supply chains, China has single-handedly made solar the cheapest source of electricity in most parts of the world.

Pure sectoral protectionism is ecologically self-defeating: it will raise transition costs for European utilities and consumers without reviving domestic manufacturing that has already been outcompeted.

To transcend this gridlock, the EU and China must move beyond the binary of capitulation or protectionism. Five recommendations offer a blueprint for ecological realpolitik.

First, establish a greenfield localization protocol, offering tariff exemptions to Chinese manufacturers who localize supply chains and employ European labor — the Chery-Barcelona model scaled continent-wide. Second, calibrate the carbon border adjustment mechanism with carbon market linkage, granting partial relief to Chinese exporters that verifiably use certified green electricity. Third, forge a circular economy compact with joint battery recycling standards and "health passports" for critical minerals. Fourth, launch triangular partnerships in the Global South, combining Chinese manufacturing efficiency with European green finance and ESG governance. Fifth, integrate China into the Coalition of Trade Ministers on Climate to formalize rules distinguishing legitimate green subsidies from market-distorting state aid.

The "Sanchez Way" is neither naive appeasement nor European weakness. It represents a clear-eyed recognition that, in an era where climate change has breached the 1.5 C threshold and threatens to cross 2 C by 2045, treating the green transition as a geopolitical football is a luxury the planet cannot afford. The future of EU-China relations lies not in fortress-like trade defenses, but in the cooperative, competitive, and deeply integrated statecraft of the green frontier.

The author is an economist and the head of the Department of Economics at Kozminski University in Warsaw. The author contributed this article to China Watch, a think tank powered by China Daily. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

ZHANG CHAO

New dynamic, not reset

Managing the China-Europe relationship requires establishing basic understandings to better manage their differences

On May 29, the European Commission held an orientation debate to take stock of its China policy. The outcome was telling: While Beijing is still a critical partner, the commission now views the bilateral trade and investment relationship as "not sustainable". The debate unfolded just days after five European Union member states co-signed a joint paper urging more aggressive trade measures against China, while the EU Commissioner for Industrial Strategy Stephane Sejourne branded China's conduct as "predatory".



In recent years, the pandemic, mutual sanctions and the Ukraine crisis have all contributed to the deterioration of China-Europe ties. But more corrosive is the misperception that has taken hold: Brussels increasingly defines China policy through the prism of its ties with the United States. This makes managing the relationship far more complex.

Beneath these immediate triggers lies a deeper structural transformation. The relative positions of China and Europe — to one another and in the world — have changed in fundamental ways.

Several decades of breakneck growth have not only eradicated extreme poverty in China but built world-leading capacity in artificial intelligence, robotics and new energy. Chinese exports to Europe have climbed up the value chain, shifting from cheap consumer goods to machinery, high-end equipment and electric vehicles. As a response, European traditional industries have increasingly turned toward protectionism.

China and Europe are not adversaries by design, but they could become so by default. The time has come to focus more deliberately on steering the relationship toward a brighter future. That requires revisiting the basic understandings that once provided stability, to find ways to coexist despite differences.

China's positive influence through its win-win cooperation now radiates well beyond its neighborhood. Through the Belt and Road Initiative, China's economic and cultural presence has reached deeply into the Global South. The EU's Global Gateway initiative was meant as a counterweight, but it arrived too late and on too small a scale to bring real results in Global South countries.

Yet to paint Europe simply as a loser would be a mistake. European companies have earned vast profits in China, and cooperation on climate change has delivered real results. However, the uncomfortable fact remains: Europe's relative influence is fading from the geopolitical and technological center stage. The near-absence of European companies among the world's leading AI companies tells the larger story.

Europe's anxiety runs deeper than market share or technological leadership. China engineered its rise not by copying Europe, but by exploring its own path to modernization with Chinese characteristics based on its national conditions. Today, when observers look at Europe and see economic stagnation, weak governance and visible urban decay, cultural admiration may linger — but for some, Europe no longer looks like a model worth emulating.

This is the deepest source of European unease. From the turn toward protective measures to the insistence on framing China as a "systemic rival" — all of it betrays a fear of growing irrelevance. The convergence narrative is dead. Both China and the EU now inhabit a new reality.

Acknowledging this new reality means accepting that the current trajectory of China-Europe relations may be hard to reverse. Rather than aiming for a full reset, Beijing and Brussels should focus on managing the relationship through the next period. This calls for a few basic understandings.

Europe needs to demonstrate both the will and the capacity to shape its own China policy, rather than taking its cues from Washington.

At the same time, the EU should understand that China does not seek to erode Europe's industrial base and it is open to more dialogue and cooperation that help avoid such a misperception.

Deeper trade and investment ties serve the interests of both sides, but Europe increasingly sees the matter differently. When the EU introduces protective measures, it stresses that it is not pursuing decoupling. Yet it should remain alert to the real-world consequences. The idea that Europe can leverage China's need for its market and certain technologies — pursuing a strategy of "escalate to de-escalate" — carries considerable risks. It is far easier to start a trade conflict than to end one. Europe should resist the temptation to copy the US playbook when engaging with China.



WANG XIAOYING / CHINA DAILY

At a practical level, China and Europe should create more channels of dialogue and seize some early, low-hanging fruit.

On economic security, think tanks from both sides can map out where interests overlap and where each side misreads the other's intentions. At the official level, China and the EU have established a rare-earth export-control dialogue. They can consider building on these efforts to establish a broader, higher-level economic security mechanism. Such a platform would allow both sides to seek institutional solutions before disputes escalate into crises.

On sanctions, the EU should demonstrate greater sincerity. The EU's unilateral sanctions against Chinese companies over alleged support for Russia in the Ukraine crisis are eroding the broader relationship. After the EU sanctioned 27 Chinese entities in April, China responded by sanctioning seven EU companies. The EU should interpret this asymmetry not as a sign of weakness, but as a signal that Beijing remains mindful of the overall relationship. Both sides should go for dialogue before the logic of tit-for-tat becomes entrenched.

Low-hanging fruit does exist. Continued cooperation in small, technical areas can begin to rebuild a measure of trust. People-to-people exchanges are one such area. China has already introduced visa-free access for residents of 25 EU member states. The EU can respond with substantive steps to facilitate visas for Chinese residents. Third-party cooperation is another promising avenue: environmental protection, desertification control, biodiversity conservation and humanitarian assistance offer spaces where habits of cooperation can be rebuilt step by step.

China and Europe are not adversaries by design, but they could become so by default. The time has come to focus more deliberately on steering the relationship toward a brighter future. That requires revisiting the basic understandings that once provided stability, to find ways to coexist despite differences.

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BUSINESS

RETAIL

Walmart China vows tighter food safety grip

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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A Walmart store in Yichang, Hubei province, on June 6. LIU JUNFENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Walmart China will significantly strengthen food safety and compliance controls, the retail giant said after China's top market regulator summoned its local membership retail arm Sam's Club China over repeated food safety violations.

The undertaking by Walmart China followed an official regulatory interview conducted by the State Administration for Market Regulation, which said it had uncovered food safety issues over an extended period across both Sam's Club physical stores and its e-commerce channels.

Regulators instructed Walmart China to strictly comply with China's food safety law as well as regulations governing chain retailers and online food sales operators, while strengthening supply chain oversight, risk control systems, and corporate accountability mechanisms to better safeguard consumer health.

In response, Walmart China said it "fully acknowledges, deeply reflects upon, and sincerely accepts" the regulator's instructions, adding that it has issued a formal apology to members for any inconvenience caused. The company said it has launched a senior management-led task force to conduct a full internal inspection and a rectification campaign spanning its operations.

Walmart China also pledged to reinforce food safety management across the entire value chain, enhance end-to-end quality control systems, and ensure strict compliance with all applicable laws and regulatory requirements. It further stated it would regularly report progress to authorities and "willingly accept public supervision", signaling a commitment to increased regulatory transparency.

67
number of Sam's Club stores in China

The regulatory intervention comes amid a series of reported food safety incidents linked to Sam's Club China. Among the widely reported cases, a consumer in Wuhan, Hubei province, alleged that Thai coconuts purchased at Sam's Club showed purplish flesh and cloudy coconut water. The consumer suspected improper storage conditions or product deterioration.

Data from Black Cat, a consumer complaint platform under Sina, show that the retailer has so far accumulated about as many as 15,000 consumer complaints, with a significant proportion related to food safety and product quality issues.

Recently, sales of near-expiry food products both in-store and online at Sam's Club sparked public outcry. Consumers reported receiving vegetable salads via Sam's Club delivery that had fewer than 24 hours remaining before expiration. At the time, customer service responded: "If you do not wish to receive near-expiry items, you need to leave a note in your order saying 'No near-expiry products'."

The brand has also faced criticism over its shifting product strategy. Last year, consumers questioned the introduction of mass-market snack products such as Orion pies and Panpan walnut vanilla puffs — items widely available in ordinary supermarkets — arguing that they were inconsistent with Sam's Club's positioning as a premium, curated membership retailer.

Even so, Sam's Club remains a key growth driver for Walmart China as the company continues expanding its membership retail model in the country.

The membership warehouse chain has opened 10 new stores over the past year and plans at least 14 additional locations in 2026. As of April 30, Walmart operated 278 Walmart stores in China, while Sam's Club had expanded to 67 stores.

According to the China Chain Store and Franchise Association, Walmart China reported sales of 195.86 billion yuan ($28.9 billion) in 2025, achieving sustained double-digit revenue growth. Sam's Club China also saw strong performance last year, with full-year sales surpassing 140 billion yuan and a paid membership base exceeding 10 million for the first time.

But despite strong growth, Sam's Club China has faced increasing scrutiny over its ability to maintain consistent product quality amid rapid expansion. Some posts on social media platform RedNote have also involved speculation over food safety concerns after last year's change of senior management roles.

Jason Yu, general manager at CTR Market Research, said that attributing recent issues solely to leadership changes or corporate restructuring is overly simplistic.

Yu said: "For a retail enterprise, the root cause invariably lies in the comprehensiveness of its end-to-end quality control system.

"The more stores it opens, the harder it becomes to rely exclusively on niche, small-batch production regions or a single tier of premium suppliers to meet nationwide demand."

Exports show sustained signs of resilience

Overseas sales of Chinese ICs surged to record $35.55 bln in May, top category

By **WANG KEJU**
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With industrial production maintaining steady growth in May, China's exports continued to show strength, underscoring the role of manufacturing capabilities and external demand as key pillars of economic stabilization, economists said.

However, they cautioned that consumption showed signs of slowing for the world's second-largest economy, pointing to persistent pressure on domestic demand recovery, a trend that will require more forceful policy support.

Their comments came as fresh data showing that China's value-added industrial output — which is used to measure the activity of large enterprises with annual main business turnover of at least 20 million yuan ($2.94 million) — grew 4.5 percent year-on-year in May.

In particular, high-tech manufacturing, covering sectors such as computers and electronic equipment, led the nation's industrial production last month, surging 15.1 percent year-on-year and accelerating by 2.3 percentage points from the previous month.

Output of integrated circuits jumped 22.9 percent year-on-year to 49.6 billion units in May, while industrial robot output climbed 27.9 percent to 101,150 units.

"China's move up the manufacturing value chain, coupled with a global artificial intelligence investment boom, continues to boost exports of high-tech goods," said Feng Lin, executive director of research at Orient Golden Credit Rating International.

Feng said China's exports of ICs surged to a record $35.55 billion in May, overtaking all other categories to become the country's largest single export, while automatic data processing equipment and components also posted strong gains, with these exports reaching $26.89 billion in May, up 66.1 percent year-on-year.

"Global AI investment enthusiasm has further intensified, with chips, computer components and electronic component prices continuing to rise, strengthening their pull on China's export value," she added.

Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOCI China, said China's export edge — especially in high-tech goods — will be a key stabilizer for growth in the second half.

In sharp contrast to the industrial and export strength, domestic retail sales of consumer goods, a key indicator of the country's consumption strength, fell 0.6 percent year-on-year in May, marking the first monthly decline since late 2022 and signaling weakness in household consumption, experts said.

Wen Bin, chief economist at China Minsheng Bank, attributed the contraction to multiple factors, including the diminishing impact of trade-in subsidy programs and a cautious consumer outlook.

"The marginal effect of the trade-in policy is fading. Earlier rounds of subsidies have already pulled forward demand for cars, home appliances and consumer electronics, and the current subsidy scale and rates are both lower than last year," Wen said.

The weakness in consumption was mirrored in the credit data. Household loans fell by 141.2 billion yuan in May, the second consecutive monthly decline, said the People's Bank of China — the country's central bank. Short-term household loans, a proxy for consumer credit, dropped by 84 billion yuan.

The retail sales decline was driven largely by weakness in goods consumption. However, services retail sales continued to grow, rising 5.4 percent year-on-year in the first five months, highlighting a structural shift in consumer preference toward experiences over goods.

Looking ahead, Wen expects the government to maintain supportive policies for consumption, including targeted subsidies for services, income growth initiatives and expanded social safety nets.

Rebuilding consumer confidence will take time as households continue to repair balance sheets and remain cautious about income and employment prospects, he added.

Retail MNC seen recalibrating Beijing store presence

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**

Walmart is reported to be planning a recalibration of its physical retail presence in Beijing through the introduction of a new generation of smaller-format stores, signaling a strategic shift in response to the country's rapidly evolving retail landscape.

The step will mark a significant development as Walmart has, for some years, refrained from prioritizing the Beijing market.

Walmart's physical footprint in Beijing has contracted significantly in recent years. Data indicate the company currently operates five stores in the city. Since entering China in 1996, the company has faced sustained pressure from the rise of e-commerce and the expansion of discount and community-based retail formats, which have eroded the competitiveness of traditional big-box stores.

However, according to staff at BHG Mall in Changping district, a Walmart supermarket is undergoing renovation at the site of a former BHG grocery store, which closed at the end of May. While the final format has not yet been officially disclosed, the store is expected to open in the coming months. Personnel at the BHG Mall in Shunyi district said its underground supermarket space was handed over to Walmart for redevelopment following closure on May 26, with the opening timeline yet to be announced. Walmart China did not comment on the new development.

Walmart's strategy is increasingly centered on smaller, more localized store formats. In early 2025, the company launched a community store pilot in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, covering about 500 square meters and offering around 2,000 product items or stock-keeping units (SKUs) focused on daily essentials.

A more significant milestone came in April 2026, when Walmart reopened its renovated outlet in Chengdu, Sichuan province, as a "New Generation Store". The nearly 3,000 sq m outlet carries around 10,000 SKUs, emphasizing fresh food and private-label products under the Marketside brand. Walmart has indicated this format will serve as a blueprint for broader nationwide upgrades, with more than 100 stores expected to be renovated or newly opened within the year.

Jason Yu, general manager at CTR Market Research, said Walmart's return to Beijing should not be interpreted as a revival of the traditional hypermarket model, but rather as part of a broader restructuring toward compact, high-efficiency stores.

He said that the new openings align closely with the "New Generation Store" format, positioned to compete with operators such as Hema and Dingdong Maicai. "This is not a return of the 10,000-square-meter hypermarket," Yu said, adding that Walmart is effectively transferring operational practices from Sam's Club into its core supermarket business.

Yu said that Sam's Club's robust performance in China provides financial support for Walmart's restructuring efforts, enabling the company to close underperforming locations while investing in upgraded formats. The Marketside private label, he added, mirrors the value proposition, leveraging centralized sourcing and supply chain efficiency.

At the same time, industry consolidation — driven by the withdrawal of Carrefour, the financial difficulties of Yonghui and the acquisition of RT-Mart — has released prime retail locations, allowing Walmart to selectively reenter high-traffic urban areas, Yu said.

However, whether Walmart can reverse its broader operational decline will depend on the performance of these new formats over the next 12 to 24 months, Yu added.

Cross-river conduit


A recent aerial photo shows the construction site of a major railway bridge along the Yancheng-Yixing High-speed Railway in Yancheng, Jiangsu province. Stretching some 311 kilometers, the HSR — partially built by China Railway 24th Bureau Group — has 10 stations along the line, serving as a new rapid Yangtze River-crossing channel, supporting the high-quality integrated development of the delta region. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Pumped-storage hydropower to level up

By **ZHENG XIN**
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China's pumped-storage hydroelectricity industry is gearing up for opportunities during the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, serving as a critical engine for the nation's green transition and long-term energy security, said experts.

During the next five years, the country expects to see some 100 million kilowatts of new pumped-storage capacity become operational, with an average annual rollout exceeding 20 million kW, placing the industry at a new high, they said.

"Pumped-storage is to play an increasingly irreplaceable role in expanding the scale and quality of new energy, ensuring the safe and stable operation of the power system," said Zhao Zenghai, deputy head of the China Renewable Energy Engineering Institute.

Zhao said he believes that compared with the 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-25) period, the sector's development scale is expected to experience a rapid leap.

The 100 million kW of newly commissioned capacity is roughly 1.5 times the nation's total cumulative capacity at the end of 2025, with China's total operational pumped-storage capacity projected to reach around 160 million kW by 2030, he said.

Concurrently, the country will actively and systematically advance the construction of approved projects, striving to meet the power system's demand for 400 million kW of flexible capacity by 2035.

These insights were highlighted in the Pumped-Storage Industry Development Report 2025, recently released by the institute in Beijing.

The report noted a highly optimized spatial layout for the coming years. While projects during the 14th Five-Year Plan were heavily concentrated in eastern load centers to address peak-shaving demand in developed areas, the 15th Five-Year Plan will foster a new pattern of coordinated development between eastern load centers and new energy-rich regions in central and western China.

"While closer synergy with new energy will effectively smooth output fluctuations and substantially boost the utilization and consumption of renewables, it will also provide vital regulatory support for cross-provincial power transmission from new energy mega-bases, significantly enhancing the efficiency of transmission corridors," said Zhao.

Ye Xiaoning, a senior engineer at the State Grid Energy Research Institute, said pumped-storage power stations are expected to further solidify their role in system regulation in the years to come.

"In addition to leveraging their peak-shaving and valley-filling capabilities to rapidly respond to grid demands in the central and eastern regions, they will also be serving as vital regulatory support for outbound power transmission in the new energy-rich western and northern regions, effectively smoothing out wind and solar fluctuations and boosting the utilization of new energy," Ye said.

Pumped-storage power stations have been playing a powerful regulatory role within the power system, boasting outstanding peak-shaving and valley-filling capabilities, he added.

Capable of rapidly responding to grid regulation demands, smoothing out the volatility of wind and solar power generation, and effectively enhancing the integration and utilization of new energy, the industry has transitioned from mere scale expansion to prioritizing both scale and quality in recent years, placing greater emphasis on economic viability, safety and ecological friendliness, Ye said.

Technological innovation is also taking center stage. According to the institute, the next five years will see breakthroughs in large variable-speed units and stable operations under wide load ranges, alongside the widespread application of digital and smart technologies across the industrial chain to better meet the flexible regulation needs of a modern power system.

The robust momentum in China's new energy sector aligns seamlessly with its global leadership, said Francesco La Camera, director-general of the International Renewable Energy Agency.

A main driver of the global renewable capacity additions in 2025, which hit a record 692 gigawatts, China accounts for over 60 percent of global capacity additions, playing a leading role across the board in electric vehicles, energy storage deployment and grid investment, he said.

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BUSINESS

First national urban renewal plan unveiled

Some 15 trillion yuan in investment expected during 15th Five-Year Plan



A worker builds a public facility in a residential community as part of an urban renewal project in Tianjin on May 28, 2025. SUN FANYUE / XINHUA

By **WANG KEJU**
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China has unveiled its first national-level urban renewal plan, with market watchers expecting about 15 trillion yuan ($2.1 trillion) in investment during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), as the government seeks to modernize aging infrastructure, upgrade residential areas and boost domestic demand, experts said.

The plan, released in May by the State Council — the nation's Cabinet — is the first national-level guideline for urban renewal and the first sector-specific plan to be implemented following the release of the broader five-year blueprint.

It outlines quantitative targets, including the renovation of 500,000 dilapidated urban residential units, 115,000 aging residential communities, 1,500 outdated industrial districts and factory zones, 4,000 urban villages and 365,000 kilometers of underground pipeline upgrades by 2030.

In this context, China is expected to invest at least 15 trillion yuan in urban renewal projects during the 15th Five-Year Plan period, averaging 3 trillion yuan annually, said a research note by Huachuang Securities.

That would be slightly higher than the 2.6 trillion yuan and 2.9 trillion yuan invested in 2023 and 2024, respectively, said the Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development. The ministry said that in each of those years, about 60,000 urban renewal projects were completed nationwide.

Zheng Degao, vice-president of the China Academy of Urban Planning and Design, said that the targets were set based on "physical examinations" of cities and surveys of residents' needs.

For example, the renovation of aging residential communities will focus on those built 20 years or more ago, with flexible scope determined through special assessments, Zheng said.

A key challenge in urban renewal has been financing, and to this end, the plan identifies three sources of funding: fiscal funds, financial institutions and private capital.

Tang Daizhong, deputy director of the Department of Construction Management and Real Estate at Tongji University, said each funding source bears different risks, responsibilities and return expectations, and they must work in tandem.

Fiscal funds serve as a safety net, Tang said, adding: "Public money plays a foundational and guarantee role, but it can also act as equity to attract financial capital from banks and policy lenders."

He said that in a typical project, fiscal funds might cover 20 percent of the investment, with financial institutions providing the remaining 80 percent, leveraging public money to multiply total spending.

Financial capital also helps solve timing mismatches. Urban renewal projects often have long payback periods, while investors seek quicker returns.

"Long-term financial funds can extend repayment schedules so that future cash flows can cover the investment," Tang said, adding that private sector participation is best suited for operations.

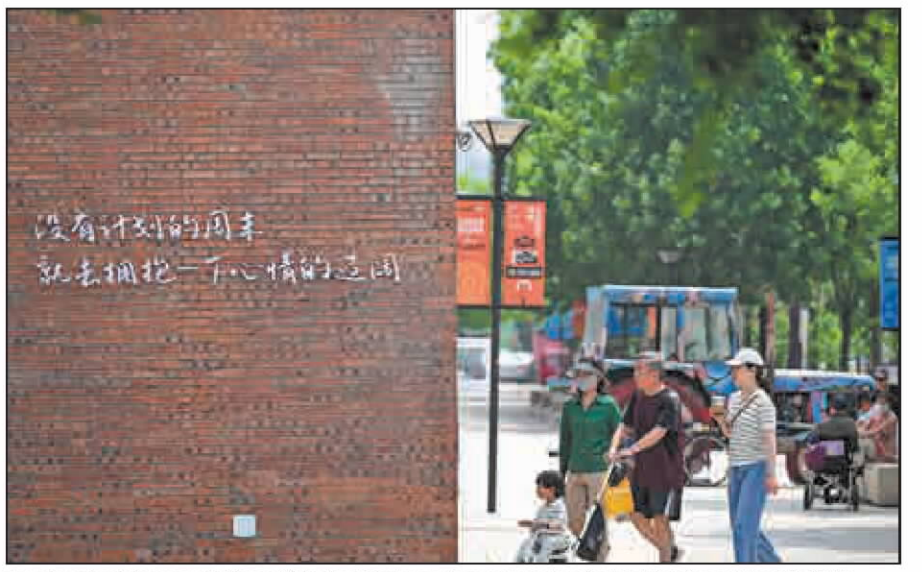
"Some comprehensive developers and operators can use their funds to run projects and rely on future operating profits to cover initial investments," he added.

The central government has selected 15 cities to receive central fiscal support for urban renewal projects in 2026, marking the third consecutive year of a dedicated funding program that has already channeled more than 20 billion yuan to 20 cities, including Shanghai and Beijing.

Beyond direct fiscal transfers, the State Council has also permitted local governments to issue special-purpose bonds to finance eligible urban renewal projects.

The China Index Academy said special-purpose bond issuances for urban renewal work across the country exceeded 350 billion yuan in 2025, a modest 2 percent increase from the previous year, accounting for 7.6 percent of total new special-purpose bonds.

That said, the nature of special-purpose bonds — requiring projects to generate enough revenue to repay principal and interest — means they cannot be used indiscriminately for public welfare initiatives like aging community renovations and underground pipeline upgrades, which produce little or no direct cash flow, experts cautioned.



Locals enjoy leisure activities within the Tiantuo urban renewal project in Tianjin on May 30, 2025. SUN FANYUE / XINHUA

> "Special bonds should play more of an equity role, not a blanket bailout ... When a project can achieve cash flow balance with special-purpose bonds covering about 20 percent of the investment, it can proceed."
>
> **Dong Yu,** executive vice-president of Tsinghua University's China Institute for Development Planning

"Special bonds should play more of an equity role, not a blanket bailout," said Dong Yu, executive vice-president of Tsinghua University's China Institute for Development Planning. "When a project can achieve cash flow balance with special-purpose bonds covering about 20 percent of the investment, it can proceed."

For purely public welfare projects that generate no revenue, Dong suggested drawing the project boundary wider to include some revenue-producing components.

"Planners can make the area larger, incorporating parts that can yield quality cash flow. Once you form a larger asset package, the whole thing becomes able to finance."

This bundling approach has been used in some large-scale redevelopment zones, where residential renovation is paired with commercial space, parking or community services that generate ongoing income.

Attracting private capital requires more than just profit potential, experts said, stressing the importance of contract enforcement and clear exit mechanisms.

"Legal protections for contracts are crucial to eliminate uncertainty and risk during private capital entry and development," said Zhao Yanjing, a professor specializing in urban economics at Xiamen University, adding that equally important is having financial tools for exit.

China has been expanding its real estate investment trust market, and urban renewal plans explicitly encourage the use of REITs and asset-backed securities for eligible projects. These instruments allow private investors to liquidate their stakes after projects become operational, reducing lock-in risks.

Policies deliver uptick in property sales, prices

By **WANG KEJU**

The traditional spring home-buying season, which typically peaks in March and April, stretched into May this year as policy support and targeted demand in first-tier cities drove a notable pickup in sales, helping to restore market expectations, experts said.

Data from the China Index Academy show that total new home sales of the country's top 100 real estate firms reached 1.23 trillion yuan ($181.89 billion) in the first five months, with the year-on-year decline narrowing for the third consecutive month.

In May alone, sales by those developers stood at 328.78 billion yuan, up 17.6 percent from April, according to the academy.

China's new home sales steadied in May, driven by a pickup in larger cities, even as the national market remained largely flat, market watchers said.

The 50 major cities tracked by real estate information provider CRIC recorded 13.62 million square meters of new home transactions in May, up 2 percent from April and just 2 percent lower than a year earlier.

The resilience came largely from larger cities. Combined transactions in Beijing and Shanghai, as well as Guangzhou and Shenzhen in Guangdong province, totaled 2.15 million square meters in May, an 11 percent month-on-month increase and a 6 percent year-on-year gain, according to CRIC.

The cumulative January-May sales in these four top cities fell 12 percent from a year earlier, but marked an improvement from an 18 percent decline in the January-April period.

Historically, housing sales taper off in May after the March and April rush. "The typical post-peak cooldown didn't happen this year," said Yan Yuejin, deputy head of the Shanghai-based E-House China R&D Institute.

"Policy support, combined with the release of pent-up demand in core cities, provided a floor for the market in May," Yan added.

From January to May, provincial and city governments across China rolled out more than 430 property-related policies, according to the China Index Academy. The measures included easing purchase restrictions, adjusting provident fund rules, offering direct purchase subsidies and improving urban renewal guidelines.

A key part of the policy toolkit has been the expansion of trade-in programs, in which local governments or developers purchase old homes to help owners upgrade to new properties. By the end of May, more than 40 such programs had been launched nationwide.



A residential development project is under construction in Fuzhou, Fujian province, on April 17. ZHANG BIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE

> The improvement in price signals, especially the moderation in secondary market declines, indicates that market expectations are slowly improving."
>
> **Chen Wenjing,** director of policy research at China Index Academy

Shanghai piloted a trade-in program in several districts in February and later expanded it to all of the city's central urban areas. Guangzhou also rolled out a similar initiative.

"These programs are effective in breaking the logjam," said Li Yujia, a researcher on residential property policy in Guangdong. "They provide liquidity to owners of old homes and create a more fluid market for new properties."

While new home sales in major Chinese cities showed unusual resilience in May, the secondary market also held steady, with transaction volumes in 20 key cities rising nearly 20 percent from a year earlier, according to data from the China Index Academy.

Beijing recorded about 16,000 second-hand home transactions in May, the highest for the month since 2021 and the third consecutive month above the 15,000-unit threshold that industry watchers consider the line between a sluggish and a stable market.

Shanghai, the country's largest second-home market by transaction volume, recorded 28,000 units in May — also a five-year high for the month. The city saw three separate days in May with more than 1,500 online contract signings, a pace that exceeded the daily average for most of the past year.

Price data in May add to a growing body of evidence that the prolonged property downturn may be showing signs of bottoming out in major cities.

The average price of new homes in 100 major cities rose 0.16 percent month-on-month to 17,156 yuan per square meter, and was up 2.03 percent from a year earlier. The monthly gain was driven largely by first-tier cities, where the launch of premium projects in prime locations pushed up the average, according to the China Index Academy.

In the secondary market, the average price of existing homes stood at 12,692 yuan per square meter, down 0.32 percent from April — the smallest month-on-month decline since mid-2024. The narrower drop suggests that seller sentiment and buyer demand are gradually finding a balance after more than two years of falling prices, the academy said.

"The improvement in price signals, especially the moderation in secondary market declines, indicates that market expectations are slowly improving," said Chen Wenjing, director of policy research at the academy.

However, the recovery remains uneven. While first-tier cities saw new home prices rise, many smaller cities still face downward pressure, Chen said, adding that the national secondary market as a whole remains in negative territory, even though the rate of decline has eased.

With mid-year financial reporting approaching, developers are expected to step up marketing, and the launch of new quality projects in core cities could support sustained improvement — at least in key urban hubs, Chen said.

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CHINA

Remembering wartime friendship



Students from the United States attending a youth camp of the Chinese Bridge visit the Memorial Hall to the Doolittle Raid in Quzhou, Zhejiang province, on Monday. The hall, established in 2018, commemorates Chinese citizens who aided and rescued US airmen after the Doolittle Raid. The 1942 bombing raid on Japanese cities, led by Lieutenant Colonel James Doolittle, was conducted to avenge Japan's surprise aerial attack on the US naval base at Pearl Harbor during World War II. The hall is a witness to the friendship between the Chinese and American peoples.
YANG MEIQING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Mass production of high-purity silicon-28 to boost tech sector

Breakthrough shows Chinese engineers closed a critical gap in industrial chain

By ZHAO LEI in Tianjin
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Chinese scientists have achieved a key technological breakthrough that is expected to advance the country's efforts in quantum computing and semiconductor development.

The Research Institute of Physical and Chemical Engineering of Nuclear Industry, a Tianjin-based subsidiary of China National Nuclear Corp, announced on Monday that it had mass-produced silicon-28 isotope with extremely high purity.

The product features an isotopic abundance exceeding 99.99 percent, ending China's reliance on imports for the material.

Han Liguo, a senior researcher leading the project, said natural silicon contains three isotopes — silicon-28, silicon-29 and silicon-30 — with silicon-28 accounting for 92.2 percent.

Characterized by zero nuclear spin, silicon-28 can significantly reduce environmental noise interference in quantum computing, earning it the title of "the purest silicon on Earth".

"By contrast, silicon-29, another stable isotope found in natural silicon, creates disturbances in quantum computing operations," Han said. "To minimize such interference, the isotopic abundance of silicon-28 must be raised above 99.99 percent."

According to the institute, only a handful of countries have mastered large-scale production of stable isotopes. As a result, China depended on imports for high-end stable isotope products, a situation that has constrained the development of related industries, affected security in key sectors and hindered independent progress in advanced equipment manufacturing, nuclear medical diagnostics and frontier scientific research.

Founded in 1964, the institute is China's leading research body specializing in isotope separation technology. In recent years, it has leveraged its expertise in nuclear technology to develop equipment and processes for the mass production of stable isotopes.

The institute said it has established a fully independent research and production system, ensuring a domestic supply of stable isotopes.

Han said high-purity silicon-28 is an ideal material for manufacturing silicon-based qubits. It significantly improves qubit coherence and control precision, providing critical material support for the research and development of silicon-based quantum computers.

The isotope can also be used in high-end semiconductors, she said, adding that semiconductor components made from silicon-28 offer improved thermal conductivity and performance stability, creating broad opportunities for use in advanced chip manufacturing.

Lei Zengguang, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and an expert in nuclear materials and nuclear fuels, said stable isotope technology is a key component of the nuclear industry.

"It may appear to be a niche field, but it is an essential enabling technology for many critical sectors, including precision manufacturing, quantum technology, biomedicine, environmental monitoring and nuclear energy," Lei said.

"Gaining full independent control of core stable isotope separation technology has long been a shared goal for those of us working in the industry. In recent years, the Research Institute of Physical and Chemical Engineering of Nuclear Industry has achieved major breakthroughs, successfully isolating more than 20 important stable isotopes."

The new capability to mass-produce silicon-28 with an isotopic abundance above 99.99 percent means Chinese engineers have not only mastered the relevant technologies but have also closed a critical gap in the industrial chain, Lei said.

He said the achievement carries major implications for China's quantum technology and high-end chip industries.

Beyond those sectors, high-purity silicon-28 also has significant potential for applications in advanced medical treatment and space exploration, he added.

China-ROK cooperation bolsters fishery resources

By ZOU SHUO
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China and the Republic of Korea carried out their seventh annual joint fish stock enhancement and release campaign in the Yellow Sea on Tuesday, releasing a total of 7.29 million juveniles of important commercial species into waters that have long sustained fishing communities in both countries.

The ROK released 4.29 million fry and juveniles of small yellow croaker, red seabream and swimming crab off Incheon, while China simultaneously released 3 million juveniles of greenfin horse-faced filefish, swimming crab and blackhead seabream off Yantai, Shandong province.

The campaign is based on a consensus reached at the 16th session of the bilateral fisheries joint committee in 2016. The event, which began in 2018, has released more than 18.75 million fry and juveniles into the Yellow Sea, contributing to the recovery of commercially valuable fish stocks, improvement of the marine ecosystem and higher incomes for fishermen from both countries, official data showed.

The cooperation is grounded in the China-ROK Fisheries Agreement signed in 2000. Over the years, the two sides have expanded collaboration in catch management, resource conservation, scientific research and joint law enforcement.



Workers release fry into the Yellow Sea during a joint fish stock enhancement and release campaign by China and the Republic of Korea in Yantai, Shandong province, on Tuesday.
XIAO SHUILIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

China has released more than 67.7 billion fry and juveniles of various aquatic species into the Bohai and Yellow seas.

The Yellow Sea serves as a vital fishing ground for both countries, with many commercially important species showing distinct seasonal migration patterns, according to the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences' Yellow Sea Fisheries Research Institute.

Since 2010, China and the ROK have conducted joint fisheries resource surveys, typically four times a year on a quarterly basis, with each side carrying out two cruises. The surveys involve mutual vessel boardings and data sharing to monitor stock fluctuations and inform conservation decisions, the institute said.

These fish spawn, nurse and feed in the inshore waters of China's Bohai and Yellow seas during warmer months, then migrate toward the central and southern Yellow Sea for wintering as water temperatures drop, the institute said.

This migratory pattern, together with the long-established fishing practices of both countries, means that the sustainable management of Yellow Sea fisheries requires joint efforts, the institute added.

Qu Jiangbo, general manager of the Tianyuan Aquatic Products Co, said the company supplied greenfin horse-faced filefish for this year's release campaign. The fry and juveniles were produced using controlled temperature and water quality breeding techniques, using wild-caught, disease-free broodstock with high genetic diversity.

Before release, the juveniles undergo strict quarantine and drug residue testing. Only those passing tests for 11 prohibited substances receive official certification for release, Qu said.

The company has invested 130 million yuan ($19 million) in a live germplasm bank for marine fish in northern China, which is expected to be fully operational before this year-end to preserve and utilize fishery genetic resources, he said.

Fishermen have also witnessed tangible benefits. Cui Gang, a local fisherman for almost 20 years, said that over the past five to six years, he has seen larger catches of greenfin horse-faced filefish, with rare red seabream occasionally appearing.

"The proportion of small mixed fish has declined, while commercially valuable species are larger and yields have stabilized," Cui said.

On the joint China-ROK fish stock enhancement and release effort, Cui said, "The sea has no borders, and neither do fish. If both sides take good care of these waters, we fishermen will have a future."

Cybercrimes that used a Trojan virus solved

By YANG ZEKUN
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Chinese police have cracked a series of cybercrime cases involving a new variant of the Silver Fox Trojan virus that has recently emerged in cyberspace, the Ministry of Public Security's cybersecurity bureau said on Tuesday.

The Trojan virus is highly deceptive and mainly targets employees of enterprises and public institutions, particularly finance personnel, the bureau said.

Once installed on a victim's computer, the malware can enable remote control, access account passwords, intercept short message service verification codes and obtain private data, it said.

According to the bureau, public security authorities have taken proactive action to investigate and crack down on such crimes.

In one case, police in Jilin province uncovered a criminal gang, led by a suspect surnamed Chen, that had developed a variant of the Silver Fox Trojan and used technical means to evade security detection.

The gang allegedly sent bulk phishing emails, stole corporate data and created fraud schemes to carry out criminal activities involving more than 7 million yuan ($1 million), police said.

Local police have taken criminal compulsory measures against Chen and 26 other suspects. The case is under further investigation.

Police warned the public to download software only from official websites and to carefully check domain names to avoid fake sites that use similar-looking characters, multiple hyphens or unofficial suffixes.

The public should also be cautious of links shared in chat groups under labels such as "meetings" or "subsidies" and verify them with the sender by phone or video call before opening them, police said. Any link requesting SMS verification codes or a bank card PIN should be treated with caution.

In the event of abnormal computer actions, including a mouse moving on its own or software automatically sending messages, users are advised to immediately disconnect the device from the internet, police said.

Users should also change passwords for social media and banking accounts on a secure device, notify friends, colleagues and clients that the account may have been compromised, and contact IT personnel or use professional antivirus software to conduct a full scan. Reinstalling the operating system may be necessary in serious cases, police added.

In line with China's Criminal Law, illegally intruding into computer information systems, stealing data or illegally controlling such systems can result in imprisonment, criminal detention and fines, depending on the severity of the offense. The law also punishes those who provide programs or tools for such illegal activities.

Festival treat



A keeper feeds a specially made *zongzi*, a traditional delicacy usually associated with Dragon Boat Festival, to an Asian elephant at the Qingdao forest wildlife world in Shandong province on Monday. Animals enjoyed custom-made treats ahead of the festival which will be celebrated on Friday this year.
YU FANGPING / FOR CHINA DAILY

Gene editing can treat rare inherited disease

By WANG XIAOYU
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Chinese researchers have reported the first clinical use of a domestically developed RNA-editing technology to treat Duchenne muscular dystrophy, or DMD, a severe inherited disease that causes progressive muscle loss. They also unveiled a significantly upgraded version of the platform that could broaden the future use of RNA-based therapies.

The research team, led by Wei Wensheng of Changping Laboratory and Peking University's School of Life Sciences, published its findings in two papers in the journal Cell on June 10.

The RNA-editing platform, called LEAPER — short for Leveraging Endogenous ADAR for Programmable Editing of RNA — was first developed in 2019. It works by directing naturally occurring enzymes in human cells to correct errors in RNA, the molecule that carries genetic instructions used to make proteins. The latest third-generation version of the technology has improved editing efficiency and accuracy, allowing researchers to target genetic sites that were previously difficult to modify.

"The biggest advantage of LEAPER is that it uses the body's own machinery and does not require the delivery of additional gene-editing enzymes," Wei said.

"This not only simplifies treatment delivery but also reduces the risk of immune reactions and other safety concerns, offering a new option for treating genetic diseases," he said.

Using the technology, the team developed a candidate drug for DMD, a rare inherited disorder that mainly affects boys. The disease causes worsening muscle weakness and often leads to death from respiratory or heart failure in early adulthood.

DMD is estimated to affect about 250,000 people worldwide, including around 70,000 in China, which has the largest patient population. Existing treatments can only slow the disease's progression.

Working with researchers from Kunming University of Science and Technology in Yunnan province, Shanghai Jiao Tong University and other institutions, the team administered the experimental therapy to three pediatric patients.

After a year, all three patients showed sustained improvements in motor function, including stronger respiratory muscles, an important measure of disease progression. No serious adverse events were reported.

"This marks the first time a domestically developed RNA-editing technology has been used in clinical treatment and produced positive results," the researchers said. "It is also the first time globally that RNA editing has been applied to the treatment of DMD."

Wei said gene therapies hold significant potential for treating rare inherited diseases as well as a wider range of medical conditions. His team plans to develop safer, more versatile and precisely controlled therapies to benefit more patients.

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CHINA







Clockwise from left: Cao Qiuping checks a newly 3D-printed toy at a workshop in Beijing on May 28. Some cartoon character figurines created by Cao's studio. Toys created by artists at the studio who have some disabilities. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

Making toys and rebuilding lives

Workshop helps people with disabilities move from charity-dependent roles to market-driven employment

By LI LEI
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On a late morning in May, the high-pitched whine of 3D printers filled a small workshop in Beijing's Chaoyang district.

Cao Qiuping, a former Paralympian who uses a wheelchair, had arrived early and was sorting piles of brightly colored plastic toys — stress-relief ribbons, Minecraft-style blocks and cartoon character figurines.

The souvenirs were destined for a Children's Day event in the nearby Sanlitun neighborhood.

The team's real goal was not just to make the children smile. They planned to give the toys away for free, while asking recipients to scan and join a WeChat group to become potential future customers for the workshop's other 3D-printed products.

For Cao and her two able-bodied partners, each free trinket is a small bet on a brighter future — one in which workers with disabilities compete in China's creativity market on the basis of their skill, not sympathy.

Technology as a bridge

Cao runs the Sanlitun 3D Printing Digital Workshop for People with Disabilities, a venture that is barely a few months old. The idea is to use additive manufacturing to help people with disabilities — who often struggle for years to find steady jobs — become designers, producers or operators of small businesses.

This unique model that ensures people with disabilities get paid jobs in technology-driven industries has the support of charity groups and federations representing local people with disabilities.

The workshop has just delivered its first commercial order: 50 3D-printed blind boxes featuring the bear mascot of the Fairmont Beijing Hotel in Sanlitun. The boxes, which feature four seasonal designs and a hidden "hotel chef" figurine, were produced using about 30 printers donated to the Chaoyang district by CFDP-Leye — a social enterprise that helps people with disabilities gain employment — through the China Foundation for Disabled Persons.

Behind that milestone lies a story of reinvention, resilience and the hard work of turning high-tech tools into means of ensuring sustainable livelihoods.

Looking back

Cao, now 47, knows all about braving the odds. In 1997, when she was 18, she was in a car accident on her way to school that led to her two lower limbs being amputated. "I felt like I'd been thrown from the clouds to the ground," she recalled. "Before the accident, I had dreams like any other teenager."

Her father sawed off every doorstep in their rural Beijing home to ensure her wheelchair could move freely. But they had a squat toilet so her parents had to bodily lift her to the restroom and back daily.

Her luck changed in 2003, the year she discovered wheelchair basketball. A coach spotted her at a local sports event, remarked it was terrible for someone so young to be so badly injured and asked for her contact details.

That chance encounter led to her finding a place on the Beijing women's wheelchair basketball team. By 2005, she was winning national championships.

In 2008, she went on to compete in the Beijing Paralympics.

"For the first time, I wasn't alone anymore," Cao said. "I met other people who use wheelchairs. I realized I wasn't the only one. It felt like coming back to life."

After the Games, Cao met her future husband, from the United States. They married, settled in Beijing and had two children. For more than a decade, she focused on raising her family. But as her children grew older, she began feeling left out. "When you stay home for years, you lose touch with the world," she said. "At first, I thought it was because of my disability. But later I realized anyone who stays home for too long feels disconnected."



Some 3D printed models based on traditional Chinese architecture and Terracotta Warriors on display at the studio in Beijing.
ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

Enter the 3D printer

Her way back to normal life was enabled by a strange gadget: a 3D printer.

Earlier this year, Cao visited Warm Home — a local community service center for residents with disabilities — and noticed the 3D printer. It had been donated as part of a technology empowerment initiative.

"I thought 3D printing was very high-tech, not for someone like me," she said. But with some training from CFDP-Leye, which had donated the machine, she began to learn the basics. "I realized it wasn't as difficult as I'd imagined."

Li Changsen, a technical trainer from CFDP-Leye who now works with Cao's team, said people with disabilities show exceptional focus when it comes to learning. "What I noticed is that they concentrate," he said. "They don't give up after just two days, like some able-bodied people might."

Cao had an idea which she shared with the Sanlitun subdistrict disabled persons' federation. Its chairperson, Zhang Xuechao, gave her the green light. A workshop was born this March.

Its core team comprises Cao; Wang Jing, a Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts graduate and mother of two; and Shen Liang, a programmer-turned-entrepreneur who volunteers as the workshop's technology strategist. Li Changsen provides technical support.

First order

Their first real test came sooner than expected. The Fairmont Beijing Hotel placed an order for 50 blind boxes featuring its bear mascot. The order was small — worth only about 1,500 yuan ($221.74) — but the stakes felt enormous.

"We spent around 80 hours on just the design," said Wang, who met Cao years ago through their children, who were classmates. "Turning a flat mascot into a 3D-printed figure was completely new. We had to revise it again and again."

Li Siwei, a 38-year-old technician, was among the first apprentices at Li Changsen's training sessions last July and one of the program's best graduates. A former soldier, Li was injured in a car accident in 2016 that left him with spinal injuries. "I'd heard about 3D printing for years but never had the chance to try it," he said. "Now, sometimes when certain things break down at home, I just design and print a replacement."

While Li Siwei did not himself work on the Fairmont blind boxes, he helped the team with other custom designs.

For the Fairmont project, the complex modeling was handled by Li Changsen while the core team focused on design iteration, assembly and post-processing. Because they were still learning advanced 3D modeling, they relied on Li Changsen to refine the digital files and ensure the bear mascot could be printed as separate pieces that could be assembled.

Shen said the Fairmont order proved a point. "That order barely covered the cost of materials," he said. "But it showed we could deliver professional-quality work. The hotel said the final product exceeded their expectations of what 3D printing could achieve."

Profitability

Despite the early success, the workshop is far from profitable.

"We're compromising on profit to build a reputation first," Cao said. "The Fairmont order covered the cost of raw materials, but that's it. No labor. No design fees. We're paying for credibility."

The team's business model is still taking shape. They have received small orders — toys for a weekend market and customized figurines for a piano teacher's students — but nothing steady. "Most people don't even know we exist," Cao said.

Technical dependence is a major challenge. While the workshop's members have mastered basic printing, complex modeling still requires outside help from Li Changsen.

"Our goal is to become independent," Shen said. "We want to train our people to become teachers. Li Siwei could be one of them."

Neighborhood strategy

Late last month, the team was preparing for a Children's Day event. Their plan was to print small toys and give them away to children and parents who scanned a QR code to join a WeChat group.

"It's about building a community," Shen said. "Once people are in our group, they'll know we exist. Maybe next time they need a custom-made gift, they'll think of us."

The strategy reflects a broader shift in Chinese cities: using training and technology to move people with disabilities from charity-dependent roles into market-driven employment.

"We don't want sympathy," Cao said. "We want equal opportunities. If a customer has a choice between us and an able-bodied competitor, we want them to choose us, not because they feel sorry for us, but because our quality is better."

For Cao, the immediate goal is modest: keep the printers running, find the next order and prove her team can survive on its own.

Small orders continue to trickle in, and Cao welcomes each one. "The orders are small, but they haven't stopped," she said. "They're still coming. We're always working on something. I'm not afraid of small orders — I'm only afraid of having none at all."







Left: Cao Qiuping discusses design details with Li Changsen, an able-bodied team member who provides technical support, at the workshop in Beijing. **Middle:** Wang Jing, a Tianjin Academy of Fine Arts graduate and mother of two, works on 3D modeling on her laptop at the workshop. **Right:** Wang exchanges ideas on the designing of toys with technician Li Siwei at the workshop. PHOTOS BY ZHANG WEI / CHINA DAILY

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Z WEEKLY

All about Gen Z

Z WEEKLY

What is the hundred-bird coat?



If you have the chance to visit a Miao village during festivals or marriage ceremonies, you will be amazed by the diverse and vibrant costumes and silver jewelry worn by Miao women.

Among the traditional costumes of different branches of the Miao ethnic group, the hundred-bird coat stands out as one of the most symbolic and visually distinctive.

Known for its vibrant colors, layered patterns and complex embroidery techniques, it is widely regarded as a concentrated expression of Miao cultural heritage — sometimes described as an "ethnic epic" woven into fabric that carries memory and identity.

The garment is traditionally made using Miao embroidery, a craft passed down through generations. Each coat can take months to complete, as artisans stitch detailed motifs based on memory, imagination and inherited visual language.

Historically, the hundred-bird coat was worn during important ceremonies to honor ancestors and mark significant life events. Over time, it has also become a form of festive attire, still closely associated with celebration and cultural continuity.

Besides patterns like frogs, butterflies and insects, a single garment may feature hundreds of bird-inspired motifs, including stylized or mythical forms such as "bird dragons" and feather decorations that contribute to its name.

These layered designs are not merely decorative; they reflect stories, beliefs, and symbolic connections between nature, ancestry, and identity within Miao culture.

Village runway redefines fashion

A grassroots stage turns craftsmanship and ethnic heritage into expression of cultural confidence.

By **WANG XINGWEI**
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Fashion is often defined by global runways, luxury houses and seasonal trends. But in the mountains of Southwest China's Guizhou province, a different vision is taking shape — one rooted not in exclusivity, but in craftsmanship and community.

For designer Yang Chunlin, better known online as Gu Axin, fashion is not something imported from Paris, Milan, London or New York, but something that grows out of local ethnic culture.

"Our rural everyday life, in fact, represents the pinnacle of Eastern aesthetics on the international stage," he said.

That belief sits at the heart of "Village T", or "Village Runway", a grassroots fashion initiative Yang launched two years ago.

It began as a small, improvised runway in an open field, where a ridge of farmland became the catwalk and villagers stepped naturally into the role of models.

As the project expanded, it later moved into larger cultural spaces, eventually appearing on national platforms such as the 2026 Spring Festival Gala. It has also participated in international cultural exchange events, including the Foire de Paris (Paris Fair) in France.

"There were no resources, no team, no experience, and many voices of doubt," Yang recalled the early days.

He said many locals initially believed fashion had nothing to do with them. "People in the mountains have rich culture and craftsmanship, but we often lack confidence and underestimate what we're capable of," he added.

For Yang, that perception gap was precisely why the project mattered — to create a stage for people from his hometown to be seen on their own terms.

What followed was not a conventional fashion production, but a collective act of creation. Elders, embroiderers and young villagers all contributed what they could — clothing, labor, and traditional craft knowledge — turning the early shows into a shared expression rather than a rehearsed presentation.

"There are no professional models, scripts, or staged performances," Yang said. For him, that is where the magic lies: its authenticity.

As "Village T" grew, it became a platform for showcasing Guizhou's intangible cultural heritage, particularly Miao embroidery and Dong brocade.

Miao embroidery, known for its freehand technique and rich symbolism, is often described as a form of visual storytelling. Its patterns carry ancestral memory, mythology and identity.

Among the garments featured in the show, one piece holds special meaning for Yang: a Miao embroidered jacket transformed from a traditional "hundred-bird coat", a ceremonial Miao garment. But Yang's decision to reshape it into a modern silhouette sparked local debate.

"Many people didn't understand and felt distressed, saying I was destroying an antique," he recalled.

For him, however, the transformation was never about erasing tradition, but about extending its life. "In its modern design, the new jacket fully retained all the hand embroidery and cultural totems of the original garment," Yang explained.

More broadly, his philosophy is that heritage must evolve to survive. Traditional craft, he argues, should not remain frozen in museums or confined to ceremonial contexts, but should continue to live through contemporary expression.

"When the showcase is presented abroad, the biggest reaction from foreign audiences is sheer amazement," Yang said.

During the Foire de Paris, Yang met a foreign designer who was deeply moved by the craftsmanship on display. "This isn't just clothing — it's a living art form, a culture with a soul," she said.

According to Yang, for many visitors, the most striking realization is that some ethnic groups preserve history not through written language, but through textile traditions, where embroidery itself serves as a living record of identity and memory.

A changing village

Today, "Village T" has become more than a fashion showcase. It has reshaped local life.

"More and more young people are willing to return home to start businesses, and the works of senior embroiderers have found new markets and increased in value," said Yang.

Tourism has grown, and traditional craftsmanship has regained cultural relevance. But perhaps its most lasting impact is less visible: a shift in how younger generations see themselves and their place in the world.

Children who once felt distant from global stages now find them within reach.

Six-year-old Yang Jiayu from the Yao ethnic group has already visited major cities and appeared at international events. "I've been to Beijing, Shanghai and to the New York Fashion Week with 'Village T'," she said.

Her peer, 11-year-old Zhou Yumo from the Dong ethnic group, describes how tradition is embedded in her clothing. "My aunt made this outfit for me by hand. It has a lot of silver ornaments that jingle when I walk," she said.

For 9-year-old Xu Kexin from the Bouyei ethnic group, the experience has also shaped her aspirations.

"When I grow up, I want to carry on the traditions of my people and become a cultural ambassador," she said.



Yang Chunlin (top) and people of all ages wearing traditional ethnic costumes taking part in "Village T" in Guizhou province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

LIANG GUOXIU / CHINA DAILY

Online
Watch the video by scanning the code.

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Podcasters explore hidden Xiapu

Through long-form conversations, podcasters turn Xiapu's local culture into stories that can travel across languages and borders.

By **GUO JIATONG**
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When Indonesian podcaster Rizky Ardi Nugroho arrived in Xiapu county, Fujian province, he expected to find the coastal scenery and distinctive sea erosion landforms that have made the area a favorite destination for photographers.

But during his three-day field trip, Nugroho discovered that Xiapu had much more to offer than picturesque landscapes. He was captivated by its maritime traditions, rich cultural heritage and vibrant community life.

"If you say Xiapu is a small county, I don't think so," he said. "The urban planning is very good, the city is very clean, and the people are very polite. It was beyond my expectations."

The creator of the Indonesian podcast *Do You See What I See* was among a group of domestic and international podcasters invited to a Xiapu field trip as part of the Second Gen Z International Podcast Festival from June 10 to 12. Nugroho's experience was exactly the kind of encounter the event hoped to create.

Themed "Xiapu: Where Mountains Meet the Sea", the festival aimed to encourage multilingual content creation through field visits and cultural exchanges, bringing together podcasters, communication professionals and young creators.

For nearly eight years, Nugroho has built a following through stories that bridge China and Indonesia, exploring culture, folklore and local traditions for Indonesian audiences.

During the trip, he was drawn not only to the county's natural views, but also to its efforts to preserve traditional culture, including wedding ceremonies, bamboo-stick dances, martial arts performances and historical artifacts.

One of his most memorable discoveries was the connection he saw between Xiapu and his homeland.

"As an archipelagic nation, Indonesia shares a long maritime tradition with China's southeastern coast. We share similar conditions in agriculture," he said.

Nugroho's discoveries, experts say, reflect a broader shift in international communication — from abstract national narratives to concrete local experiences.

"When storytelling reaches counties and smaller communities with distinctive local characteristics, it becomes more vivid and helps present a more comprehensive, authentic and multidimensional picture of China," said Zhang Yanqiu, deputy dean of the Institute for a Community with Shared Future at the Communication University of China.

She said podcasts are particularly suited to this kind of storytelling because they allow for sustained discussion and more focused exploration.

"If people want a deeper understanding of a topic, short videos are often not enough," she said. "Podcasts provide a more immersive experience and enable more precise communication."

This search for depth shaped the way many creators explored Xiapu.



Podcasters record a program in Dongbi village, Xiapu county, Fujian province. ZHANG XIAOYU / FOR CHINA DAILY



"As an archipelagic nation, Indonesia shares a long maritime tradition with China's southeastern coast. We share similar conditions in agriculture."

Rizky Ardi Nugroho, creator of the podcast *Do You See What I See*



"Long conversations force you to be more honest. After talking for an hour, you can't really hide behind a version of yourself."

Shanshan (pseudonym), one of the hosts of the podcast *Bye-Bye-Work*



"When people travel after listening to my podcast, I hope the landscapes they see come with 'subtitles'. There are stories behind them."

Yang Guowei, creator of the podcast *Grand Traveler: Humanistic Travel Audio Journal*

Finding deeper voices

Yang Guowei, creator of the travel podcast *Grand Traveler: Humanistic Travel Audio Journal*, has long documented destinations through history, geography and local culture.

In Xiapu, he spoke with a local seaweed farmer to better understand one of the county's pillar industries.

From the farmer, Yang learned that seaweed production runs from seedling cultivation in autumn to harvesting in spring. In the past, without machinery, workers had to rely entirely on manual labor to pull heavy seaweed from the ocean. The seaweed fields, arranged like rows of crops, required immense physical effort to harvest.

Although modern machinery has eased part of the burden, tasks such as drying the seaweed still require significant manual labor.

"After learning about the process, I realized how much effort goes into something we often take for granted," Yang said. "When people travel after listening to my podcast, I hope the landscapes they see come with 'subtitles'. There are stories behind them."

If Yang found hidden labor behind Xiapu's seascapes, other podcasters found emotional ties behind its cultural traditions.

Podcast hosts Zhang Erda and Shanshan (both pseudonyms), are known for discussing the thoughts and emotions of young urbanites on their podcast *Bye-Bye-Work*.

During their visit to Banyueli, an ancient village of the She ethnic group in Xiapu, they began reflecting on why some people remain so deeply connected to their places of origin.

One person who left a lasting impression was Lei Qisong, a local cultural inheritor and founder of a museum dedicated to preserving She culture.

Lei has invested his own money in the museum, collecting artifacts ranging from wood carvings and traditional costumes to furniture and objects used in She wedding customs. Together with his family, he has devoted himself to preserving and passing on local culture.

"People here genuinely love where they live. They identify with their culture, appreciate it and believe it is worth sharing with others. That kind of confidence is very contagious," Zhang Erda said.

That emotional and spiritual resonance is something Zhang Erda and Shanshan hope to convey to their listeners.

To them, the spirit of a place can be infectious, and it is this intangible quality that they want to capture through their podcast.

"They remind us of who we truly are," Zhang Erda said. "In cities, we often maintain boundaries and keep our distance, but in places like this, people are more open and eager to share their passions. This openness fosters genuine connections."

Making stories travel

For Zhang Erda and Shanshan, the trip is likely to become part of a future podcast episode.

Rather than simply recounting what they saw in Xiapu, they hope to use the journey as a starting point for broader discussions about travel, identity and the ways people connect with places.

"We usually focus on the thoughts and emotions of young people living in cities," Zhang Erda said. "A trip like this gives us an opportunity to connect personal experiences to larger themes that more people can relate to."

For Shanshan, podcasting is also rewarding for the host.

"Long conversations force you to be more honest. After talking for an hour, you can't really hide behind a version of yourself. You begin to understand yourself better, and listeners have time to think alongside you," she said.

According to Zhang Yanqiu, podcasts and other forms of "soft communication" can help local stories reach wider audiences. But turning those stories into effective international communication still requires precision, focus and continued exploration.

She said broader national narratives are ultimately built through specific, lived experiences rather than abstract concepts.

"When you travel and see different places, you begin to understand China in a more concrete way," she said.



Podcast creators pose for a group photo on Xiawei Island in Xiapu county, Fujian province. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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Z WEEKLY

Ceramics bring cultures closer

Shanghai event invites Chinese and foreign students to repair ceramics together, turning broken pieces into bridges of cultural understanding.



Carlotta Rose (left), Leandra Unterberg (second from left) and Michelle Rusyaeva (right) take part in a ceramic restoration workshop in Shanghai on June 12. ZHENG YIRAN / CHINA DAILY

By **ZHENG YIRAN** in Shanghai
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For international students Leandra Unterberg, Carlotta Rose, Michelle Rusyaeva, Erik Grigoryan and Yasir Mehmood, ceramic restoration offered a hands-on way to engage with Chinese cultural heritage — both challenging and enjoyable.

June 13 marked China's Cultural and Natural Heritage Day. To celebrate the occasion, the Changning district culture and tourism bureau in Shanghai organized a cultural heritage event featuring interactive experiences, including ceramic restoration.

The workshop was held on June 12, when the five international students from Shanghai Jiao Tong University and Tongji University joined the activity alongside Chinese participants, experiencing traditional craftsmanship up close.

Seated around tables filled with broken ceramic fragments, glue and restoration tools, students carefully worked to piece the objects back together, guided by instructors. The quiet, focused setting contrasted with the busy urban surroundings outside, as participants concentrated on aligning each fragment and restoring the broken pieces step by step.

For Rose from Germany, the activity offered both discovery and peace of mind.

"It is good to experience something that I had never encountered before," she said. "I like the calm atmosphere, where I can concentrate on small details."

That sense of discovery also extends into her daily life in Shanghai. "Life here is very different from that in Germany. There is so much to see and do," she said, adding that she has often seen local residents playing board games and dancing in public squares.

"They kindly invited me to join, and it was fun," she said.

Unterberg found the restoration process difficult. "You need to stay focused throughout the process," she said. But she believes the effort is necessary. "We should all treat cultural relics with care."

Like Rose, Unterberg has also developed a growing interest in China through daily life in Shanghai.

"At a park in Changning district that I often walk by, there are people practicing calligraphy with water brushes on the ground. It is fascinating," she said.

> "By restoring the ceramic, we are restoring history. Although the object was broken, we brought it back to life by connecting the pieces."
>
> **Yasir Mahmood,** a Pakistani student in China

She has also participated in other cultural experiences with friends, including a tea ceremony.

"I've always been curious about the differences and similarities between Chinese and European tea culture," she said.

Rusyaeva highlighted her appreciation of Chinese culinary culture, including dumplings, steamed buns, noodles, wontons and Peking roast duck, which she said are very different from her usual diet.

"Chinese culinary culture is one of the oldest in the world and very different from that of Europe," she said. "When I go back home, I would like to cook Chinese dishes for my family and tell them about my experience in China."

Mehmood said the activity helped him better understand traditional craftsmanship.

"Before coming here, I had only read about ceramic restoration in books," he said. "My biggest takeaway is that it requires patience and concentration."

He added that the process carried symbolic meaning.

"By restoring the ceramic, we are restoring history. Although the object was broken, we brought it back to life by connecting the pieces."

Beyond the workshop, Mehmood has also experienced other aspects of Chinese culture, including mooncake making, Peking Opera performances and dragon boat racing.

He said that when he returns to Pakistan, he will share his experiences with his friends and family.

"I think it's a great way to bridge cultural gaps between China and Pakistan and promote mutual understanding."

Experts say such personal exchanges reflect the broader value of hands-on cultural experiences in deepening understanding across cultures.

"Replacing one-way explanation with immersive experiences like ceramic restoration can reduce cultural barriers and encourage emotional connection," said Zhang Zhuo, a researcher at the Institute of Journalism of Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences.

She added that such activities help transform abstract cultural symbols into tangible skills, allowing participants to better understand traditional craftsmanship. International students, she noted, can serve as cultural connectors who help share their experiences with wider audiences after returning home.

"As cross-cultural communication nodes, international students can help extend the reach of Chinese cultural heritage through word-of-mouth sharing," she said.

Grassland teenagers step onto soccer's biggest stage

By **GUI QIAN**
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The roar of tens of thousands of spectators rolled across Mexico City Stadium on June 11 local time, shortly before the opening match of the FIFA World Cup 2026 kicked off, as six Chinese teenagers took part in the entrance ceremony in a moment they had once only imagined from home.

At the players' tunnel, Hao Xuan, Gao Haokai, Lyu Yuchen, Bao Wenbo, Cui Xiaofei and Lin Nandifu stood on both sides of the entrance, holding the FIFA flag. In the bright glare of the stadium and in front of a global audience, the students from the Inner Mongolia autonomous region looked composed beyond their years.

Selected from campus soccer players across the region through a flag bearer program organized by Mengniu, an Inner Mongolia-based dairy company and the official sponsor of the FIFA World Cup 2026, the six were stepping onto soccer's biggest stage for the first time.

"I used to watch the World Cup only on television. I never thought I would one day stand on the pitch," said Bao, 17, from Hailar No 1 Middle School in Hulunbuir. "It has been my dream since childhood to be part of it, no matter what role I played."

Bao's story reflects the journey of the six young athletes, all of whom emerged from Inner Mongolia's grassroots soccer development system. As China's first pilot province-level region for soccer reform and development, Inner Mongolia has made campus soccer a foundation for the sport's growth.

With policy support and continued investment, the region has strengthened the youth soccer chain, from building and renovating standard pitches to training coaches and organizing regular competitions. Parents of the young flag bearers said the change has been visible, giving their children more chances to compete and a stronger soccer atmosphere in which to grow.

"This is not just a trip, but a chance for them to see the world through soccer," said Shi Chunguang, assistant vice-president of Mengniu. "Standing on the sport's biggest stage can give these children confidence and a broader vision that no classroom can provide."

On the day of rehearsal, the six teenagers set out at 5 am and stood in the stadium for eight full hours. They had to push through jet lag, fatigue and language barriers. During breaks, they exchanged thoughts about soccer with peers from Mexico and South Africa, using simple English and gestures as they compared the soccer cultures of their countries.



(From left to right) Bao Wenbo, Lyu Yuchen, Liu Nandifu, Hao Xuan, Gao Haokai and Cui Xiaofei serve as FIFA World Cup flag bearers in an event organized by Mengniu at Mexico City Stadium on June 11 local time. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Gao, 17, from No 4 Middle School of Baotou, was attending winter training when he learned he had been selected. To present his best self to the world, he began what he called "personal image management" — working out and paying closer attention to his diet.

"Since I've made it to this stage, I have to do my best," he said.

The most nerve-racking moment came when the entrance ceremony officially began. Gao was the first in his group to walk out. But the moment he stepped from the players' tunnel onto the stadium turf, his nervousness gave way to pride.

"I felt that I was not only representing myself, but also my hometown and my country, while showing the world what young Chinese soccer players are like," he said.

Cui, 15, from Tianshan No 6 Middle School in Ar Horqin Banner, Chifeng, has been taller than most of her peers since childhood. She was noticed by the school team coach and began more systematic training. Over time, she found herself falling in love with soccer.

"My family, coaches and friends all hoped I would broaden my horizons, and they had great expectations for this opportunity," Cui said.

On WeChat and Douyin, her feeds were filled with messages of encouragement and congratulations from relatives and friends.

"They couldn't come, so I'll see it for them," she said.

On the World Cup's opening stage, the six teenagers from the grasslands made a brief but shining appearance. What they held high was not only the FIFA flag, but also a newly visible possibility for countless young soccer players behind them.

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SPORTS

WORLD CUP 2026

Vozinha turns in a 'dream' performance

40-year-old Cape Verde keeper's heroics shut out favorite Spain





The European champion Spain, which dominated possession and had 27 goal attempts, could find no way past 40-year-old Cape Verde keeper Vozinha, who has become the face of his team's historic night. AFP

It took Cape Verde goalkeeper Vozinha all of his 40 years on Earth to make his World Cup debut.

The long, long wait was worth every second.

Vozinha recorded seven saves Monday, holding Spain's star-studded lineup to a shocking 0-0 draw. The veteran keeper was everywhere as the Spanish team and its fans became increasingly frustrated, despite dominating possession and unleashing 27 shots. Not even the second-half entrance of young superstar Lamine Yamal could crack the code to get past Vozinha and the Cape Verde defense.

As the final whistle blew, Vozinha hunched over near his net and cried before being embraced by his teammates. Cape Verde, in its first-ever World Cup match, had clinched a point against Spain, the 2010 champion and one of this year's tournament favorites.

Vozinha said he was overwhelmed by emotion thinking about his loved ones, who were unable to see his finest performance: his grandparents who had raised him, and his mother. His grandparents died a few years ago. And his mother had been unable to gather the money in time to secure a visa to enter the United States, Vozinha said.

Cape Verde is among 50 countries whose citizens face bonds of up to $15,000 to secure a US visa, part of President Donald Trump's broader crackdown on travelers from countries that officials said had high rates of visa overstays. The Trump administration last month suspended the requirement for ticket holders from Cape Verde and four other World Cup nations, but critics said it was too late for many fans.

Vozinha's performance was the culmination of a career that didn't even start professionally until he was 25, making his debut for Angolan club Progresso.

Since then, he's had stops in Moldova, Cyprus, Slovakia and Portugal, where he currently plays for Chaves in the Portuguese second division.

He was called up to the national team in 2012 and, at times, Vozinha said, he thought about retiring from international soccer, but he "continued because of this dream".

"I worked all my life for this moment, for this dream," Vozinha said. "A lot of generations in the past (dreamed of) this day, but they did not achieve it. And now the dream has come true."

The word "vozinha" is Portuguese for "little grandmother," and the goalkeeper said he was given the nickname by older kids who would beat him on the soccer field and then laugh, saying he was going home to complain to his grandparents. Years later, he took on the nickname after someone else joined his club who also had the same first name, Josimar.

These days, Cape Verde defender Steven Moreira said he and his teammates like to tease Vozinha about his age. He said he was proud of the keeper, calling him a "big legend", who had a "crazy game" and showed that age doesn't matter.

Fans across the world noticed, too: Vozinha's following on Instagram exploded from around 50,000 people to more than 2.4 million a few hours after the match.

"He lives and breathes Cape Verde," said defender Pico Lopes, who noted Vozinha can come across as a strict teammate during practice. "He's always on us about being on time, but that's what he does. He pushes us to be better. And you saw it today — he leads by example."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

No panic, says De la Fuente after La Roja held to goalless draw



Spain boss Luis de la Fuente said he is still convinced La Roja will go far at the World Cup, despite failing to break down debutant Cape Verde in a 0-0 draw in their tournament opener.

The European champion badly missed the spark of Lamine Yamal, who was only deemed fit enough for a second-half cameo on his return from injury, as Spain struggled to even create chances against a side ranked 67th in the world.

"We are completely calm, convinced that there is a long way to go. As we see it, we have seven games left," said De la Fuente.

"We just lacked freshness and precision."

Spain is now 32 competitive games unbeaten, stretching back to March 2023.

However, the lackluster nature of the performance brought back painful memories of its meek exits to Russia and Morocco on penalties at the 2018 and 2022 World Cups, where the side dominated possession, but failed to score goals.

"Tomorrow, I'll bring up that magic number," added De la Fuente of his side's long unbeaten run.

"We have to stick to our philosophy and get key players back who will play a crucial role as the tournament progresses."

Yamal's introduction immediately injected life into the Spanish attack and lifted the majority of the nearly 70,000 crowd who were desperate to see the Barcelona superstar. Yet, even his threat was snuffed out, as Cape Verde doubled and, at times, even trebled up on the 18-year-old.

After an injury-plagued season at Athletic Bilbao, Nico Williams was also kept in reserve until the 87th minute.

"They are two game-changing players, but the ones we've had on the pitch are, too," said De la Fuente.

"They all bring different qualities to the table.

"They will provide new options, and the team will continue to grow. What we need to do is to find our rhythm and the decisive touch required for this type of competition, which I have no doubt we will acquire.

"Lamine showed exactly what he's capable of the moment he stepped onto the pitch, forcing the opposition to change their approach, but that was the amount of playing time we felt was right for him.

"Once we regain our chemistry and competitive edge, the team will be even better."

Spain returns to Atlanta for its second game against Saudi Arabia on Sunday before taking on Uruguay in its final group game in Guadalajara, Mexico, on June 27.

AFP

Belgium and its 'Golden Generation' veterans get off to unimpressive start



Romelu Lukaku (left) and Kevin De Bruyne celebrate Belgium's equalizer against Egypt in Seattle on Monday. AP

Despite seeking to avoid a repeat of its early World Cup exit in 2022, Belgium got off to an unimpressive start.

Romelu Lukaku entered in the 66th minute against Egypt on Monday, and the veteran striker immediately created a scoring chance that led to an equalizing own goal, but that was all Belgium could muster in a limp 1-1 draw.

"No game's an easy game in the World Cup," coach Rudi Garcia said afterward.

Perhaps not, but Belgium was expected to handle an Egypt squad that has never won a World Cup game. Instead, the Red Devils were outmaneuvered in the first half, with the speed of Egypt's younger players making the Pharaohs the aggressors.

"We know that we had a bad start in the match," captain Youri Tielemans admitted.

Now, the question becomes whether or not Belgium can make one last World Cup run with the remaining veterans from its "Golden Generation", which includes the 33-year-old Lukaku and two 34-year-olds, midfielder Kevin De Bruyne and goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

Belgium held the top spot in the FIFA rankings for several years and had its best World Cup performance when it finished third in Russia in 2018.

But the team fizzled out four years later in Qatar, entering with title-winning ambition, but failing to advance to the knockout round.

Since the FIFA rankings were introduced in 1992, Belgium and the Netherlands are the only teams without a World Cup title to hold the top spot.

The Red Devils entered this year's World Cup ranked 10th, by far the best in Group G, which also includes Iran (25th), Egypt (29th) and New Zealand (79th).

Lukaku, Belgium's leading goalscorer, is recovering from a hamstring injury. Belgium tied the game less than a minute after he entered as a substitute.

"He's a target man," Tielemans said. "He needs to build up his fitness, which is understandable after being out for the season, but he helps us in this way."

De Bruyne was replaced by Hans Vanaken in the 85th minute.

With 32 teams making the knockout round in this expanded World Cup, it's easier than ever to advance, but Belgium has less room for error as it prepares to face Iran on Sunday in Inglewood, California.

"We have to win against Iran, there's no two ways around it," Garcia said.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Coach says Iran ordered out of US right after NZ game



Iran's Mohammad Mohebbi celebrates scoring his side's second goal during a 2-2 World Cup Group G draw with New Zealand in Los Angeles on Monday. REUTERS

INGLEWOOD, California — The coach of Iran's World Cup team said it was ordered to leave the United States and return to its training base in Mexico only a few hours after opening its politically charged tournament by playing out a 2-2 draw with New Zealand on Monday.

Coach Amir Ghalenoei didn't say who ordered the Iranians to leave earlier than planned. The team had expected to spend the night in California to maximize the normal recovery process after its opening game, only to be told after the match that everyone must immediately get on a plane for the 140-mile trip back to Tijuana.

"They didn't even give us time to recover," Ghalenoei said.

"After the game today, they said to us: 'you have to leave immediately.' It's very important for us to have time for recovery, (but) we are asked to get on a plane and return to our camp in Tijuana, and we are really troubled by that."

The Iranians' World Cup cycle has been in upheaval since the US and Israel started bombing Iran on Feb 28. Iran ultimately decided to compete, even after FIFA rejected its request to move its three group-stage matches out of the US.

"We don't know why they are returning us, to be honest," Ghalenoei said. "I think it's very strange. It seems like others are doing the planning for us. The decision-making for us is being made elsewhere. We were supposed to come two nights before the game, and we were supposed to stay tonight to recover and return tomorrow at lunchtime. We have no idea why.

"I think our team is perhaps the most oppressed in the World Cup."

Captain Mehdi Taremi and Ghalenoei both decried the team's lack of numerous key staff members — including the president of Iran's soccer federation, coaching support personnel and media officials — who were denied visas by the US, further hindering the team's preparations.

"We have to leave Los Angeles right now, and it's not good for us," Taremi said about an hour after the match. "I think FIFA have to help us more than this. Everything is like a disaster, actually, for us."

Iran opened its World Cup with a draw, coming from behind twice with Mohammad Mohebbi getting the second equalizer in the 64th minute in front of a solidly pro-Iranian crowd. Some Iranian-American fans engaged in protest against Iran's government.

Iran's next match is also at SoFi Stadium against Belgium on Sunday.

Quality performance

New Zealand coach Darren Bazeley praised his players for their battling performance which brought the team tantalizingly close to a first-ever World Cup win, saying they showed the kind of quality needed to clear that hurdle.

The Kiwis led Iran twice in what was an entertaining Group G encounter that featured a brace from New Zealand's Elijah Just.

"That may be our best performance ever, or since I've been involved with the All Whites, which is a long time," Bazeley said.

"Overall, I thought it was a really strong performance and I think we showed the world who we are and who our players are."

The draw means all four teams in the group have one point after Belgium drew 1-1 with Egypt earlier on Monday.

It was also the first time since the 1958 World Cup that four draws were recorded in a single day's play.

It also means, however, that New Zealand — in its third finals appearance — remains without a win after seven World Cup matches.

Bazeley said his team produced enough quality moments to snatch a victory, but acknowledged it hurt to come so close to that elusive win.

"We came here to win, and today we were so close to making history," he said. "We haven't won a game at a World Cup, and we're so close to doing that today, and that hurts."

New Zealand looked like it would hold on, until Mohebbi headed in a perfect cross to tie things up at 2-2, a moment Bazeley attributed to one of his team's few defensive lapses.

Nevertheless, he predicted his players would create more positive moments during the tournament.

"We've been building and building over the last few years in regards to performance," he said.

"And I've said a lot that, every game we play, we have moments within the games against good teams where we play really well and create chances. Today we were more consistent with that."

AGENCIES

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Mythical parallels
Exhibition unveils links between civilizations
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Hat-trick hurrah
Messi ties with Klose as top goal scorer in World Cup history
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CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 THURSDAY, JUNE 18, 2026

Ebola survivors



A healthcare worker (right) and her son receive hospital discharge certificates on Tuesday after recovering from Ebola virus disease in Bunia, the Democratic Republic of Congo. China is providing a new round of emergency humanitarian aid to Africa in response to the ongoing Ebola outbreak in some countries and regions, including the DR Congo and Uganda. As of Tuesday, the two countries recorded around 837 confirmed cases and 196 deaths. GRADEL MUYISA MUMBERE / REUTERS

Xi calls for more coordination of regional growth

Fujian-Ningxia success hailed as model for east-west drive to achieve common prosperity

By XU WEI
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President Xi Jinping has called for further steps to optimize the collaboration program between eastern and western regions of China to enhance coordinated regional development and boost the common prosperity drive.

In an instruction published on Wednesday, Xi highlighted the need to draw on the successful experience of the cooperation between Fujian province in East China and the Ningxia Hui autonomous region in Northwest China in refining the practice.

Xi, who is also general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, commended the collaboration model for contributing to China's poverty alleviation drive and promoting coordinated regional growth over the past 30 years.

In 1996, China launched the program of East-West Pairing-off Cooperation for Poverty Reduction, whereby a developed provincial region in the east assisted a less-developed region in the west.

After China secured a victory in eliminating absolute poverty in 2021, the country put in place a five-year transition period to continue supporting people and regions that had emerged from poverty, ensuring a smooth transition from poverty alleviation to rural vitalization while guarding against any large-scale relapse into poverty. With the transition period now over, regular assistance programs start from this year, which also marks the beginning of the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period.

The president stressed in the instruction the need to improve the east-west collaboration mechanism, optimize cooperation methods and expand the areas of cooperation.

The goal is to promote industrial complementarity, personnel exchanges, mutual learning in technology, exchanges of ideas and mutual learning in work styles between eastern and western regions, in order to achieve mutual benefit, win-win outcomes and common development, he said.

Xi urged Party committees and governments at all levels to earnestly fulfill their responsibilities in regular assistance programs, firmly prevent any large-scale relapse into poverty, and advance all-around rural vitalization.

The instruction from Xi was conveyed at a work conference on Wednesday in Yinchuan, the capital of Ningxia.

Vice-Premier Liu Guozhong said at the conference that more work must be done to deepen industrial cooperation and labor collaboration between eastern and western regions and to strengthen exchanges of officials and professionals.

He highlighted the need to expand cooperation in science and technology, finance and other fields, and to carry out creative initiatives tailored to local conditions.

While serving as a provincial leader in Fujian province in the late 1990s, Xi personally oversaw the progress of pairing-off cooperation between Fujian and Ningxia.

Wang Jian, head of Ningxia's regional department of agriculture and rural affairs, said last week that the annual per capita disposable income of rural residents in Ningxia rose from about 1,400 yuan ($207) in 1996 to more than 20,000 yuan in 2025.

The Xihaigu area of Ningxia, once known as one of China's most impoverished and environmentally harsh areas, has bid farewell to its long history of extreme hardship and barren conditions, while 1.13 million people have gained access to safe drinking water, he said.

Over the past three decades, Fujian has provided 7.68 billion yuan in assistance funding to Ningxia for infrastructure projects, helping build more than 600 schools, hospitals, nursing homes and care centers for people with disabilities. Fujian has also encouraged over 1,600 enterprises to invest in Ningxia, bringing more than 100 billion yuan in actual investment, Wang added.

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Blame game won't restore Western competitive advantages

WORLD WATCH
By Otton Solis

China's phenomenal success in exports deserves admiration. The development strategy behind it should be viewed as a model for others to emulate and even become part of the policy packages attached to financial assistance from the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and Western governments.

That is how previous success stories were treated. Japan's post-war rapid economic growth was termed the "Japanese miracle", and the high-growth economies of the Taiwan region and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, Singapore and the Republic of Korea were celebrated as the "Asian Tigers".

China, however, has been given a different label. In 2013, economists David Autor, David Dorn and Gordon Hanson helped popularize what later became known as the "China Shock", which alleged that Chinese imports were hurting the labor market in the United States.

The change from terms of admiration to a vocabulary of alarm was telling. The "China Shock" was associated with negative nouns such as "overproduction, overcapacity and oversupply". These were attributed to strong state guidance through industrial policies, never mind the fact that the same strategy had underpinned the economic rise of Japan and several "Asian Tigers".

Today, as Chinese companies make global strides in electric vehicles, artificial intelligence, batteries, biotechnology, renewable energy, robotics, semiconductors and other frontier technologies, that concept has been updated to the so-called "New China Shock", or "China Shock 2.0".

In terms of supply and demand, genuine oversupply would mean that goods cannot find enough buyers unless prices are artificially supported. But there is no worldwide authority to set minimum prices for products, including electric vehicles, solar panels and batteries. What really bothers Western policymakers is not excess supply, but that Chinese companies are able to sell at competitive prices because of their remarkably high productivity.

See ***Growth,*** *page 3*

China, US keeping drug control on a steady track

By YANG ZEKUN
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China and the United States have maintained steady progress in anti-drug cooperation, with both sides continuing to expand practical collaboration in key areas, a senior Chinese narcotics control official said on Wednesday.

Wei Xiaojun, executive deputy director of the Office of China National Narcotics Control Commission and head of the Ministry of Public Security's narcotics control bureau, made the remarks as the nation further strengthened its drug governance and chemical control by placing 16 additional non-medicinal narcotic and psychotropic substances under control.

Wei noted that China and the US have deepened cooperation across substance scheduling, chemical control, intelligence sharing, joint investigations, online information cleanup, fugitive repatriation, anti-money laundering and drug testing technologies.

China has maintained regular communication with relevant US government departments, including the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, to exchange updates and discuss priorities, Wei said.

Chinese law enforcement agencies have also worked on joint cases and the repatriation of drug-related fugitives with the US Drug Enforcement Administration, the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Immigration and Customs Enforcement, he added.

In February, police in Tianjin arrested a suspect, surnamed Gong, in a drug-related case based on information provided by US authorities. Prior to that, a US citizen suspected of involvement in the same case was arrested by US law enforcement agencies from the state of Georgia.

Wei emphasized that drug control cooperation is a global mandate, and it should be based on mutual respect and trust. "As long as China and the US work together, they can effectively address drug-related challenges, which will benefit both peoples and the world," he said.

China remains committed to maintaining the positive momentum of Sino-US antidrug cooperation, which is a hard-won achievement and requires sustained joint efforts, he added.

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NOODLING AROUND ON LONG SUMMER DAYS IS A SHAANXI TRADITION

Completion of the first wheat harvest of the year brings a raft of tasty, temperature-taming dishes

By LI YINGXUE
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(From left to right) *Biangbiang* noodles, *saozi* noodles, *jiangshui* noodles and oil-splashed noodles are among the delicacies of Shaanxi province.
PHOTOS BY CHEN ZEBING / CHINA DAILY AND PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

As the summer solstice arrives on Sunday, across the wheat fields of the Guanzhong Plain, the first harvest of early summer has just been completed. Fresh grain is milled into new flour, still carrying the fragrance of the earth.

China Vibes — FOOD —

In Shaanxi province, this moment is not marked by ritual or festivity, but by something far more immediate and familiar — the transformation of the new wheat into bowls of noodles to be shared around the table.

A traditional Chinese saying goes, "Eat dumplings on the winter solstice and noodles on the summer solstice." The custom reflects the rhythm of seasonal eating, with foods chosen to suit the body's needs as the temperature rises.

In Shaanxi, however, noodles are not just a seasonal dish — they are a way of life.

Actor Sun Hao, a native of Xi'an, the capital of Shaanxi, understands that connection well. The 58-year-old recently won praise for his role in the television drama *Zhu Jue*, or *Leading Role*. While audiences discussed his performance, many also noticed the authentic Shaanxi dishes that frequently appeared on screen.

According to Sun, the production team ran a dedicated cafeteria serving local specialties, including oil-splashed noodles. "One bite is enough," he said. "I can immediately tell whether the noodles are good."

That confidence comes from growing up in a region where wheat-based foods dominate daily life. In much of Shaanxi, especially the Guanzhong Plain, noodles, steamed buns and flatbreads remain staples on family tables.

One of the most representative dishes for the summer solstice is *jiangshui mian*, or fermented vegetable noodle soup.

See ***Noodles,*** *page 3*

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INDEPTH

By LI YINGXUE
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A Chinese boys' U12 team and Dong Lu, the initiator of the "Chinese Football Boy" program, pose with the Sigismondi Cup trophy on June 2 in Turin, Italy. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Soccer young guns take 'wild route' to glory road

Chinese boys team's prestigious international victory reflects new talent-spotting philosophy

The 2026 FIFA World Cup is underway, and while the Chinese men's national soccer team may not be in contention for the trophy, a group of young players has offered a glimpse of a possible bright future.

On June 2 in Turin, Italy, a Chinese boys' U12 team defeated the academy side of English Premier League club Everton 5-4 in a penalty shoot-out to claim the Sigismondi Cup. The tournament, often described in youth soccer circles as a "mini World Cup", featured 48 youth teams from around the world, including academies from major European clubs.

The Chinese side completed a perfect run, winning all seven of their matches, scoring 20 goals and conceding just one on their way to the title. They became the first Asian team to win the tournament.

When the decisive moment arrived in the final, 12-year-old Meng Xinyi from Nanjing, Jiangsu province, stepped up for the fifth penalty.

He began his run-up, struck the ball cleanly, and sent it into the corner. As the ball hit the net and the shoot-out ended 5-4, he tore off his jersey, threw it in the air, and did a backflip in celebration.

Supporters in the stands erupted. On the opposite side, the young players from Everton stood frozen, hands on their heads, watching the trophy slip away.

"I was very nervous walking up," Xinyi said later. "But I also told myself I had to trust my instincts. When the ball went in, it felt incredible."

His approach to taking penalties is simple and built on self-belief. "No matter how the goalkeeper tries to distract you, if your first instinct is to shoot a certain side, you must trust it," he said.

The team, known as China Football Boy 2014, delivered a flawless campaign in Italy.

Behind the celebrations, however, lies a broader question about the development of Chinese soccer. Youth training has long faced challenges in consistently producing elite talent.

That landscape is now beginning to shift, as grassroots "wild route" initiatives expand alongside official efforts to support structured overseas development. While their approaches differ, both are contributing to a more diversified pathway for talent development.

Behind the backflip

Xinyi's acrobatic celebration was not accidental.

Before focusing on soccer, he spent more than a year training in martial arts while in kindergarten, developing flexibility and explosive strength. He later discovered soccer in primary school and quickly showed aptitude for the game.

By the time he joined his school team in Nanjing Gulou No 1 Central Primary School, soccer had already become part of his daily rhythm. He would finish homework during breaks so he could train after school.

Asked what soccer means to him, Xinyi's answer is straightforward. "Happiness," he said. "Because soccer allows me to express myself and push myself fully. Even when we are behind, I always believe we can come back."

His ambition is equally clear. "I want to become a professional player and contribute to Chinese soccer in the future."

Connecting players like Xinyi across China is a widely discussed and sometimes controversial figure in Chinese soccer development circles — the former journalist and commentator Dong Lu, and his grassroots initiative known as the "Chinese Football Boy" program.

In a recent online dialogue with veteran broadcaster Shui Junyi, Dong described his approach candidly as belonging to the "wild route"—a term often used to distinguish informal grassroots development from institutional systems.

He argues that talent is not "manufactured" in a traditional sense. "What matters is not who trains you, but who discovers you, guides you, and gives you a platform," he said. "Talent is revealed, not manufactured."

In 2017, Dong became involved in youth soccer development full-time. Since then, he has organized youngsters from across China to attend weekend and holiday training camps, and frequently taken them to international competitions.

Dong said total investment in the project has exceeded 58 million yuan ($8.58 million) over nine years, with free training provided to participating children.

Xinyi's father, Meng Qinghua, said the opportunity given to his son had transformed the boy's life.

"Without Dong Lu, there would be no Meng Xinyi today," he said. "He gave the child the chance to play internationally, and he never charged a fee."

Dong's philosophy places strong emphasis on exposure to competition. Unlike traditional youth systems that often prioritize training over results, he argues that Chinese soccer suffers from what he calls a "habitual acceptance of losing".

"In Chinese soccer, the real scarcity is hope," he said. "If we do not win, there is no attention, no momentum. But victory is essential because it creates belief."

Trial by fire

A central pillar of Dong's model is constant exposure to international competition.

In early June, a mixed U16 and U17 squad from the program arrived in Sao Paulo, Brazil, after competing in the Netherlands. The players were scheduled to face youth teams from Brazilian clubs such as Sao Paulo, Palmeiras, and Santos.

"Even if we lose by a large margin, we must play against peers of the same age," Dong said. "Only then can we understand where we truly stand."



Meng Xinyi, 12, demonstrates a header during an interview in Nanjing, Jiangsu province, after winning the 2026 Sigismondi Cup. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY



Left: Players compete during the "2034 Cup" Primary School Students' Football Games (U12) in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, in July 2022. SUN JIAN / FOR CHINA DAILY **Above:** Dong Lu encourages a young player during a training session in Suzhou. XU YAOWEN / FOR CHINA DAILY

For many players, the experience has been formative.

One of the squad members, Yuan Bohan, said after one match in Brazil, he noticed the difference in the pace and intensity of the game. "The rhythm is completely different from what we experience domestically," he said. "Winning and losing both matter, because what we lack most is the experience of winning at this level."

Despite losing, the Chinese team still managed to express its own style of play. "We hope to learn from Brazilian soccer and bring that mentality back to China," he said.

In an environment of constant testing, individual breakthroughs have begun to emerge.

On June 3, Chinese player Li Haoyan, 14, officially joined FC Barcelona's famed La Masia academy at U15 level. He instantly became one of the most closely watched Chinese youth players to enter Spain's elite development system.

Born in Dalian, Liaoning province in 2012, Haoyan first trained at a grassroots club founded by his father, before joining Dong's program at age 10. At age 13, he moved to Spain to pursue soccer full-time.

Adapting to a new country proved challenging. Language barriers and daily life adjustments were significant obstacles. He reportedly wrote tactical instructions on his palm during matches and added extra training sessions on his own initiative.

In the 2025-26 season, Haoyan played 28 league matches with CF Damm. He contributed 12 goals and 12 assists, helping his team finish seventh in a 16-team regional division.

Known for his pace and versatility, Haoyan attracted attention from several Spanish clubs before Barcelona finalized his signing.

"I want to thank every fan who has supported me on the journey to this dream," Haoyan wrote on social media. "This is a new environment and a new challenge, and I will stay focused, train hard, and cherish the opportunity to develop in one of the world's best youth academies.

"I will steadily improve myself, carry the original aspiration of representing my country with pride, and give everything I have to keep moving forward," he wrote.

CFA's support role

Haoyan's journey to Barcelona is one example of what grassroots "wild route" development can achieve through private support and individual commitment. But soccer authorities have increasingly sought to build more systematic mechanisms to support overseas development.

In recent years, the Chinese Football Association has introduced policies that share a similar objective: helping more young players gain experience in high-level overseas environments.

For decades, Chinese soccer has struggled with what many call the "12-year-old drop-off" — a stage at which many promising players leave the sport due to academic pressure and uncertain professional prospects.

Earlier generations of Chinese players who went abroad did so largely alone. Players such as Yang Chen and Shao Jiayi relied on personal resilience and limited support networks during early stints in Europe.

Today, however, institutional support is expanding.

In April 2026, the Chinese Football Association launched its Youth Inspiration Program, aimed at players age 15 to 23. The initiative provides financial subsidies, development support, and performance-based incentives for young players competing overseas.

CFA President Song Kai emphasized that talent development depends on exposure to high-level competition. "We want talented players to go abroad, stay abroad, and play abroad," he said.

For many players, the program reduces uncertainty. CFA officials note that financial instability is one of the key barriers preventing young players from pursuing international careers.

China's head coach Shao Jiayi described the initiative as a meaningful shift. "It provides a clearer pathway and tells young players that they are not alone when they go abroad," he said.

At the same time, domestic grassroots soccer continues to expand. In Nanjing, where Meng Xinyi plays, a structured school-to-school soccer pathway now links primary, secondary, and high school education, reducing dropout risks.

Cities such as Chengdu in Sichuan province have also introduced shared coaching centers, integrating retired athletes into school programs and improving coaching quality at the grassroots level.

According to CFA data, the number of registered elite young players has now reached nearly 100,000, with competition participation continuing to rise.

CFA officials have emphasized that multiple development models are welcome. "Professional academies, sports schools, school-based programs, and social organizations all play a role," Song said. "The key is to broaden the talent pool."

Broader horizon

Looking across the evolving landscape, Chinese soccer today is no longer defined by a single pathway.

There is Meng Xinyi, celebrating in Turin; Li Haoyan, training at La Masia; Dong Lu's teams competing in Brazil; and a growing institutional framework supporting youth development at home.

"The real shortage in Chinese soccer is victory," Dong said.

Yet victory, increasingly, is being pursued through multiple routes — some structured, others experimental, and many still evolving.

The question of whether grassroots "wild route" initiatives or institutional systems will ultimately prove more effective may be less important than their coexistence. In a mature ecosystem, different pathways often reinforce rather than exclude each other.

Dong recently suggested that the next major breakthrough in Chinese soccer may emerge around 2034, when a new generation of players — shaped by both domestic reform and international exposure — reaches maturity.

By then, many of today's young players will be entering their prime years, some already embedded in overseas systems.

Whether that future delivers long-awaited progress remains uncertain. But for the young players now crossing borders, scoring penalties, and chasing opportunities far from home, Chinese soccer is already being rewritten — not as a single story, but as a widening field of possibilities.

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TOP NEWS

Nation outlines pathway to a fairer world

Beijing issues white paper on promoting more just and equitable global governance

By **JI HAISHENG**
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China on Wednesday released a white paper titled "More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions", which Foreign Minister Wang Yi said aims to offer a comprehensive account of the country's ideas and actions in promoting global governance, and to foster broader consensus within the international community on reforming and improving global governance and ensuring more effective responses to global challenges.

Wang made the remarks at a news conference held by the State Council Information Office in Beijing on the release of the white paper.

"Global governance is a common endeavor that bears on the well-being of all humanity, and building a just and equitable global governance system is a shared vision long pursued by people from across the world," Wang said.

Wang said that the Global Governance Initiative, proposed by President Xi Jinping, came at a critical juncture where the international system established after World War II faced multiple shocks and global governance was encountering headwinds. Since its introduction in September, the GGI has received broad support from nearly 160 countries and international organizations, with over 60 countries joining the Group of Friends of Global Governance. "The GGI has evolved from a Chinese proposal into an international practice, and is showing ever-growing vitality," Wang added.

To foster broader international consensus, China will host the first Xiong'an Global Governance Forum this autumn, Wang said.

At the news conference on Wednesday, officials also underlined the wide range of measures China has rolled out to advance a fairer and more equitable global governance system.

Zhou Haibing, deputy head of the National Development and Reform Commission, said that China upholds multilateralism and an open, inclusive approach in promoting both global governance and international cooperation on artificial intelligence.

He said that China will host the 2026 World AI Conference and High-Level Meeting on Global AI Governance in Shanghai in July. According to the foreign minister, China is also stepping up efforts to establish a World AI Cooperation Organization.

Noting that the GGI puts people's well-being at the center, Zhao Fengtao, vice-chairman of the China International Development Cooperation Agency, said that China has always worked with other countries to improve the global poverty reduction governance framework.

Together with 53 countries and nine international organizations, China launched the Global Partnership for Poverty Alleviation and Development, which has helped to turn its poverty reduction experience into global public goods, and given new momentum to global poverty reduction, he said.

Stressing the key role of the Global South in global governance, Vice-Foreign Minister Miao Deyu said that the international community should support the Global South in bolstering solidarity and self-reliance, leveraging major cooperation platforms including BRICS, the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, and the Group of 77 and China, and scaling up the role of emerging financial institutions such as the New Development Bank and the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

Wang Huiyao, president of the Center for China and Globalization, a Beijing-based think tank, said that while individual major powers' engagement in bloc politics, geopolitical confrontation and unilateralism has diverted the international focus away from improving global governance, China has put forward a more inclusive and comprehensive vision for global governance, redirecting the global focus to the essential issues requiring the joint efforts of all countries.

"At a time when the world is far from peaceful, the newly released white paper has put forth an innovative framework for global governance," he said. The document has not only formed a new core of consensus and reshaped views on global governance, but also concretely showcased how China's global visions and policy proposals can be translated into tangible and on-the-ground outcomes, he added.

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Digital art feast



Visitors tour Dataland, the world's first museum dedicated to artificial intelligence art, data visualization and AI-driven creativity, during a media preview on Tuesday ahead of its official opening on Saturday in Los Angeles, California, the United States. MARIO TAMA / GETTY IMAGES

NATIONAL VISION, LOCAL ACTION

Hainan now a magnet for foreign firms

By **CHEN BOWEN** in Haikou
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Feng Fei

Six months after the launch of island-wide special customs operations, the Hainan Free Trade Port is running smoothly, with international trade and investor interest rising sharply, Hainan Party Secretary Feng Fei told China Daily.

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The landmark move, which took effect on Dec 18, 2025, marks one of China's most ambitious institutional opening-up efforts. Feng said the initial phase had achieved its primary goal of stable and orderly operations, with goods moving efficiently, cross-border travel more convenient, and businesses increasingly moving operations to the island.

By May 31, customs clearance efficiency had improved significantly. The value of imports under the zero-tariff policy jumped 116 percent year-on-year, average clearance time for imported goods dropped 20 percent, and declaration requirements for goods leaving the island for the mainland were simplified by over 60 percent.

Total international trade value rose 53.7 percent during the period. The number of registered foreign trade companies grew 57.8 percent, while newly established foreign-funded enterprises increased 37.6 percent.

The robust growth reflects not only the initial effects of the special customs operations, but also the growing effectiveness of the Hainan FTP's institutional framework, he said. A comprehensive policy framework is now in place, featuring zero tariffs, low tax rates, and liberalization and facilitation of trade, investment, cross-border capital flows, personnel entry and exit, and transport, alongside safe and orderly data flow. Goods eligible for zero-tariff treatment have expanded from 21 percent to 74 percent of all tariff lines.

Institutional innovations are also reshaping the island's economic structure. Feng said that Hainan has developed a modern industrial system with distinctive characteristics and competitive strengths. Tourism, modern services, high-tech industries and high-efficiency tropical agriculture accounted for nearly 70 percent of the province's GDP in the first quarter of 2026.

Against this backdrop, Feng said Hainan is becoming an increasingly attractive destination for global investors and highlighted three major opportunities for foreign businesses. Hainan offers China's shortest negative list for foreign investment, a pioneering cross-border services trade negative list, and special market-access measures, including wholly foreign-owned hospitals and independent operation of high-level overseas universities, and vocational colleges in the fields of science, engineering, agriculture and medicine.

Located at the junction of two of the world's most dynamic markets — China's 1.4 billion consumers and Southeast Asia's nearly 700 million — Hainan has attracted 22 Fortune Global 500 foreign-funded enterprises and a total of 139 headquarters-type companies. More global investors have chosen the island as a base to enter the Chinese market or expand globally. In 2025, Hainan's outbound investment volume grew 20.7 percent year-on-year.

To sustain the momentum, Hainan has been stepping up efforts to build a market-oriented, law-based and internationalized business environment, Feng said. The province has introduced a fair competition regulation, enacted 57 local regulations under the Hainan Free Trade Port Law, and established international commercial courts and a specialized intellectual property court. A one-stop dispute resolution mechanism integrating mediation, arbitration and litigation is operational.

Meanwhile, Hainan is upgrading transportation and logistics infrastructure to strengthen its role as a regional hub linking China with global markets.

Hainan aims to become a shipping hub for the New International Land-Sea Trade Corridor and an aviation gateway to the Pacific and Indian Oceans. The first seventh-freedom traffic rights route, which allows foreign airlines to operate routes between two countries without flying to their home countries, is now operational.

Feng outlined a road map to establish Hainan as a new frontier of China's opening-up by 2035, and a globally influential high-level free trade port by mid-century. The province has partnered with 44 global free trade zones and ports, attracted investment from 180 countries and regions, and maintained trade ties with over 220 countries and regions.

Drugs: 16 additional substances put under control

From page 1

According to Wei, China has actively responded to the diversion of nonscheduled chemicals into illicit drug production channels in North America.

Starting on July 1, a total of 16 substances will be added to the catalogue of nonmedical narcotic and psychotropic substances, China's national drug regulator announced on Wednesday.

This will place 412 types of nonmedicinal narcotic and psychotropic drugs, as well as the entire categories of fentanyl-related substances, synthetic cannabinoids and nitazene-related substances under control.

To strengthen risk prevention, China issued warning notices twice — in November 2025 and May this year — urging compliance with relevant laws. Customs and postal authorities reinforced export supervision, risk analysis and inspection procedures.

Wei said authorities have also carried out nationwide crackdowns on the illegal trafficking of precursor chemicals and new psychoactive substances, and strengthened industry self-regulation.

Chemical control remains a key upstream measure in China's drug control strategy, he said. In 2025, authorities seized 550.6 metric tons of drug-related precursor chemicals. China has also published a white paper on fentanyl-related substance control and expanded its regulatory system.

Wei said that China's drug situation remains generally stable, but new challenges are emerging as trafficking becomes more organized, substance abuse more diversified and users younger. He warned that loophole exploitation, gray-area substances and emerging addictive compounds are increasing regulatory complexity.

According to the 2025 China Drug Situation Report, which was released on Wednesday, Chinese authorities solved 27,000 drug-related cases and arrested 41,000 suspects last year, down 27.6 percent and 33 percent year-on-year, respectively. They also seized 33.5 tons of drugs, up 25.4 percent, and handled 134,000 drug users, down 30.3 percent.

The report noted a rise in abuse of nonscheduled addictive substances. In 2025, authorities seized nearly 1.27 million liters of nitrous oxide, up 84 percent year-on-year, and 9.3 tons of other substances, an increase of more than 17-fold.

Spreading cheer



A man dressed as a clown plays with Palestinian children on Tuesday during an event aimed at lifting their spirits in Khan Younis, Gaza, Palestine. ABED RAHIM KHATIB / GETTY IMAGES

Noodles: Fermented food helps cope with summer heat

From page 1

Ren Haibo, executive chef at the restaurant in the Beijing office of the Shaanxi provincial government, describes it as the perfect antidote to summer heat. The dish begins with celery that is fermented in water used to cook noodles over several days. The resulting sour broth is seasoned with garlic, dried chilies and aromatics before being poured over freshly cooked noodles.

"The taste is sour, fragrant and refreshing," Ren said. "It stimulates the appetite and helps people feel comfortable in hot weather."

Long before air conditioners became commonplace, such fermented foods offered a practical way to cope with high summer temperatures. Today, *jiangshui mian* remains a seasonal favorite in central Shaanxi.

Jiangshui yu is a traditional Shaanxi dish consisting of cornmeal dough pieces served in a fermented vegetable broth. In spite of its name including the Chinese character *yu*, it contains no fish. The small, doughy pieces are made from cornmeal or wheat flour and are served in a sour broth with garlic, chives and chili oil, creating a refreshing balance of sour and spicy flavors.

"In the past, when new wheat arrived, the first thing people wanted to do was taste the fresh flour," said Ren.

That tradition lives on in dishes such as Qishan *saozi* noodles, a specialty from Baoji and western Shaanxi. Often served to welcome guests, the noodles are renowned for their harmonious blend of sourness, spiciness and aroma. A colorful topping of diced vegetables, tofu, egg strips and meat is ladled over thin, springy noodles.

For Shaanxi people, however, the love of wheat extends beyond noodles. One of Sun Hao's favorite local dishes is *xiaochao paomo*, a spicy variation of Xi'an's famous soaked flatbread dish.

"It's incredibly fragrant," said Sun. "The taste is stronger, and younger people especially love it."

The ritual surrounding the dish is almost as important as the food itself. Diners traditionally tear pieces of flatbread by hand before it is cooked with broth and other ingredients.

As the year's longest day arrives and fresh wheat enters local kitchens, the cycle of harvest to table continues uninterrupted — carried forward in bowls of noodles shaped by generations.

Growth: West can replicate factors fueling China's success

From page 1

There are two key socioeconomic consequences of this increase in productivity. First, millions of low-income and middle-income consumers from Western countries and the Global South, including Chinese consumers, are able to buy cars and other industrial goods at much lower prices. This would not be possible without Chinese competition.

Second, the world is able to fight climate change more effectively when it gains access to low-cost, high-tech renewable energy equipment produced by Chinese companies. Low-tech and high-cost industries in the West have struggled to survive against Chinese competition.

Instead of welcoming the benefits enjoyed by consumers and the improved odds in the fight against global warming, many Western policymakers have chosen to side with entrenched interests, unproductive businesses, established oligopolies and the financiers of their costly political campaigns.

Rather than trying to fix blame for their competitive shortcomings, Western countries would do well to identify the underlying factors of China's highly productive economy.

Four advantages enjoyed by China deserve special attention. First, the country has a vast domestic market, which allows Chinese companies to achieve significant economies of scale and subjects them to intense local competition even before they enter the global market. Second, there is continuity and predictability of economic policy and political stability in the country. Third, China has made massive investments in quality education, transportation and energy infrastructure, and in research and development. Fourth, macroeconomic management and industrial policy have been fine-tuned to align with long-term planning, while market forces and the private economy are allowed to play important roles.

None of these advantages are beyond the reach of Western economies. When it comes to market size, both the US and the European Union have very large integrated markets capable of supporting similar economies of scale. On the policy front, politicians in most Western countries have chosen polarization and short-term gains over long-term national interests. That is hardly China's fault.

The same applies to education, infrastructure and innovation. Nothing prevents Western countries from channeling large investments into these areas as they did in the past. But to do it now requires tough decisions, such as reducing defense expenditure and pursuing a more equitable tax system. As for industrial policy, public investment has played an important role in infrastructure and technological development in Western countries. If China's strategy in these areas explains its success, as is often argued by Western nations, nothing prevents them from doing the same.

The West has chosen a different response: blame games and protectionism. Instead of embracing competition, the core factor for economic success, most Western governments have chosen to shield their industries by using tariffs, quotas and the outright blocking of some imports.

A more constructive path for the West would be to examine the factors that have fueled Chinese success and try to imitate some of those policies. If such an approach is followed seriously, the world might even witness a "West shock" in the future.

The author is a senior fellow at the Beijing Club for International Dialogue, and was special adviser to the president of Costa Rica from 2018 to 2022. The views do not necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

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WORLD



G7 leaders take a group photo in the French resort of Evian-les-Bains on Tuesday. In a declaration issued overnight, the leaders threw their support behind the US' tentative agreement with Iran, saying they were "ready to contribute to its implementation". VIA XINHUA

Reactions to Iran deal mixed

Fourteen-point framework begins 60-day process to negotiate permanent agreement

By **MINGMEI LI** in New York
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US President Donald Trump declared "victory" following the agreement with Iran, but reactions across the United States remain sharply divided.

On Wednesday, US media reported that senior US officials had disclosed details of a preliminary memorandum of understanding between Washington and Tehran aimed at ending the 110-day conflict, which was signed ahead of schedule on Wednesday.

The agreement has immediately sparked debate over whether it represents a diplomatic breakthrough or a concession to Tehran.

Under the 14-point framework, the two sides would have 60 days to negotiate the terms before reaching a final agreement. According to a senior US official, the preliminary deal would reopen the Strait of Hormuz, establish a $300 billion reconstruction plan for Iran, and lift restrictions on Iranian oil exports. The agreement also includes language that Iran agrees not to develop or procure nuclear weapons.

Some terms of the deal remain contentious. Trump repeatedly denied on Wednesday that the United States would contribute to the reconstruction fund, though he said Gulf allies could provide financial support if they chose to do so.

Trump warned that the US would "go back to bombing" if Tehran failed to comply with the terms of the preliminary agreement or if negotiations did not result in a long-term deal preventing Iran from developing a nuclear weapon.

"Mistakes are made. War is nasty," Trump said during the G7 summit, appearing to acknowledge US responsibility for strikes that killed more than 150 children. Trump said the incident was under investigation.

The agreement has drawn mixed reactions from US lawmakers, even within the Republican Party, with some praising it as a step toward ending the conflict while others warning that it could strengthen Iran.

Republican senator Lindsey Graham welcomed the MOU, reversing his earlier skepticism toward negotiations between the two countries.

"After this discussion, it is my opinion that signing the MOU will be beneficial to the United States, in as much as the Strait of Hormuz will begin to open, and the hostilities with Iran will stop," Graham wrote.

"Whether or not the United States can reach an acceptable, verifiable deal with Iran regarding its nuclear program and other issues is yet to be determined, but I see little downside to trying," he continued. "The economic stability that comes from opening up the Strait and the cessation of hostilities could create a pathway to peace well beyond the Iranian conflict."

Others, however, strongly criticized the deal.

"The details that I've seen so far look ... awful. This will go down as a tremendous foreign policy blunder," Republican Senator Bill Cassidy told Nexstar's Reshad Hudson on Capitol Hill on Wednesday.

"(President Ronald) Reagan is rolling over in his grave. Iran's nuclear ambitions were not curbed, and they have learned that threatening the Strait of Hormuz works and will undoubtedly leverage it in the future," Cassidy wrote in a social media post. "Now, Iran gets to build brand-new infrastructure under this deal."

"Before the war, the strait was open, Iran was being crushed by sanctions, and 13 service members were still alive. Now, 13 Americans are dead, families have paid billions at the pump, sanctions will be lifted, and the bombing has stopped. This is the worst foreign policy blunder in decades," he wrote.

Former US ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley also criticized the agreement, particularly reports that sanctions on Iranian oil exports would be lifted immediately.

"If this is true, Iran wins," Haley wrote.

A recent analysis from the Center for Strategic & International Studies said both Washington and Tehran would likely claim victory, while each side would also face losses.

"For President Trump, the primary success of the deal is the reopening of the Strait of Hormuz ... but the strait's closure was a direct consequence of the war," the analysis said.

The analysis also noted that the agreement could be a major setback for Israel and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who has long viewed Iran as an existential threat. It added that the Iran war had broad support in Israel and that Netanyahu faces a difficult political environment ahead of the coming election.

Agencies contributed to the story.

Fed Chair announces new era for central bank

By **BELINDA ROBINSON**
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Federal Reserve Chairman Kevin Warsh announced a new era at the Fed in his first news conference at the helm of the central bank, signalling his plan to make it quieter with less engagement with the markets and one that squarely focuses on tackling inflation.

Warsh spoke at his first news conference as Fed chair on Wednesday, after overseeing his first Fed policy meeting. All 12 members of the Federal Open Market Committee voted unanimously to hold rates at a range of 3.5 percent to 3.75 percent for a fourth meeting in a row.

The new Fed chair was clear about his core focus. "I've said for years inflation is a choice," Warsh told reporters. "You bet it is."

He added that he was committed to bringing inflation back down to its 2 percent target. The Fed will next meet in six weeks.

In new projections, policymakers said they expected overall inflation to be 3.6 percent by the end of the year, higher than they had predicted three months ago. Core inflation would be 3.3 percent, The New York Times reported.

In a departure from his predecessor — former Fed Chair Jerome Powell — Warsh identified a series of changes that he intends to make in his new role.

"The recent past need not be prologue," he said while discussing the fact that inflation was higher than the Fed's target for more than five years.

One of his first small changes was to the usual Fed statement, which he said was "a bit shorter, a bit simpler and dispenses with some older language" and focuses on "the facts as best as we can judge it".

In another change, he declined to submit an economic forecast to the Fed's Summary of Economic Projections, including its "dot plot", CNBC reported. But he did allow his colleagues to submit one.

He also opted to end the "forward guidance", which is a hint in Fed statements about where interest rates may be heading in the future.

"I can't give you any forward guidance about what we're going to do next," he said. "The good news is we'll be meeting in six weeks."

In his speech, he said it was important at any institution during "a change in leadership" to "reaffirm its mission, to review current practices, and to consider whether those practices best meet our objectives".

He announced that five task forces will reexamine the core functions of the central bank.

They will address communications, the balance sheet, data sources, productivity trends and jobs.

Warsh said that he will be "enlisting some of the very best minds, both inside and outside the economics profession", for discussions on the task force. They will be paired with Fed staff.

In another departure from his predecessor, Warsh did not offer explicit guidance on interest rates and did not talk about how the Fed will decide when to adjust rates.

Analysts said that this could make it tough for investors to determine what the central bank will do next.

He stated that the financial markets would be entering "a new chapter" with the central bank.

He also stated that the labor market is stable.

Warsh, 56, was nominated by President Donald Trump in January as the replacement for former chair Powell. He took over as the 17th Fed Chair in May.

He served on the Fed's Board of Governors from 2006 to 2011, and previously worked as an executive at Morgan Stanley and the Duquesne Family Office.

His predecessor had a fractious professional relationship with Trump as he would not cut rates, even after several demands to do so by the US president.

Asked about the Fed's decision to maintain rates, Trump said on Wednesday: "It's all right, whatever."

The new Fed chair takes over as inflation reached a three-year high of 4.2 percent in mid-June, mainly due to higher gas prices, data from the government said.

Warsh said he plans to keep talking with the media, as news conferences are useful for communicating, if he has "something to say".

The bond market sold off when the Fed released its projections on Wednesday afternoon and again during Warsh's news conference, The Wall Street Journal reported.

But Warsh said he was not interested in immediate market reactions.

Other economic challenges include oil prices falling sharply after the deal to end the US-Israel war with Iran was reached.

It took immediate effect late Wednesday after both sides signed it, Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said.

While seeking Trump's nomination, Warsh had called for "regime change" at the Fed.

He reportedly prefers the communication style of Alan Greenspan, the Fed's chair from 1987 to 2005, who was less outspoken than Powell, The Associated Press and Reuters reported.

"The changes to the policy statement were profound," Thomas Simons, chief US economist at Jefferies, wrote in a note. "Policy statements became much wordier after the global financial crisis, so this is a return to a more Greenspan-era style of post-meeting communications."

Japan slammed over slow probe into embassy attack

By **ZHOU JIN**
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China has criticized the lack of progress in Japan's investigation into and handling of a case involving a Self-Defense Forces officer who allegedly entered the Chinese embassy in Tokyo armed with a knife, urging Japan to take full responsibility for the incident.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the remarks on Wednesday after the Tokyo District Public Prosecutors Office reportedly decided to extend the detention of Kodai Murata, a second lieutenant in Japan's Ground Self-Defense Force, for psychiatric assessment to determine whether he can be held criminally responsible for his actions.

Nearly three months have passed since Murata illegally broke into the Chinese embassy in Tokyo.

Lin said incidents threatening the security of Chinese diplomatic missions in Japan have continued to occur, adding that China has expressed grave concerns and lodged protests against the Japanese side on many occasions.

The case exposes a number of deep-seated problems in Japan, including worsening right-wing influence and the suppression of objective and rational voices, he said.

Lin also listed the toxicity of the Japanese government's erroneous policies on vital issues concerning China-Japan relations, including history and Taiwan, the serious lack of education on true history and the pervasive erroneous historical views.

There is also an ongoing push in Japan for a more offensive and expansionist defense policy, and a failure in the oversight and discipline of the Self-Defense Forces, he said.

Lin noted that several prominent figures in Japan have called on the government to apologize to China.

Some have urged Tokyo to reflect on itself and take corrective actions concerning the supervision of the SDF, the education on history and Japan's policy toward China, so as to fundamentally address the issue and remove its breeding ground in society.

"We once again urge the Japanese side to do serious soul-searching, correct its wrongdoings, conduct a thorough probe and take full responsibility for the incident," Lin said.

Nepal looks to strengthen collaboration with China

By **ZHOU JIN**

Nepal's new government is looking to strengthen political engagement with China and expand cooperation in areas including connectivity, technology, governance and people-to-people exchanges, Foreign Minister Shisir Khanal says.

Speaking of his recent four-day visit to China, Khanal said connectivity is one of Nepal's top priorities in its cooperation with China, both a neighbor and an important partner for the South Asian country.

"We have seen very impressive infrastructure being built on the Chinese side. We would like to see similar connectivity improvements on the Nepali side as well," he said.

Improved land and air links would facilitate trade, tourism and people-to-people exchanges, he added.

Khanal expressed hope that his visit would help pave the way for more high-level exchanges between the two countries in the coming months.

"I have invited Foreign Minister Wang Yi to visit Nepal, and we also hope to see more exchanges between leaders from both sides," he said.

A former minister of education, science and technology, Khanal took the current post in March. He said Nepal sees great potential to work with China in emerging technologies, particularly artificial intelligence.

"Nepal has a young and technologically savvy population," he said, adding that it is one of the fastest-growing sectors in the country in terms of tech service exports.

Khanal praised China's rapid advances in AI, especially the development of powerful and cost-effective models, saying Nepal hopes to leverage such innovations to support its own digital transformation.

Nepal recently announced plans to establish its first sovereign AI data center, and China could be a partner in that effort, he added.

Kathmandu aims to improve public services through digitalization and technology to make such services easily accessible to its people, he said.



> "We have seen very impressive infrastructure being built on the Chinese side. We would like to see similar connectivity improvements on the Nepali side as well."
>
> **Shisir Khanal,** foreign minister of Nepal

"That's something China has done amazingly well and (which) we would like to learn from," he said.

Nepal is particularly interested in learning from China's industrialization, agricultural modernization and technology-driven development, Khanal said.

China's mechanized agriculture has generated large numbers of jobs in both rural and urban areas, helping power the country's rapid economic growth, he said.

In recent years, China has also made remarkable progress in homegrown technologies, which have improved efficiency and brought tangible benefits to people's daily lives, he added.

Highlighting the long and traditional relationship between Nepal and China, Khanal said it is now important to bring dynamism to the relationship between young people of both countries and deepen mutual understanding.

"There is significant interest among young Nepalis in learning from China, particularly in science and technology," he said, adding that more and more Nepalis are studying Chinese and pursuing higher education and research opportunities in China.

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Zhejiang champions law-based governance

Frontline policing and dispute management prioritize people's life quality in province

By HAO NAN
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With the commitment to pioneering provincial-level law-based governance in China, East China's Zhejiang province has integrated rule-of-law building into every aspect of modernization and become a demonstration zone.

A sound legal ecosystem has underpinned Zhejiang's robust economic and social progress after the province initiated the rule-of-law provincial construction strategy on April 26, 2006.

From 2006 to 2025, the province's GDP surged from 1.56 trillion yuan ($230.9 billion) to 9.45 trillion yuan, while public safety satisfaction rose from 94.8 percent to 98.9 percent, ranking among the nation's highest for five consecutive years.



A judge from Dongyang city people's court Weishan tribunal delivers a lecture on constitutional law to primary school students in Dongyang city, Zhejiang province, on Dec 3, 2025. BAO KANGXUAN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Supporting enterprises

These statistics testify to the province's improved law-based governance mechanisms.

Over the past two decades, Zhejiang has enacted more than 30 pioneering regulations and rules to shore up reform and industrial upgrading.

Notably, the province issued regulations to boost private enterprises and optimize the business environment, securing full life-cycle protection for market entities.

Hangzhou, capital city of Zhejiang province, has rolled out a regulation on embodied intelligence robots. As the first local regulation of its kind nationwide, it took effect on May 1, serving as a benchmark for the development of embodied intelligence across the country.

To support enterprises going global, Zhejiang opened an overseas legal service center in November 2025. It now operates more than 400 service outlets in 98 countries and 138 major cities, providing one-stop legal services such as consultation, remote notarization and commercial mediation.

Centering on livelihood

Zhejiang's two-decade commitment to the rule of law has also prioritized people's interests. The Fengqiao Experience, which centers on resolving conflicts at the grassroots level, originated in Fengqiao town of Zhuji city. Over the past few years, the practice has spread nationwide and evolved into a hallmark of advancing law-based governance.

At present, public security authorities in Zhejiang are pushing forward the development of police stations modeled after the Fengqiao Experience. The Ningwei squadron of the traffic management police brigade of Xiaoshan district public security subbureau in Hangzhou is among them.

The squadron has deployed more police officers to frontline posts to ensure a quick response to emergencies. When no police calls come in, officers carry out preventive work including incident detection, hidden danger inspection and traffic safety publicity.



A policeman from Ningwei squadron instructs the elderly on traffic safety in Hangzhou on March 23. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Over the five years since the launch of the Fengqiao-style initiative, fatalities from traffic accidents under Ningwei squadron's jurisdiction have dropped by 63.6 percent. Following the rollout of grid-based governance, congestion-related police reports in the precinct dipped 32 percent year-on-year, and accident handling efficiency rose by 45 percent.

"We have truly realized the governance goal of resolving minor incidents within grids and major issues within the jurisdiction," Yuan Gengsheng, an official from Ningwei squadron, said.

To make judicial services more accessible and efficient, local courts in Zhejiang have introduced diversified mechanisms for family disputes and fast-track procedures for labor disputes, significantly cutting public litigation costs.

Additionally, procuratorial organs have launched special campaigns on food and drug safety and ecological protection, while the police have intensified crackdowns on telecom fraud and organized crime.

Beyond judicial rectification, Zhejiang has built 381 standardized comprehensive governance centers in key areas and expanded online judicial services to enable convenient dispute resolution. It has also strengthened public legal education with 10 national legal education bases to foster a law-abiding society.

Digital court system

Leveraging its digital economy, Zhejiang has embedded technologies into full-cycle law-based governance to modernize provincial governance.

The province has built cross-departmental big data platforms for online criminal case handling and a digital court system covering filing, mediation, trial and enforcement, lowering the appeal rate of first-instance cases to 6.12 percent.

As the nation's pilot for comprehensive and integrated administrative law enforcement reform, Zhejiang has streamlined more than 1,300 law enforcement teams to 652. It has also launched 105 cross-departmental supervision scenarios, eliminating duplicated and overlapping law enforcement issues.

In the future, Zhejiang is committed to making substantial progress in modern law-based governance. The province plans to deepen institutional reforms related to the rule of law, continuously enhance digital empowerment mechanisms for judicial and administrative governance, and refine its people-centered legal service system.

These efforts aim to consistently enhance the public's sense of fulfillment, happiness and security, setting a robust provincial benchmark for the comprehensive advancement of the rule of law across China, local officials said.



Wu Minghui hosts a stall sharing information on how people can protect their own rights during a legal publicity campaign held on May 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Public's legal knowledge boosted by diverse efforts

By YUAN SHENGGAO

To raise residents' awareness of the law, Zhejiang province in East China has ramped up legal popularization over the past two decades. Nowadays, respecting, studying, abiding by and applying the law has become a voluntary practice across society.

Yuhang district of Hangzhou, capital city of Zhejiang province, started to pioneer quantitative assessment on the rule of law governance in 2006, serving as a microcosm of the province's drive to foster law-abiding conduct.

Wu Minghui, who used to be a mediator, felt the change in Yuhang when recalling a contractual dispute over auxiliary processing involving a small-sized precision processor in her early working days.

In the case, a processor manufactured spare parts for a local high-tech company.

But the two sides only kept simple delivery slips without a formal written contract specifying quality criteria, inspection protocols and payment deadlines.

Disputes later arose over product precision defects, leaving more than 300,000 yuan ($44,338) unpaid.

Frequent quarrels between the two parties nearly put an end to their business partnership.

"Without standardized contract guidelines or digital working tools, I could only calm the conflicting sides temporarily instead of resolving the dispute fundamentally. That case drove home a profound truth: without the safeguards of the rule of law, businesses cannot secure stable operation," Wu said.

Now as a practicing lawyer in Nuoliya Law Firm, Wu adopts a different approach when handling similar disputes. She directly applies the Contracts section of the Civil Code to clarify delivery specifications, inspection obligations and payment liabilities for both parties.

Leveraging the digital rule-of-law platform, she uses standardized contract templates to help parties secure transaction evidence and clarify rights and obligations efficiently. Moreover, she coordinates with judicial offices, industrial parks and trade associations to settle disputes with reference to precedent rulings.

For years, Yuhang has translated institutional strengths of the rule of law into development dividends through quantified management, digital empowerment, diversified co-governance and development-focused guarantees, enabling the law to underpin businesses for steady operation and bold innovation, Wu said.

At the end of 2007, Yuhang issued the official quantitative assessment system for law-based governance. In 2008, the district rolled out a rule-of-law index. Quantitative assessment has since been applied to law-based development and social governance in Yuhang.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Justice revealed the first batch of national model cities, counties and districts for law observance and legal popularization, with Yuhang on the list. "The core edge of a law-based Yuhang lies in addressing the genuine needs of residents and enterprises with accessible and feasible legal services. Thanks to multilevel collaborative mechanisms, most conflicts get resolved at the grassroots level. We now provide full-spectrum compliance services for enterprises covering risk prevention and dispute resolution, so businesses can pursue development free from unnecessary worries," Wu said.

Across Zhejiang, legal literacy is being promoted via diversified initiatives. In December 2025, Wenzhou arranged for leading officials of administrative authorities to attend in-court trials on-site.

In Zhenhai district of Ningbo, the Weiyuan Qingfeng hall, an education venue on Party discipline, functions as a regular rule-of-law classroom for Party members and cadres. Renovated from Zhejiang's clean-government education base and opened in 2015, it has drawn nearly 400 groups and more than 20,000 visitors annually over the past 11 years.

During the summer vacation in 2025, Shangcheng district of Hangzhou partnered with the local public welfare legal service team to host law-themed garden activities inside air-raid shelters. In the cooler environment, children learned about the evolution of China's legal publicity drive.

In January, Dai Ji, head of the Department of Justice of Zhejiang Province, revealed a 20-year scorecard marking the progress in building law-based Zhejiang. He said: "It has become a widespread social consensus that all affairs follow legal provisions, all residents understand and observe laws, and all parties conduct activities in accordance with the law."

New rules guide robotic intelligence

By YUAN SHENGGAO

Hangzhou in East China's Zhejiang province has rolled out the country's first local regulation governing embodied intelligence robots, which took effect on May 1.

Covering technological innovation, infrastructure construction, industrial development, application empowerment and safety management, the ordinance sets clear legal guidelines for the standardized and high-quality growth of the emerging sector.

Zhou Junjie, senior vice-president of Zhejiang SUPCON Information Technology, noted that the regulation was formulated with extensive input from enterprises, research institutions, end users and expert panels. Tailored to the current development status and bottlenecks of China's embodied intelligence industry, it offers valuable references and guidance for the nationwide sector.

According to Zhou, the progress Hangzhou has achieved in the embodied intelligence industry, which has been propelled by the much-talked-about "six little dragons" enterprises, represented by Unitree Robotics and DEEP Robotics, has proved the feasibility and soundness of the local regulations. These rules will set an example to drive the entire industry.

As an example of embodied robots, the recently unveiled Hangjing Zhixing robot by SUPCON can perform standard directing gestures such as guiding traffic to go straight and stop fluently. It is also capable of detecting traffic violations including riding without safety helmets, stopping beyond traffic lines and jaywalking across zebra crossings, followed by polite and patient voice alerts.

It is expected to take on a wider range of tasks in Hangzhou, ranging from the West Lake scenic area and Qianjiang New Town.

"Though it is a local industrial regulation, it boasts universal applicability," Zhou said, adding that the regulation also takes into account the current development landscape and prevailing challenges of China's embodied intelligence robot industry. "Undoubtedly, it offers valuable guidance and reference for the sector nationwide and will serve as a benchmark for the development of embodied intelligence across the country," Zhou noted.

"Furthermore, the regulation defines the core concept of embodied robots. By legislative means, it connects the full industry chain covering technology, application scenarios, market and safety. It gives enterprises full confidence to ramp up research and development efforts, roll out applications and expand business, acting as a real reassurance for local companies."



A robot produced by Zhejiang SUPCON Information Technology guides traffic on a major road in Hangzhou. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

During an enterprise's growth, innovation is inevitably accompanied by risks and uncertainties. A stable, fair, transparent and predictable legal environment is fundamental for enterprises to invest, operate and pursue innovation boldly.

This forward-looking legislation for emerging industries serves as a vivid epitome of Zhejiang's two-decade commitment to advancing the rule of law to bolster high-quality development and business environment, according to local officials.

Grounded in the belief that the rule of law creates a sound business environment, Zhejiang has launched a host of pioneering reforms, including the one-stop service that features no unnecessary interference and timely responses to needs, which has effectively unlocked the innovation capability of market entities.

According to a survey made by the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce to evaluate the business environment across the country in 2025, Zhejiang ranks first nationwide in four major categories: market environment, legal environment, innovation environment and government service environment. Its government service sector has maintained the top position for four consecutive years.

At the symposium marking the 20th anniversary of building a law-based Zhejiang, Wang Hao, Party secretary of the province, emphasized the key role of supporting high-quality development through legal services. He added that more efforts should be made to improve rules and systems for fostering a worldly recognized innovation ecosystem and a highly competitive business environment, and fully implement the requirements for building a unified national market.

"This constitutes a key part of Zhejiang's next drive to advance the development of a law-based province to a higher level," Wang said.

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COMMENT

Editorials

Principles, proposals and actions aimed at better global governance

The State Council Information Office released a white paper on Wednesday titled "More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions".

The document outlines China's principles, proposals and actions on global governance, aiming to foster broader consensus within the international community, ensure more effective responses to global challenges and build a more just and equitable global governance system.

The world faces severe and complex challenges, along with increasing disruptions to the postwar international order. The two pressing questions of the era are: What kind of global governance system should be established, and how can global governance be reformed and improved?

China has always been an active participant in, contributor to and builder of global governance as it regards it as a common endeavor that bears on the well-being of all humanity.

In promoting a global governance system characterized by extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, President Xi Jinping has called for true multilateralism to foster an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization.

To this end, he has put forward the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity and proposed the Global Governance Initiative to build a more just and equitable global governance system.

Resolutely upholding the authority and status of the United Nations is fundamental to the effective implementation of the GGI, which, aligned with the growing trend toward greater democracy in international relations, offers a clear and feasible road map for improving global governance.

That the GGI has the support of nearly 160 countries and international organizations — with over 60 countries joining the Group of Friends of Global Governance — sends a clear signal that building a just and equitable global governance system is a shared vision pursued by the international community.

Anchored in the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and guided by a vision of global governance featuring extensive consultation, joint contribution and shared benefits, the GGI upholds multilateralism and unites forces in pursuit of a fairer future.

But as the white paper stresses, the effective implementation of the GGI hinges on major countries bearing a sense of responsibility and all nations unitedly addressing the peace and development deficits.

With the declining effectiveness of some international mechanisms and inadequate rules in emerging areas, the fragmentation in global governance is evident. There is a "compound crisis" in which the lack of security, development, governance and trust are intertwined.

On the one hand, the world is experiencing deeper multipolarization and the rapid rise of the Global South. On the other hand, the existing governance system suffers from a lack of representativeness, inclusiveness and effectiveness. This is exacerbated by heightened competition among major countries, obstacles to multilateral cooperation and a decline in international trust.

As the white paper states, there is no need to reinvent the wheel to overcome these challenges. What is needed is for all countries to firmly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, safeguard the international order based on international law and uphold the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter.

China, on its part, has been consistent in this regard. Noting that China was the first country to sign the UN Charter, Foreign Minister Wang Yi said at a news conference held to present the white paper on Wednesday that the country is ready to work with other countries to reinvigorate and strengthen the UN and uphold the authority of the UN by advancing the GGI. The GGI is action-oriented and aligned with the Global Development Initiative, Global Security Initiative, Global Civilization Initiative and high-quality Belt and Road cooperation.

Embodying the unity of ideas and actions, the GGI provides important conceptual guidance and practical pathways for steering the global governance system toward greater justice and equity, contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to resolving the shortcomings in global governance.

Drone 'partnership' mask for remilitarization

On the agenda of the G7 leaders who met in France this week was reportedly a proposal straight out of a geopolitical conjurer's playbook: Japan's participation in the Eurodrone project.

On paper, this is a straightforward case of industrial synergy. Europe wants to reduce its reliance on US and Chinese supply chains; Japan, with its precision manufacturing, needs new partners to ease the strain on an overstretched US defense industry. It sounds like a pragmatic "alignment" of interests.

But to see this as merely a tech-transfer or investment deal is to miss the strategic bamboozling at its heart. This is the latest, and perhaps most brazen, act in a well-rehearsed Japanese trick: the art of "security" packaging. Tokyo has become a master of cloaking military ambition in the drab language of economic and technological cooperation.

The Eurodrone initiative seems to be the perfect vehicle. It allows Japan to deepen its military ties with key European countries, gain access to sensitive drone technology for its own "counterstrike" capabilities, and embed itself further into Europe's military-industrial base — all under the guise of supply-chain "diversification".

The G7, already grappling with its existential anxieties, is susceptible to being hoodwinked in this way, as Europe's post-Ukraine security jitters mean it is predisposed to Japan selling itself as an indispensable "natural partner". By exploiting the European need to reduce dependency on the US for military supplies, Tokyo hopes to weave Japan's "remilitarization" into the fabric of collective Western security. As Tokyo sees it, if it can get a G7 stamp of approval for a project like Eurodrone, it gains a powerful imprimatur for its broader "remilitarization".

Gaining international "legitimacy" for its military expansion is not an afterthought, but the core objective of the move.

The Sanae Takaichi government has labeled China as Japan's "unprecedented strategic challenge"; Japan has doubled its military budget in a mere four years, with spending set to hit a staggering 9 trillion yen ($56.15 billion) this year; and it is actively developing offensive weapons that effectively shatter its postwar "exclusively defense-oriented" principle.

And this brings us to the uncomfortable historical parallels that polite diplomatic discourse tends to forget. The very same *zaibatsu* industrial conglomerates that will be at the heart of any Japan-Europe defense project were the indispensable gears of Japan's wartime military machine. This structural continuity, combined with the right-wing forces that continue to whitewash its wartime history, should set alarm bells ringing.

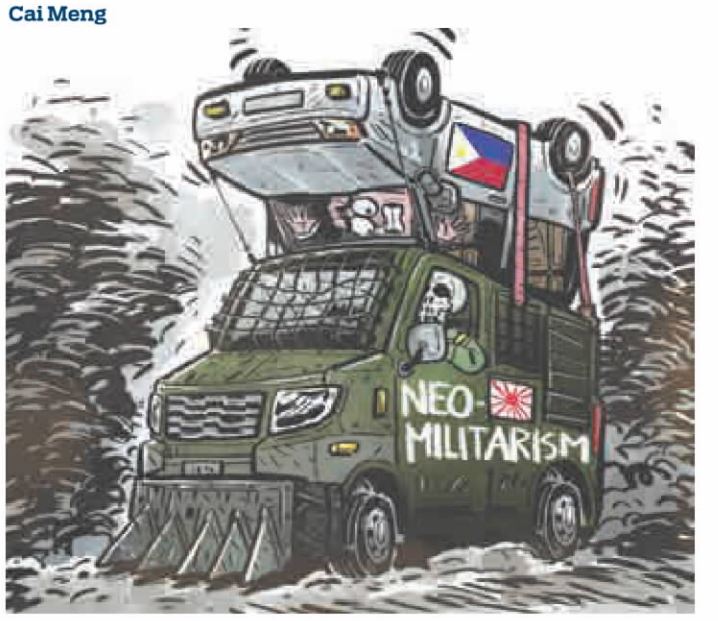
The proposal by the ruling Liberal Democratic Party to increase military spending to 3 percent to 3.5 percent of Japan's GDP, and to build "sustained combat capability" for a prolonged "emergency", demonstrates the direction of the dangerous journey the Takaichi government is leading Japan on at present.

It is a trajectory of a state methodically, and seemingly with "great courtesy", dismantling its constitutional shackles. Japan has not yet formally revised Article 9, but with its "helicopter destroyers" that are effectively aircraft carriers and its latent capability to produce nuclear weapons, the infrastructure for a potent military force is already in place. All that remains is the final push.

Therefore the query posed by Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian warrants serious global attention. Highlighting Japan's history of militarism and foreign aggression, Lin asked some pointed and timely questions: Is Japan's militarist past returning? Is Japan speeding down the path of "remilitarization"? Could Japan once again become the bane of East Asia?

As the G7 leaders consider Japan's proposal, they should ask themselves whether they are engaging with a peaceful partner, or are they providing, through their own anxieties, a multilateral seal of approval for Japan's strategic revisionism? The European G7 members risk becoming enablers of aggression. They should not be fooled by the language of "partnership". This is about more than drones; it's about setting a dangerous precedent.

Cai Meng



Opinion Line

East-west pairing assistance key to balanced development

China's east-west pairing assistance program — a mechanism launched in 1996 — continues to shape the country's pursuit of more balanced and inclusive growth. This was evident on Wednesday, when officials gathered in Yinchuan, capital of the Ningxia Hui autonomous region, to review and further improve the program.

Over the past decades, the reform and opening-up of China have greatly promoted the development of the country in all aspects. While prosperity has been generated along the country's eastern coast, its western areas have lagged behind in comparison. The challenge is to ensure growth benefits are distributed more evenly across the vast country.

In response, policymakers have established a framework linking the developed eastern regions with their less-developed western counterparts, creating channels through which capital, talent, technology and market opportunities can flow across administrative boundaries. Over time, this has evolved into a coordinated development assistance system.

Over the past five years, enterprises have been guided to invest more than 750 billion yuan ($111 billion) in the western regions. This program has helped more than 5 million rural workers from western China secure jobs and facilitated nearly 570 billion yuan in sales of agricultural products from western regions to the eastern markets. These figures suggest that the mechanism is not just redistributive. It has created sustainable economic linkages and growth opportunities.

Equally notable is the institutional architecture developed over the years. The program now operates through five major mechanisms: industrial cooperation, labor collaboration, consumer assistance, talent exchange and social support. Together they connect investment, employment, market access, human capital and public services into a single framework.

Industrial cooperation encourages investment and industry upgrading. Labor collaboration expands employment opportunities. Consumer assistance creates sizable markets for agricultural products. Talent exchange transfers expertise and managerial experience. Social support mobilizes educational, healthcare and other public resources. Each mechanism addresses a different dimension of regional inequality.

The significance of this model lies in its compatibility with China's national conditions. A country of continental scale, marked by vast differences in geography and development levels, requires institutions capable of coordinating resources across regions. The pairing program turns regional disparities into opportunities for complementary development. Eastern regions gain access to new markets and labor resources, while western regions benefit from investment, technology and expertise.

More broadly, the program reflects a characteristic of China's long-term development perspective. Few governments can sustain a development strategy across three decades while continuously adapting its objectives and implementation — from poverty alleviation to rural vitalization and coordinated regional development. The achievements of the pairing program owe much to long-range planning, policy continuity and incremental improvements in governance.

Experience around the world suggests that economic activity naturally gravitates toward already prosperous regions. China's approach has been to use institutions to mitigate this tendency without abandoning market mechanisms. The pairing program does not replace markets; it connects them by lubricating the internal circulation.

As China enters the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, balanced development has become increasingly important for the efforts to realize common prosperity. Future growth will depend not only on technological innovation and industrial upgrading, but also on expanding domestic demand and ensuring broader participation in development. Regional coordination is therefore an economic imperative of national importance.

The east-west pairing assistance program should be adapted to the current situation. Unlike 30 years ago, many inland areas have become gateways to global engagement under the Belt and Road Initiative. Consequently, the east-west pairing assistance program should incorporate more cross-regional collaboration.

Thirty years after its launch, the program stands as a testament to a governance philosophy that prizes patience, continuity and long-term development — qualities that have helped transform the regional development gap into a story of increasingly shared growth.

— LI YANG, CHINA DAILY

What They Say

Chinese classics offer ways to tackle modern challenges

Editor's note: *The Second World Conference of Classics was held in Athens earlier this month. Chen Yun, a professor of philosophy at East China Normal University, who attended the conference, spoke to China News Service about why China's classics should be included in global classical studies. Below are excerpts of the interview and an analysis of the practical application. The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.*

From the perspective of Chinese classical studies, peace signifies not merely stability within human communities, but also harmony and balance between human society and nature. Stability within human society is based on respect for political, social, ethical and civilizational differences. In addition, it demands an integrative consciousness to transcend such divisions and achieve *tai he*, where all the people and all things coexist in supreme harmony.

The contemporary world order often reflects a "law of the jungle" mindset, where might makes right, conflating human society with the animal kingdom. Such thinking amounts to a negation of civilization.

In contrast, the Chinese concept of *tianxia weigong*, or pursuing the common good for all under heaven, from the classic *The Book of Rites*, represents an ideal vision for the world order. *Tianxia*, or "all under heaven", transcends political boundaries to encompass a civilizational domain, integrating individuals and societies into a community of humanity.

In real life, it is necessary to cultivate individuals who are capable of bearing the responsibility for all under heaven, and encourage them to break free from serving narrow group interests and commit themselves to the shared interests of all humanity.

Confronted with the current world order and its multiple challenges, we must mobilize both political and non-political forces to forge a humanitarianism suited to the age of globalization, and improve global governance through diverse approaches.

Fairness, justice and equality are long-existing pursuits of Chinese philosophers from ancient times to today. The political principle of serving the public is deeply embedded in the concept of "pursuing the common good for all under heaven", which is in drastic contrast to the concept of "pursuing good for the small interest group".

Behind political concepts such as being people-oriented, selection of the capable and the rule of virtue lies the concept of "pursuing the common good for all under heaven". This has become a central feature of the traditional Chinese political value system.

The pursuit of the common good is the prerequisite for achieving fairness, and only by prioritizing public welfare, can social fairness be realized.

These values underpin China's role as a steadfast promoter of world peace and shared development.

The pursuit of common good for all under heaven carries the core wisdom of Chinese civilization. Deeply rooted in the fertile soil of Chinese culture, it has not only become an important ideological resource for the development of Chinese society, but also provides Chinese solutions for the future of humanity.

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VIEWS

Ro Jae Hun

Toward more mature ROK-China ties

In June this year, the ROK witnessed the first anniversary of its new government. Within just one year, the Lee Jae Myung administration has not only restored political stability and economic confidence, but also elevated the ROK's global standing through its "pragmatic diplomacy".

President Lee Jae Myung's proactive summit diplomacy — encompassing official visits to 14 countries and hosting the heads of state from 13 nations — has enabled ROK diplomacy to rebuild international confidence while strengthening strategic partnership and multilateral diplomacy.

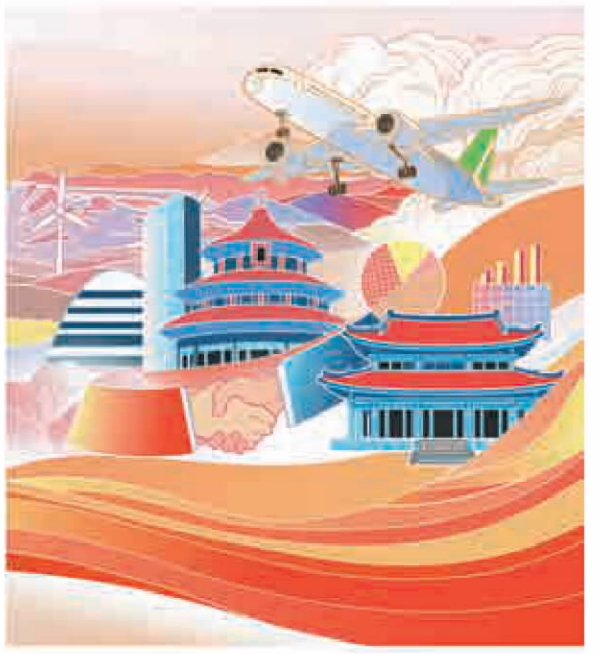
In particular, ROK-China relations have developed to new heights within a remarkably short period of time.

The two successful summit meetings served as a vivid testament to the dramatic progress in bilateral relations, yielding tangible and meaningful outcomes across a wide range of areas.

As indispensable neighboring countries, the ROK and China have shared common interests in many areas and maintained close relations since the establishment of diplomatic ties in 1992. Through mutual efforts, bilateral relations have reached a new peak.

Last November, the ROK successfully hosted the 2025 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Gyeongju, achieving a milestone outcome with the adoption of the "Gyeongju Declaration" aiming towards easing regional trade barriers and stabilizing global supply chains.

On this occasion, President Xi Jinping visited the ROK. It was the first state visit by President Xi Jinping in 11 years. During his visit, the two leaders engaged in hours of comprehensive discussions, reaffirming the core value of our strategic cooperative partnership and laying out a blueprint for the comprehensive development of bilateral relations across political, security, economic, and cultural spheres. Then only two months later, President Lee visited Beijing. It was the first state visit by the ROK President in 9 years. These consecutive summit meetings have led to the following results.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

On the political side, the two countries fully restored strategic and cooperative partnership. Mutual trust is being restored, and mutual respect is deepening. Both agreed to work together for a more stable and secure Korean Peninsula. High-level engagement and strategic communication continue to intensify.

On the economic and trade side, concrete numbers accurately reflect the positive momentum in bilateral relations. From the inauguration of the Lee Jae Myung administration through May 2026, trade between the ROK and China has totaled $315.9 billion, marking an 18 percent increase from the same period a year earlier.

The two leaders shared their vision for future cooperation in the field of investment, AI, bio industry and smart cities. Cooperation for securing a stable supply chain has been strengthened. Negotiations for the new trade and investment FTA are accelerating.

An agreement was reached to extend the currency swap. Discussions on demographic challenges facing the two countries such as aging society and silver economy were also on the agenda. As the two countries prioritize the livelihood of the people, these mutual cooperation will benefit the people of both countries.

A total of around 20 MOUs were signed to secure the implementation of the mutual agreements. These are substantive measures that will help stabilize and cement bilateral relations, especially in an increasingly uncertain global environment.

On people-to-people exchanges, mutual visits are on an upward trend, especially as both sides relaxed visa policy. The number of international flights between the ROK and China reached 113,200 just within 11 months since the launch of the current administration, marking an 8.3 percent increase.

The expanded connectivity has driven a significant increase in people-to-people exchanges, with bilateral visitor numbers rising to 8.45 million, up an approximately 26 percent. Cultural and sports cooperation is also expanding. To the delight of soccer and baduk fans, the two sides are strengthening partnerships and people-to-people exchanges in these areas, which are of great common interest to the younger generations of both countries.

Building on this growing momentum, the ROK-China Summer Youth Sports Exchange is scheduled to take place this year between Jeollabuk-do and Hainan Province, featuring friendly matches in badminton, basketball, table tennis, and baduk.

With joint efforts, these exchanges have helped improve mutual perceptions. Taking China's concerns seriously, President Lee himself publicly spoke out against the spread of misinformation and domestic fake news concerning China. According to a ROK polling organization, the favorability rating toward China recently rose from 21.3 to 30.2 percent just within a year.

Moreover, the share of those who regarded the relations as either good or average rose significantly to 78 percent. Concurrently, various other studies indicate that Chinese citizens' favorability toward the ROK has improved as well. It clearly demonstrates a meaningful and reciprocal turnaround in mutual public perceptions.

The upcoming 2026 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting in Shenzhen, China will present another important opportunity for the ROK and China to further strengthen strategic communication and deepen practical cooperation.

Building on the positive momentum achieved through the recent summit meetings, the two countries will continue to expand collaboration in emerging future-oriented fields.

Guided by the common understandings reached by two leaders, the ROK and China will work together to manifest the shared visions into substantive outcomes, accumulate mutual trust and expand people-to-people exchanges.

Advancing strategic cooperative partnership toward a more mature, stable, and ever-deepening relationship is the path the two countries are taking together.

The author is the ambassador of the Republic of Korea to China.
The views don't necessarily represent those of China Daily.

Arkebe Oqubay

Hainan Free Trade Port redefines economic openness

On Dec 18, 2025, the anniversary of China's landmark reform and opening-up policy, Hainan launched island-wide special customs operations — a moment that transformed the entire tropical province into the world's largest free trade in terms of area. Six months on, the numbers are striking, and the strategic logic is becoming clear.

Trade has surged. By the end of February 2026, Hainan's total goods imports and exports had reached 65.49 billion yuan ($9.7 billion), up 29.1 percent year-on-year — outpacing the national average by 14 percentage points. Exports alone grew by 55.4 percent.

Markets in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Africa and Latin America have all seen substantial growth, pointing to a genuinely diversified trade base rather than dependence on a single partner or region.

But statistics alone do not capture what makes Hainan significant. To understand why this experiment matters — not just for China, but for the wider world — it helps to ask a simple question: why choose to open up precisely when so much of the world is closing down?

The past few years have seen a wave of economic nationalism sweep through advanced economies.

Tariffs have been raised, supply chains have been "reshored" in the name of security and trade policy has increasingly been wielded as a geopolitical weapon. Hainan represents a deliberate and confident move in the opposite direction, demonstrating that openness need not mean vulnerability.

What makes Hainan different from previous Chinese free trade zones is not just its scale — though covering an entire province of 35,000 square kilometers is certainly unprecedented — it is the depth of its institutional openness.

Zero tariffs now apply to over 6,600 categories of goods, up from around 1,900 before. A corporate income tax rate of 15 percent makes it one of the most competitive business environments in Asia.

The customs framework itself is innovative. Goods move freely within the island; stricter checks apply only when products cross into the Chinese mainland market — what officials call "freer access at the first line, regulated access at the second line".

This gives foreign businesses a genuine staging ground: they can process, assemble and add value in Hainan before selling into China's vast domestic market.

One provision deserves particular attention. Imported products that undergo at least 30 percent value-added processing in Hainan can enter the mainland tariff-free.

This single rule transforms Hainan from a transit point into a place where real economic activity — and real economic value — can be created.

Critics might ask: is this not simply another special economic zone, a familiar feature of China's development landscape since the 1980s? The answer is no, and the distinction matters.

Earlier pilot free trade zones — there are now 24 of them, including the pioneering Shanghai FTZ established in 2013 — were designed as contained experiments. Hainan is something qualitatively different: a full-province model that builds on four decades of accumulated experience while breaking genuinely new institutional ground.

It is a testing ground for cross-border trade financing, greater foreign exchange flexibility, and blockchain-based payment systems.

For countries seeking alternative financial infrastructure, these pilots are worth watching closely.

Perhaps the most distinctive aspect of Hainan, and the one least appreciated in mainstream media, is what it offers developing countries.

The Global South is not a monolithic bloc, but its economies share certain common challenges: they export raw materials and agricultural commodities and struggle to move up the value chain. Hainan's design speaks directly to these challenges.

For ASEAN producers of palm oil, rubber, tropical fruits and fisheries products, Hainan offers preferential access to the Chinese market — one of the world's largest — without the full burden of mainland customs compliance.

More ambitiously, the value-added processing incentives mean that a Malaysian palm oil refiner or an Indonesian electronics assembler can locate operations in Hainan, add value and ship to Chinese consumers under favorable terms.

This is a path from commodity exporter to processed-goods exporter — precisely the transition that development economists have long argued is essential for sustainable growth.

A joint survey released on Hainan's 100th day of customs operations found that over 70 percent of ASEAN enterprises surveyed already recognize Hainan's strategic value as a platform for entering the Chinese mainland market. Export growth to ASEAN, Africa and Latin America has expanded substantially since December.

The cooperation goes beyond trade in goods. Hainan is developing sectoral platforms in tropical agriculture, healthcare, green energy and the digital economy. The Boao Lecheng International Medical Tourism Pilot Zone has become a key channel for the entry of advanced pharmaceuticals into China.

A green and digital innovation project in Baoting (a Li and Miao autonomous county in Hainan) is piloting climate-resilient development models that can be adapted and replicated in other island nations and developing countries.

These are not conventional export-processing zones that funnel goods to Northern markets while leaving the local economy largely untouched. They are platforms for a different kind of cooperation — one in which China and developing country partners build capability together.

Could other countries learn from the Hainan model? The answer depends on what one is trying to learn.

Rules-based, institutional openness — where businesses can plan around predictable policies rather than arbitrary political decisions — is a sustainable competitive advantage.

Singapore built its prosperity on this logic. Hainan is testing whether a larger, continental economy can do the same. The answer will be whether foreign enterprises move beyond registering in Hainan to actually producing there; whether the financial innovations gain traction; whether the trade links with ASEAN and the broader Global South deepen into genuine supply-chain integration.

Traditional export-processing zones tend to create enclave economies: jobs and foreign exchange, but have weak links with domestic industry and little technological transfer.

Hainan's design — with its value-added incentives, sectoral cooperation platforms and integration across an entire province rather than a fenced compound — offers a more holistic template. For countries in Africa, Southeast Asia and Latin America that are weighing their development strategies, the lessons are potentially transformative.

For advocates of multilateralism, Hainan is a timely reminder that trade liberalization can still be driven by unilateral ambition as much as negotiated agreement.

Malaysia has already identified Hainan as a testing ground for high-standard implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership. If the experiment succeeds, it could provide practical momentum for wider regional integration at a moment when the multilateral trading system is under strain.

Hainan is still in its infancy. But what the first six months have established is that the foundations are solid. The customs system works. The numbers are moving in the right direction. The institutional framework is in place.

In a world where many governments are retreating behind walls, Hainan is a door held open.

For trade partners, investors, and development planners across the Global South and beyond, that invitation deserves a serious response.

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The views don't necessarily reflect those of China Daily.

Imran Khalid

EU's tariff walls risk eroding its industrial foundation

The intense debate in the European Union over what Western policymakers called "a new wave of industrial competition" may prove to be a watershed moment in the bloc's trade policy.

In a crunch meeting in Brussels, EU commissioners explored broad sector-wide import quotas and tariff safeguards aimed at bolstering the competitiveness of European manufacturing.

At the same time, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen secured a major political agreement with Hungarian Prime Minister Peter Magyar, unfreezing €16.4 billion ($18.9 billion) in previously blocked EU funds.

Though analysts see these twin developments as notable progress in strengthening the bloc's industrial resilience and internal cohesion, a closer look reveals the underlying challenges amid the adjustments.

Brussels is attempting to strengthen its economic and trade dominance on a foundation of systemic economic friction and internal compromises.

The result is a profound institutional paradox. Europe is attempting to curb imports from reliable suppliers that help sustain the stability of its green supply chains while simultaneously spending billions to manage domestic political disagreements.

It is mimicking the protectionist, industrial-policy playbook of the United States even though it doesn't have the same fiscal firepower, abundant domestic resources or deep capital markets. The EU is inadvertently undermining its own industrial base under the weight of high energy costs and strategic overreach.

Europe's dilemma can be broken down into three systemic challenges. First, self-inflicted industrial pressure is accelerating across the continent.

The EU is inadvertently undermining its own industrial base under the weight of high energy costs and strategic overreach.

While public attention centers on high-profile trade disputes over electric vehicles, trade data reveals a deeper reality: European industry is heavily dependent on highly efficient imported intermediate inputs.

Many manufacturers rely on basic components that are significantly more cost-effective than domestic alternatives because of the scale and clustering advantages enjoyed by foreign producers.

This dependence extends to critical sectors. From polyhydric alcohols used in plastics and paints to vital amino acids used in pharmaceuticals, European industries continue to rely heavily on imported inputs. By applying one-size-fits-all safeguard clauses across sectors, Brussels is not protecting its industry; it is raising input costs for its remaining factories.

This leaves European manufacturers facing a tough choice: absorb higher costs and lose global competitiveness, or shut down domestic production entirely.

Second, Europe doesn't have the fiscal capacity required to execute a successful protectionist shift. Unlike the US, which can utilize massive federal subsidies to support domestic supply chains, the EU operates without a unified fiscal architecture. The EU Net-Zero Industry Act remains a regulatory blueprint rather than a well-funded commercial engine. Forced to operate within these rigid constraints, European policymakers are attempting to use trade defenses to curb market competition.

However, this excessive use of trade regulatory tools doesn't address the underlying macroeconomic reality: Europe lacks the cheap domestic energy and raw materials required to bridge the massive price gaps created by the efficiency of foreign producers. Consequently, protectionist measures function less as engines of industrial renewal and more as an economic surcharge on European consumers and businesses, driving up inflation while doing nothing to build real structural resilience.

Third, managing internal fragmentation through fiscal concessions risks creating permanent instability within the EU. The sudden release of €16.4 billion to Budapest, which is roughly 13 percent of Hungary's national budget, shows that the EU must continuously compromise its institutional principles to preserve a fragile consensus on foreign policy.

To advance a more protectionist economic agenda against external competitors, the European Commission is forced to offer financial incentives to seek the cooperation of member states that challenge the Brussels consensus.

This approach may buy temporary unity, but it creates a highly flammable domestic political environment.

While officials warn that millions of industrial jobs are at risk, member states remain divided on how to respond. Core manufacturing states such as France demand aggressive trade barriers to protect the domestic industry, but export-dependent economies such as Germany and Spain remain wary of provoking retaliatory trade restrictions.

The result is a fragmented union that buys short-term legislative compliance at the cost of long-term economic coherence.

The mechanics of this strategy are clear: trade protectionism without an underlying, fully funded fiscal expansion cannot preserve an industrial base. At best, it delays industrial adjustment; at worst it subsidizes industrial obsolescence.

By drifting away from the rules-based frameworks of the World Trade Organization in favor of unilateral safeguards, Europe risks weakening the very global architecture that enabled its prosperity. The ultimate implication of this shift is that Europe may be trapping itself in a structural corner. It risks alienating partners in the Global South by restricting access to its market, cutting off its own access to affordable technological components, and remaining dependent on external security guarantees.

Until Brussels addresses these structural contradictions and embraces the reality of global economic interdependence, its aggressive trade posture will remain an exercise in managing decline, rather than asserting constructive global leadership.

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GLOBAL VIEWS

LIU CHENYANG AND YU XIAOYAN

APEC's approach to resilience

The bloc's value lies not in issuing broad declarations, but in transforming consensus into replicable and scalable public goods for regional and global governance through pragmatic cooperation



Liu Chenyang



Yu Xiaoyan

Asia-Pacific regional cooperation has become increasingly important amid growing uncertainty in the global economic and trade landscape, driven by sluggish global growth, rising trade protectionism and accelerated restructuring of industrial and supply chains. The APEC Ministers Responsible for Trade Meeting, held in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, from May 22 to 23, marked an important milestone in China's role as APEC host in 2026. More importantly, it helped build consensus and shape the agenda for the APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting, which will be held in Shenzhen, Guangdong province, in November.

Since its establishment in 1989, APEC has played a central role in shaping the Asia-Pacific economic order through a distinctive "APEC approach" that is tailored to the region's diversity and varying stages of development. Based on voluntary, non-binding and consensus-building principles, APEC embraces open regionalism and promotes regional economic cooperation on the basis of equality and mutual benefit. By maximizing common ground while respecting differences, it has strengthened regional cohesion and fostered broad-based consensus across the region.

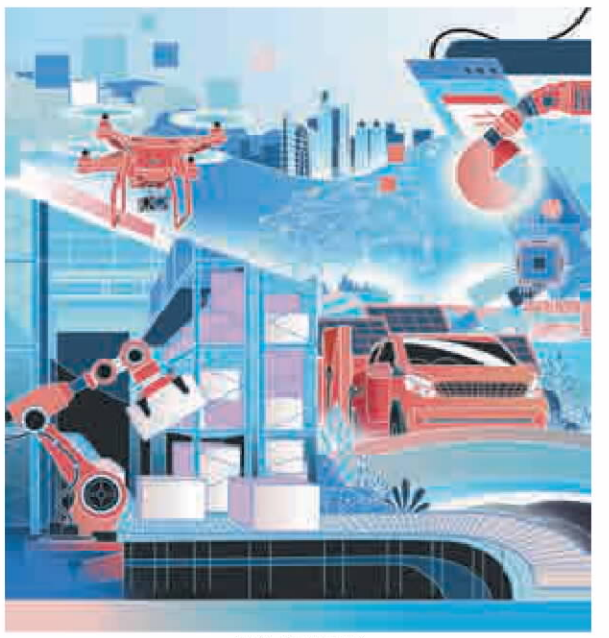
From the Bogor Goals to the Putrajaya Vision 2040, APEC has consistently provided long-term strategic direction for regional cooperation. The Bogor Goals — a commitment APEC leaders made in Bogor, Indonesia, in 1994, to achieve free and open trade and investment by 2010 for industrialized economies and by 2020 for developing economies — established a phased road map toward trade and investment liberalization, helping transform the Asia-Pacific into one of the world's most dynamic and open economic regions during the height of globalization. The Putrajaya Vision 2040, adopted in 2020, envisioned an open, dynamic, resilient and peaceful Asia-Pacific community. It identified three economic drivers — trade and investment; innovation and digitization; and strong, balanced, secure, sustainable and inclusive growth.

China's proposed theme for APEC 2026, "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together", together with its three priority areas — openness, innovation and cooperation — represents both a continuation and a concrete implementation of this vision.

In terms of openness, the 2024 APEC Economic Leaders' Meeting issued the Ichma Statement on A New Look at the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific agenda, strengthening the multilateral trading system, opposing protectionism and enhancing supply chain cooperation.

In terms of innovation, APEC has prioritized cooperation in emerging fields such as the digital economy, artificial intelligence, green development and new energy technologies, with a strong emphasis on technology-driven growth.

In terms of cooperation, APEC continues to promote inclusive and sustainable development, with particular attention to food and energy security, climate change, poverty reduction and greater integration of small and medium-sized enterprises and vulnerable groups into global value chains. Together, these priorities reflect APEC's ongoing efforts to promote high-quality growth in the Asia-Pacific while expanding both the scope and depth of regional economic cooperation.



SHI YU / CHINA DAILY

The Asia-Pacific region's role as a stabilizing force in the global economy is rooted first and foremost in its considerable economic weight and high degree of openness. According to official APEC statistics for 2025, the region was home to approximately 3 billion people, accounting for 36.6 percent of the global population. Its real GDP reached $57.5 trillion, representing 59.4 percent of the world total, while its imports and exports of goods and commercial services accounted for 46.8 percent and 46.2 percent of global trade, respectively.

Data from the APEC Policy Support Unit show that the region achieved real GDP growth of 3.5 percent in 2023 and 3.3 percent in 2024. The latest edition of the APEC Regional Trends Analysis shows growth of around 3.3 percent in 2025. Despite fluctuations in global demand, tightening financial conditions and escalating trade frictions, the Asia-Pacific economy has maintained relatively strong resilience, underscoring the enduring value of open markets, deep economic integration and regional cooperation as drivers of growth.

This stabilizing role is also reflected in APEC's capacity for institutional innovation and rule incubation. In 2012, APEC introduced a list of environmental goods that later served as an important reference for negotiations on the World Trade Organization Environmental Goods Agreement. During the 2014 Beijing APEC meetings, China and the United States reached a consensus on expanding the Information Technology Agreement, paving the way for the WTO's 2015 agreement to eliminate tariffs on 201 IT products.

APEC has also successfully implemented initiatives such as the APEC Business Travel Card scheme to facilitate cross-border business mobility, as well as two phases of Trade Facilitation Action Plans and the Connectivity Blueprint, all of which have significantly reduced transaction costs and enhanced regional connectivity. These efforts have also helped advance the implementation of commitments under the WTO Trade Facilitation Agreement.

These examples demonstrate that APEC's value lies not in issuing broad declarations of principle, but in its ability to transform consensus into replicable and scalable public goods for regional and global governance through pragmatic cooperation.

For China, APEC has long served as a major platform for participating in international economic cooperation. As the first regional economic cooperation mechanism China joined, APEC has provided an important channel for advancing China's diplomacy as a major country, including head-of-state diplomacy, neighborhood diplomacy and economic diplomacy.

APEC's vision of building an Asia-Pacific community by 2040 also carries significant practical relevance for China's efforts to build a community with a shared future for humanity. By fostering a stable and favorable regional environment, APEC supports China's pursuit of institutional opening-up and high-quality development. Continued progress in trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, regional connectivity, and Asia-Pacific value and supply chain cooperation will further strengthen China's capacity for high-level opening-up and create broader space for advancing Chinese modernization.

This year, China is hosting APEC for the third time. Both the Shanghai Accord adopted in 2001 and the Beijing Agenda issued in 2014 have become landmark achievements in APEC's history.

Going forward, China will demonstrate the responsibility of a major country by supporting the openness of the Asia-Pacific economy and promoting practical cooperation in areas such as the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific, connectivity, the digital economy and AI in response to evolving trends in global trade restructuring. China will also work with all parties to build an Asia-Pacific community, inject new momentum into regional development, and strengthen the synergy between APEC-led regional cooperation and global governance, further reinforcing the Asia-Pacific's role as the primary engine of global economic growth.

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WANG CHENWEI AND WANG HAOTIAN

Trade trends maintain momentum

New growth engines highlight the robustness as China enters the transformative 15th Five-Year Plan period



LI MIN / CHINA DAILY

According to the General Administration of Customs, China's foreign trade reached 20.68 trillion yuan ($3.05 trillion) in the first five months of 2026, marking a year-on-year increase of 15.3 percent. With key economic indicators outperforming expectations, the figures signal a strong start to the 15th Five-Year Plan (2026-30) period, highlighting the steady progress and long-term growth momentum of China's economy.



Wang Chenwei



Wang Haotian

Foreign trade has long been a key engine of economic growth. Advancing innovation-driven trade is essential to building a higher-level open economy and promoting high-quality development. Despite pressures from a challenging global environment, China's foreign trade has remained resilient and continued to reach new highs. Since the beginning of this year, China's foreign trade has shown four trends.

First, technology-intensive industries have become the backbone of exports. In the first five months of the year, total exports reached 11.91 trillion yuan, up 11.8 percent from a year earlier. Exports of mechanical and electrical products remained the key driver of growth, rising 18.4 percent to 7.58 trillion yuan and accounting for more than 60 percent of total exports. In contrast, exports of labor-intensive products fell 3.1 percent year-on-year to 1.61 trillion yuan.

Second, robust import growth has created new opportunities for international economic cooperation. Data from the General Administration of Customs showed that in the first five months of the year, China's imports totaled 8.77 trillion yuan, up 20.5 percent year-on-year. Imports of mechanical and electrical products increased by 25.3 percent, while imports of agricultural products also maintained steady growth. These trends suggest that an increasingly open China is responding to both domestic and global demand, while promoting mutually beneficial cooperation and shared development.

Third, private enterprises are leading the growth, recording a total import and export volume of 11.81 trillion yuan in the first five months, an increase of 15.5 percent. Foreign-invested enterprises reached 6.02 trillion yuan, up 15.7 percent, while State-owned enterprises totaled 2.81 trillion yuan, up 14 percent. Private enterprises accounted for more than half of the total trade volume, consolidating their stabilizing role in foreign trade.

Fourth, diversified trading partners and accelerated cooperation with emerging markets are contributing to a more stable and balanced trade structure. In the first five months, trade between China and Southeast Asian nations reached 3.52 trillion yuan, up 16.6 percent year-on-year. Trade with European Union countries totaled 2.53 trillion yuan, up 10.3 percent. Trade with the Belt and Road partner countries reached 10.57 trillion yuan, accounting for more than half of China's total foreign trade.

Meanwhile, it is important to recognize the risks posed by geopolitical tensions, sluggish global growth and rising trade protectionism. At home, China faces structural challenges, including frictions in the shift toward new growth drivers, relatively weak investment and consumption, insufficient domestic demand, the long-term task of industrial upgrading and risks in key sectors.

Despite these headwinds, China's economy is expected to remain resilient, supported by robust macroeconomic policies. China's system of centralized coordination enables it to mobilize resources efficiently and implement both cross-cycle and counter-cyclical policy measures, helping cushion the impact of external shocks. The country's vast domestic market, comprehensive industrial base and deeply integrated supply chains continue to provide strong structural advantages. Expanding domestic demand and continuous industrial upgrading also underpin China's long-term economic growth.

Against this positive economic backdrop, China's foreign trade is poised to stay vibrant. China has steadily expanded and diversified its trade ties across both traditional and emerging markets, enhancing its ability to withstand external shocks. To date, according to the Ministry of Commerce, China has signed 24 free trade agreements with 31 countries and regions, and its free trade partners account for 45 percent of its total goods trade. Trade-facilitating measures, including the granting of 100 percent zero-tariff treatment to African countries with diplomatic relations with China, along with deeper economic engagement with the EU, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Belt and Road partner countries, are expected to create fresh momentum for trade growth.

The technological revolution and industrial transformation are also becoming key engines of foreign trade growth. As emerging industries expand and new business models evolve, Chinese companies are becoming increasingly innovative and more motivated to explore overseas markets. In 2025, the largest gains in exports came from the "new trio" of new energy vehicles, lithium-ion batteries and photovoltaic products. According to the China Association of Automobile Manufacturers, exports of new energy vehicles surged 103.7 percent. The integration of data, technology, application scenarios and hardware is not only accelerating industrial development, but also empowering foreign trade enterprises.

Looking ahead, China should continue strengthening its domestic economy while fostering a more dynamic interplay between domestic and international markets.

First, China should continue pursuing mutually beneficial cooperation to sustain the vitality of foreign trade. This includes steadily expanding a high-standard network of free trade zones and further diversifying international markets to strengthen trade resilience. At the same time, private enterprises should be further empowered as both the backbone of foreign trade and a major source of innovation. By seizing the opportunities presented by new technologies, China can move up the global value chain with more high-tech and high-value-added products, while enhancing private enterprises' capacity to expand into overseas markets.

Second, China should further coordinate policy measures with market development to unlock the potential of domestic demand. To upgrade consumer spending, targeted measures should be implemented to boost consumption, foster new consumption scenarios and models, and increase financial support for consumer goods trade-in programs. Greater efforts should also be made to cultivate new growth drivers such as cultural tourism, sports events, healthcare and wellness-related consumption. In addition, China should continue promoting a unified national market to create a more favorable business environment.

Third, China should advance high-quality, innovation-driven development to strengthen the foundations of its foreign trade supply chains. This includes implementing the "AI Plus" initiative, fostering new forms of the intelligent economy and enhancing industry chain coordination and digitization. In key sectors, strategic capabilities should be strengthened by increasing investment in research and development of core technologies, equipment and products, thereby improving the resilience of supply chains in critical areas. At the same time, China should further deepen international cooperation on industrial and supply chain development, actively participate in global rule-setting, and contribute to the stable and efficient functioning of global industrial and supply chains.

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BUSINESS

AI agents set to revolutionize payment biz

Agentic commerce to bring shifts to transactions, boost autonomous services

By **JIANG XUEQING**
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As artificial intelligence platforms and merchant-integrated agents become more sophisticated, consumers are expected to increasingly delegate tasks such as product searches, comparisons, decisionmaking and purchasing to agents. The shift signals a new era of commerce moving from direct user interaction to a model built on user authorization and autonomous agent execution.

The rise of agentic commerce, however, presents new security and trust challenges. Merchants must be able to verify that transactions originate from legitimate AI agents rather than fraudulent actors, ensure purchases accurately reflect users' intentions and safeguard customer funds throughout the transaction process.

Against this backdrop, Chinese e-commerce giant JD unveiled its Agent Autonomous Payment Protocol on June 11. The framework aims to enable AI agents to complete payments independently within user-defined rules and spending limits.

The protocol establishes six levels of payment autonomy, providing a gradual pathway from transactions that require full human approval to those that can be executed entirely by AI agents. To enhance security, each payment request is linked to three critical elements: the verified identity of the user, the authorized version of the AI agent and a trusted operating environment. Transactions are approved only when all three conditions are validated.

The protocol also separates users' primary accounts from agent-driven spending. All agent transactions are routed through dedicated subaccounts subject to predefined controls, including spending caps, transaction limits, approved use cases, expiration periods and designated payees. Users can monitor activity in real time and revoke an agent's permission at any moment.

China's broader payment ecosystem is moving in the same direction. On May 26, Alipay debuted its AI Wallet and Token Pay, taking a step further to extend its next-generation AI payment infrastructure.

The initiative is also expanding beyond China.

Singapore-based Ant International introduced the Agentic Mobile Protocol, an agentic payment framework built for mobile interfaces including digital wallets, super apps and wearable devices. The protocol is designed to facilitate secure and seamless purchases through AI agents while helping merchants overcome challenges such as cross-border interoperability as agentic commerce scales globally.

A key component of the Agentic Mobile Protocol is an enhanced Know Your Agent authentication framework, which establishes a standardized trust-rating system for AI agents. The mechanism is intended to allow merchants to verify not only the identity of customers, but also the identity and trustworthiness of the agents acting on their behalf, helping ensure that transactions reflect genuine purchasing intent.

China's push into agentic payments comes as global payment networks race to build the infrastructure for agentic commerce. Industry leaders are increasingly developing technologies that will allow autonomous AI agents to search and complete transactions on behalf of consumers and businesses.

Mastercard is pursuing a vision of a future in which AI agents could eventually transact continuously with one another, executing chains of payments.

On June 10, the company unveiled Agent Pay for Machines, a new service designed to enable machine-to-machine transactions across its global payments network. The service will allow payments to be authorized, orchestrated and settled at machine speed, supporting emerging AI-driven business models.

Unlike traditional point-of-sale or person-to-merchant payments — which are initiated directly by users — machine-to-machine transactions are expected to be programmatic, continuous and executed between systems in the background of digital commerce.

"Machine payments can make it possible for services to be bought and sold among agents at fundamentally different scales than payments today — very high volumes, very small values, very fast and at extremely low latency," said Jorn Lambert, Mastercard's chief product officer.

Also on June 10, Visa announced a strategic collaboration with OpenAI to enable secure payments within agentic commerce. Under the partnership, Visa will provide its global payments network, credentialing capabilities and security infrastructure to support agentic commerce services. The company's payment capabilities will be integrated into OpenAI experiences, giving developers and merchants a streamlined way to accept Visa payments initiated by AI agents.

Visa said payments will operate within clearly defined user permissions and controls, including spending limits, approved merchant categories and required approvals. Transactions will be backed by tokenized credentials, real-time authorization and fraud-monitoring systems designed to maintain strong consumer protections.

"AI will transform commerce more profoundly than the internet or mobile technology ever did," said Jack Forestell, Visa's chief product and strategy officer. "As AI agents become active participants in the economy, Visa's focus is to ensure transactions are trusted, secure and seamless."

Live wires



Workers from State Grid Changji conduct live maintenance on power transmission lines in Yushugou township, Changji Hui autonomous prefecture, Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. The work ensures stable power supply for local farmers' summer drainage and irrigation operations amid the peak agricultural season. HE YUCHENG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Well done



Platforms for Phase II of the Bozhong 26-6 oilfield development project stand fully prepared for loading in Tianjin's Binhai New Area on Tuesday. Located in the central Bohai Sea, the oilfield features reservoirs buried more than 4,500 meters beneath the seabed and holds proven cumulative geological reserves of over 200 million cubic meters of oil and gas. DU PENGHUI / XINHUA

Shanghai Disney Resort marks 10th anniversary with sights set on future

By **ZHENG ZHENG** in Shanghai
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Executives from Walt Disney Co and its Chinese partners have expressed optimism about prospects for Shanghai Disney Resort, unveiling a series of expansion plans as the resort celebrated its 10th anniversary on Tuesday.

"When we opened these gates, we believed we could create something the world had never seen — a place where Disney storytelling met Chinese culture in a way that was genuinely new," said Josh D'Amaro, CEO of Walt Disney Co.

The resort has welcomed more than 100 million guests since its opening in 2016. "As we celebrate the park's first decade and look to its next, what excites me most is that we're just getting started," D'Amaro said.

Thomas Mazloum, chairman of Disney Experiences, said: "Being here in Shanghai has reconfirmed to me the immense opportunities we have in this beautiful country and around the world. You see here what happens when we show up where our fans and consumers are — and when we do so with a lot of innovation and immense respect for local culture."

Mazloum called Shanghai's track record a global blueprint. "I don't believe Shanghai Disney Resort will ever be completed, because we have a lot of imagination left."

The resort is already deep into its next expansion phase. Construction of its ninth themed area — a Spider-Man zone set to deliver the park's first major Marvel-themed attraction — reached a milestone just weeks ago when the last section of its roller coaster track was installed.

Two additional themed hotels are also under development.

Guan Taoping, chair of Shanghai Shendi Group — the Chinese joint venture partner — described the past decade as a journey of deep local roots, cultural exchange and regional development. She pledged to build on the resort's success to transform the broader area into "a world-class multiday tourism destination" and to accelerate what she described as a "culture-tourism-plus" industrial ecosystem.

"Our guests and fans, community and partners, cast and imagineers, and both shareholders have been the authors of the resort's story over the years," said Andrew Bolstein, president and general manager of Shanghai Disney Resort.

"As we continue the momentum built throughout the past 10 years, defined by continuous expansion and development, relentless innovation and a steadfast commitment to excellence, we are confident that the future of Shanghai Disney Resort is bright."

Tasia Filippatos, president and managing director of Disney Parks International, noted that Shanghai's innovations have generated lessons now being exported across the company's global network. "This park was built with the preferences, taste, and culture of the Chinese people at the forefront," she said, adding that many of those learnings have applications around the globe.

Experts say the resort's influence extends far beyond its gates. Lou Jiajun, a professor at East China Normal University — who has followed the project since 2009 — said the resort had transcended the boundaries of a theme park. "Over 10 years, Shanghai Disney has evolved from a single park to a resort, and then into a benchmark — for destination building, for industry leadership, and for the integration of culture and tourism," Lou said.

Lin Huanjie, president of the Institute for Theme Park Studies in China, credited the resort with rewriting the competitive logic of the industry.

"Disney's arrival made clear that competition should not be about scale and investment, but about building an experience system, creating emotional value and sustaining long-term operational excellence," he said.

Yuan Ding, executive dean of the Shanghai Disney Dream Vocational Campus and director at Shanghai Normal University, pointed to the resort's role as an employment engine. "Quantitatively, it has created hundreds of thousands of direct and indirect jobs for the entire Yangtze River Delta region," he said. "Qualitatively, it has elevated the appeal and professional standing of careers in the tourism and hospitality industry."

Inner Mongolia key hub to Sino-EU trade

By **ZHONG NAN** in Beijing and **YUAN HUI** in Hohhot

China's ongoing industrial upgrading and the launch of the China (Inner Mongolia) Pilot Free Trade Zone in April will create fresh momentum for China-Europe freight train services and provide stronger support for the country's foreign trade growth, said supply chain experts and customs officials.

The new pilot FTZ, within North China's Inner Mongolia autonomous region, covers 119.74 square kilometers and comprises three subzones in Hohhot, capital of the region; Manzhouli, a northern border city; and Ereenhot, a land port on the China-Mongolia border, each featuring differentiated functions and the development of industries tailored to local conditions.

The growing role of Inner Mongolia as a key gateway for China-Europe trade highlights the significance of the new FTZ.

On Friday, a China-Europe freight train loaded with small household appliances departed from Ereenhot, pushing the cumulative number of freight train trips passing through the network's central corridor beyond 25,000, said China State Railway Group Co Ltd (China Railway).

Lin Meng, director of the modern supply chain research institute at the Beijing-based Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation, said the steady rise in shipments of machinery, vehicles and other industrial products reflects the growing competitiveness of China's manufacturing sector.

> "Together with ongoing infrastructure upgrades, the initiative is expected to enhance the efficiency and capacity of China-Europe freight train services."
>
> **Chen Jianwei,** researcher specializing in foreign trade at the University of International Business and Economics

Continued growth in trade with European and Central Asian markets is expected to provide sustained support for freight demand, said Lin.

Chen Jianwei, a researcher specializing in foreign trade at the University of International Business and Economics in Beijing, said the development of the China (Inner Mongolia) Pilot FTZ is likely to draw greater investment in logistics, warehousing, processing and cross-border commerce.

"Together with ongoing infrastructure upgrades, the initiative is expected to enhance the efficiency and capacity of China-Europe freight train services," said Chen.

Ereenhot's railway port currently handles about 13 China-Europe freight trains daily. It is linked to 75 China-Europe freight train routes connecting more than 70 logistics hubs in over 10 countries, including Germany and Poland, said China Railway.

Freight throughput at Ereenhot railway port has maintained steady growth this year. As of June 11, the port had handled 2,137 China-Europe freight train trips, transporting 205,100 twenty-foot equivalent units and 1.97 million metric tons of cargo, up 15.1 percent, 9.7 percent and 28.6 percent year-on-year, respectively.

Mi Junming, deputy director of Manzhouli Railway Station Customs, said the rapid growth in freight volume has been accompanied by a notable upgrade in the cargo mix handled by Inner Mongolia's border ports.

Cargo once dominated by metals, chemicals, garments and footwear has increasingly given way to higher-value products such as electric vehicles, consumer electronics and household appliances, reflecting the upgrading of China's manufacturing sector and export structure, said Mi.

Statistics from Manzhouli Customs show that China's EV exports through Manzhouli railway port totaled 320 million yuan ($47.33 million) in the first five months, up 950 percent year-on-year.

Chinese EVs have gained increasing traction in overseas markets in recent years, supported by advances in battery technology, intelligent features and competitive pricing, emerging as an important contributor to China's export growth, said Chen Bin, deputy director of the expert committee of the Beijing-based China Machinery Industry Federation.

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Yum buys full Pizza Hut China for $1.2b

By **WANG ZHUOQIONG**
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On Tuesday, Yum China Holdings announced that it has entered into a definitive agreement to take full ownership of the Pizza Hut brand on the Chinese mainland in a $1.2 billion deal, a strategic shift that will eliminate ongoing royalty payments to Yum Brands.

The move gives Yum China direct control of one of its most profitable and fast-growing restaurant businesses. The transaction is expected to improve store economics and accelerate expansion, as Yum China pushes to deepen its dominance in the country's casual dining market.

Pizza Hut is currently the largest casual dining restaurant brand in China under the Yum China portfolio. In 2025, the business generated $2.3 billion in segment revenue and $183 million in operating profit. In the first quarter, it posted its 13th consecutive quarter of same-store transaction growth and its eighth straight quarter of margin and operating profit expansion.

> Ownership will give us greater strategic flexibility to drive innovation across menus, formats and operations."
>
> **Joey Wat,** CEO of Yum China

Yum China, which operates KFC, Pizza Hut and Taco Bell on the Chinese mainland, said it plans to expand the Pizza Hut footprint to more than 6,000 restaurants by 2028, up from 4,375 locations across more than 1,100 cities and counties today.

The company is also targeting a doubling of Pizza Hut operating profit by 2029 in comparison to 2024 levels.

On moving from exclusive licensee to brand owner, Yum China CEO Joey Wat said, "Ownership will give us greater strategic flexibility to drive innovation across menus, formats and operations."

The transaction comes as Yum China continues to lean on KFC as its primary growth engine. The company said KFC China, which currently operates about 13,450 restaurants, is expected to expand to more than 17,000 locations by 2028, particularly in lower-tier and underserved markets.

Separately, Yum China said KFC China will be eligible for a decade-long financial incentive from Yum Brands that will be tied to system sales growth targets and aimed at supporting continued expansion momentum.

It is not the first time Chinese capital and enterprises have moved to acquire or take control of internationally renowned food and beverage brands.

In 2017, a consortium led by CITIC Group and Carlyle Group acquired 20-year franchise rights for McDonald's on the Chinese mainland and in Hong Kong and Macao. Carlyle exited the investment in 2023, and in October 2024, CITIC Capital completed an additional stake purchase, resulting in the CITIC-led consortium holding a 52 percent controlling stake while McDonald's Corp retained 48 percent.

In November 2025, CPE, a leading Chinese consumer-focused private equity firm, acquired an 83 percent controlling stake in Burger King China, with the parent brand Restaurant Brands International retaining the remaining 17 percent.

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CHINA

Traditional festivities and sports spur holiday travel

By ZOU SHUO
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A distinctive blend of tradition, family bonding and youthful energy is expected to power China's tourism market during the upcoming Dragon Boat Festival holiday, travel industry sources said.

The three-day holiday, which starts on Friday, coincides with *xia zhi*, one of the 24 solar terms on the Chinese calendar, marking the summer solstice, and Father's Day, both of which fall on Sunday. It also overlaps with the ongoing 2026 FIFA World Cup.

Usually, the festivities revolve around boat racing, making sticky rice dumplings known as *zongzi* and other folk customs, but adding to the festive atmosphere this year are soccer watch parties and concert tourism, creating a multi-peak travel pattern, travel agencies said.

Travelers aged 20 to 49 are the main drivers of the holiday travel surge, accounting for more than 70 percent of total planned trips, data from online travel agency Tuniu showed. Short- and medium-distance trips lasting two to three days are the most popular, reflecting a clear shift toward smaller breaks and short-notice bookings.

The end of the national college entrance exam, or *gaokao*, has also triggered a surge in travel demand, which is expected to last until early July, creating a staggered travel window ahead of the summer rush, Tuniu said.

Students, typically aged 18 to 23, are driving much of this demand. Many parents had promised trips as gifts after the *gaokao*, which has boosted bookings among young travelers. According to online travel platform Qunar, flight bookings by 18-year-olds from June 10 through the end of June rose more than 30 percent compared with the same period in May.

Traditional Dragon Boat Festival activities — including making *zongzi*, salted duck eggs and sachets, wearing *hanfu* (a traditional Chinese costume) and watching boat races — have become major consumption drivers, Tuniu said.

The overlap with Father's Day has boosted family travel, with a notable increase in parent-child trips, it said.

Popular destinations include Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou in Guangdong province and Hangzhou in Zhejiang province. Shantou in Guangdong, the setting of the hit film *Dear You*, is generating a surge of searches, Qunar said.

The ancient villages of Shangrao in Jiangxi province are also much sought after. Searches for village resorts in the area, where visitors can experience festival traditions, have surged sevenfold, it said.

The frenzy generated by the ongoing soccer World Cup has also influenced travel demand. The 2026 Northeast Football City League, or "Dongbeichao" — a regional tournament jointly hosted by Liaoning, Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces as well as the Inner Mongolia autonomous region — is attracting fans from across the country, pushing up hotel bookings in the area during the holiday, according to Qunar.

In Liaoning, 43 scenic spots in seven cities are offering free admission to ticket-holding fans and residents of partner regions, helping boost hotel bookings by 20 percent year-on-year, the travel agency said.

Yin Ping, a professor at Beijing Jiaotong University's School of Economics and Management, noted that the convergence of Dragon Boat Festival, Father's Day and the World Cup creates a "day-night dual peak" travel pattern, with daytime dragon boat races and *zongzi*-making activities drawing crowds, while evenings will see fans flocking to bars and restaurants to watch matches, boosting spending on dining and nightlife.

"The integration of traditional folk culture, sports events and concerts is likely to become a lasting trend," she said.

The success of the Northeast football league in enhancing hotel bookings shows that a combination of folk culture, sports and tourism can sustainably drive local consumption — not only during holidays but also as a regular model, she added.

Airship in action



A manned airship carrying communications and reconnaissance equipment simulates deployment to a disaster-hit area during a flood-control and emergency response drill in Shishou, Hubei province, on Wednesday. ZHU XIYONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Briefly

Ex-CNOOC executive jailed for bribery case

Yuan Guangyu, former deputy general manager of the China National Offshore Oil Corporation, was sentenced to death with a two-year reprieve by a court in Jiangsu province for accepting bribes worth more than 152 million yuan ($22.49 million). Yuan was also deprived of political rights for life, and all his personal assets were confiscated, according to the ruling announced by the Xuzhou Intermediate People's Court. The court found that from 2001 to 2022, Yuan took advantage of his positions in the offshore oil corporation to seek benefits for relevant individuals and organizations in matters including project contracting, business operations and job adjustments, and accepted bribes worth more than 152 million yuan in return. In China, a suspended death sentence is typically commuted to life imprisonment if no new crimes are committed during the two-year probation period. The sentence may be further reduced for good behavior by the inmate.

Cambodia repatriates key fraud suspect

Chinese police recently repatriated Liu Ren, a key suspect in a major transnational gambling and telecom fraud case, from Cambodia, the Ministry of Public Security said on Wednesday, marking another result of law enforcement cooperation between the two countries. Liu is a core member of a criminal syndicate led by Chen Zhi, a Chinese national identified by authorities as the ringleader of a major cross-border gambling and fraud network. He was repatriated from Phnom Penh, Cambodia, earlier this year. Investigators said Chen directed Liu and others to establish the Jinbei Group in Cambodia in 2016. The group operated multiple online gambling platforms targeting Chinese citizens and encouraging gambling activities. Since 2020, the group has also run telecom fraud compounds in Cambodia, carrying out large-scale online fraud schemes involving extremely large sums of money, police said.

CHINA DAILY

Sustainable fishing



Fishermen haul in nets in Duchang county, Jiangxi province, on Wednesday. The region has expanded ecological fish farming in recent years, using fish stocking and natural cultivation methods to improve water quality while supporting local livelihoods. YIN ZHI / FOR CHINA DAILY

China to streamline its employment structure

New plan seeks fairer job market, will use AI to support entrepreneurship

By ZOU SHUO
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China will maintain overall employment stability, create fuller employment opportunities and ensure a fairer employment environment during the 15th Five-Year Plan period (2026-30), according to a new plan released by the State Council, China's cabinet, on Wednesday.

The plan for implementing an employment-first strategy over five years also calls for further optimizing the employment structure, achieving more efficient job-person matching, fostering more harmonious labor relations, and making new progress in high-quality and full employment.

It stresses the need to address the principal contradiction of supply-demand mismatches in the human resources market. It emphasizes implementing the employment-first strategy, tackling structural employment mismatches, deepening institutional reforms in employment, and preventing large-scale unemployment risks.

The plan calls for synergy between macro policies and employment, implementing actions to stabilize and expand employment, and adapting to the development of artificial intelligence to support employment and entrepreneurship.

It urges strengthening coordination between industry and employment, stabilizing the scale of employment in labor-intensive industries, expanding employment capacity in the service sector, and tapping the employment potential of emerging sectors.

Meanwhile, it stresses improving the alignment between educational supply and talent demand, and carrying out vocational skills training on a large scale.

The plan also requires expanding channels for college graduates and other young people to secure employment and achieve career success. Increasing support for key groups, including rural migrant workers and veterans, are needed, while strengthening employment assistance for people with difficulties in finding jobs and registered unemployed individuals should be in place.

It further demands promoting the healthy development of flexible employment and new forms of employment. Efforts are to be made to improve the employment and entrepreneurship service systems.

The plan also seeks to strengthen the protection of workers' rights and interests, and promote employment monitoring, early warning and risk response.

All regions and departments should treat employment as a top priority for people's livelihoods, adopt systematic approaches, and effectively implement the plan's tasks in light of local conditions, the plan said.

In 2025, China created 12.67 million new urban jobs nationwide, with the average urban surveyed unemployment rate standing at 5.2 percent, below the annual target of around 5.5 percent, according to the National Bureau of Statistics.

For 2026, the Government Work Report has set the employment targets at over 12 million new urban jobs and an urban surveyed unemployment rate of around 5.5 percent. In the first five months of 2026, the average urban surveyed unemployment rate stood at 5.2 percent, official data showed.

Tang Daisheng, a professor at Beijing Jiaotong University's School of Economics and Management, said the most notable highlight of the 15th Five-Year Plan is its elevation of the employment strategy from "employment first" to "high quality and full employment". This shift, he noted, marks a fundamental change in development philosophy, from focusing on whether there is a job to whether the job is good, moving from sheer quantity growth to quality improvement and structural optimization.

The establishment of a coordinated mechanism between investing in physical capital and investing in people means employment policies no longer operate in isolation but are deeply embedded in macro-control, industrial development, and technological innovation, he added.

Regarding artificial intelligence, Tang said the plan proactively addresses technological change by scaling up vocational skills training to help workers master new capabilities and adapt to new roles.

This forward-looking approach, he said, demonstrates the Party's ability to navigate complex situations and seize opportunities, while guiding workers to find their footing and realize their value amid the technological wave.

Extreme weather monitoring beefed up

By HOU LIQIANG
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China has significantly expanded its climate observation network as extreme weather events become more frequent and severe, launching new satellites, radar systems and ground stations to strengthen its adaptation to climate change, according to the 2025 progress report on China's climate change adaptation.

The report, unveiled by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment on Wednesday, which marked the 14th National Low-Carbon Day, detailed advances China has made in strengthening its monitoring network during the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021-25) as the country seeks to cope with a worsening climate crisis.

China launched six Fengyun meteorological satellites during the period. Its enhanced satellite system now provides services to 133 countries and regions worldwide, the report said.

The report also highlighted a strengthened weather radar network. With 842 radars covering more than 90 percent of populated areas, the network can now identify severe weather events with an accuracy rate of 83 percent.

China has established more than 100,000 ground meteorological observation stations, nine atmospheric baseline stations and 27 national climate observatories, including its first overseas baseline station in Antarctica, according to the report.

It added that the number of jointly built and shared hydrological monitoring stations across government departments has reached 137,000.

The expanded monitoring system comes as China grapples with increasingly volatile weather.

In 2025, the country experienced 40 regional severe convective weather events, above the five-year average, while the national average number of days with gale-force winds — featuring instantaneous wind speeds of 17.2 meters per second or higher — reached 18.6, the highest level since 1991, the report said.

Severe convective weather is characterized by strong winds, hail, thunderstorms and brief but heavy spells of rainfall.

Regional and seasonal droughts have also become more pronounced in China, the report noted. From January to May last year, for instance, Anhui and Jiangsu provinces and the Guangxi Zhuang autonomous region each recorded their highest number of drought days for the period since 1961.

Temperatures remained at record highs, with extreme heat events occurring frequently. The national average temperature in 2025 reached 10.9 C, 1 C above the long-term average and tied with 2024 as the highest on record, the report said.

Speaking at a National Low-Carbon Day event in Nanning, capital of Guangxi, Liu Yang, deputy head of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment's Department of Climate Change, pledged to accelerate upgrades to China's climate adaptation framework to help achieve the country's goal of basically building a climate-resilient society by 2035.

"We will improve the full-cycle mechanism of observation, assessment, action, feedback and enhancement to steadily bolster our ability to prevent and mitigate major climate risks and disasters," she said.

Soundbites

Editor's note: *The State Council Information Office held a group interview on Wednesday themed "Forging Ahead on the New Journey", bringing together representatives engaged in rural social civility to speak with the media.*



In 1999, I was elected village Party secretary and village director, and I have held these positions ever since. Relying on the Party's good policies, we united and led Party members and the masses to work hard and overcome difficulties, transforming a once poor, dirty, chaotic, and backward village into a model village for rural revitalization. Today, it is livable, suitable for work, and harmonious. Our village has chosen a new collectivized path. By developing and strengthening the village collective economy and encouraging and supporting villagers to start businesses and find employment, we aim to achieve common prosperity. We have cultivated and expanded advantageous industries, including modern agriculture, rural tourism, logistics and trade, building decoration, education and training, and medical care and wellness. With industrial development, we have pooled resources to accomplish major tasks and solve problems that individual households could not address on their own.

Wang Chuanxi, *Party secretary of Daicun village, Lanling county, Linyi city, Shandong province*



As a curator, I have always been thinking: 90 years ago, Ai Siqi turned profound philosophical ideas into plain language that ordinary people loved to hear. Today, how can we use this same approach to cultivate a civilized rural culture? The answer lies by the small fire pit in Tengchong. Over the years, learning from Ai's people-oriented approach, we have stepped out of the memorial hall and into villages. We set up no podiums and use no formulaic speeches. Instead, we sit with villagers in courtyards and around fire pits, talking about village rules and agreements, filial piety, and family values. In this way, theory has become a guide for daily life.

Bo Yanting, *director of the Ai Siqi Memorial Hall in Tengchong city, Yunnan province*



I am one of the province's first cultural commissioners, stationed in Hangchuan village, Jiande, Hangzhou. There are over 1,500 of us working across Zhejiang's countryside to promote cultural development. We visit households, identify villagers' cultural needs, bring resources from our home institutions into villages, and work with villagers to implement cultural projects. In the two years since I came to Hangchuan, I have organized photography exhibitions and built a village photography team. I believe our work as cultural commissioners is a two-way cultural journey with the villagers. The building of a civilized rural culture is never about us doing things for the villagers. Instead, we must take root in the countryside and work side by side with them.

Chen Yun, *deputy editor-in-chief of Zhejiang Photographic Press and a cultural commissioner of Zhejiang province*



Many years ago, I was a flight attendant with Xiamen Airlines, serving passengers from all over the country, dressed in uniform and wearing high heels every day. But the farther I traveled and the more scenery I saw, the more I missed my hometown and family. So in 2016, I returned to my hometown, Minning town, carrying this deep attachment and my original aspiration. I often wondered: when will my hometown be seen by more people? Then one day, I met the deputy head of our town, who said to me: "You are a college graduate from our town. Have you ever thought of using your English major to promote Ningxia's agricultural products?" His words struck a chord with me. I grew up in Minning and have witnessed its development and transformation over the past 30 years. Today, Minning has an abundance of fine products. So I decided to tell the story of my hometown's changes and introduce its agricultural products in both Chinese and English, so that more people could see Minning. I planted myself deep in the fields of Minning, using my phone as my new farming tool and turning my livestreaming room into my new farmland.

Wu Juan, *villager from Yuanlong village, Minning town, Yongning county, Yinchuan city, Ningxia Hui autonomous region*

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More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals and Actions

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China
June 2026

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Preface

Global governance is a common endeavor that bears on the wellbeing of all humanity, and building a just and equitable global governance system is a shared vision long pursued by people from across the world.

Over 80 years ago, the United Nations (UN) was founded as a multilateral platform for countries to address international affairs through dialogue and consultation. It established international rules underpinning the rule of law, ushering in a new phase in global governance. After the Cold War, multipolarization and economic globalization began to gain momentum, and the concept of global governance grounded in coordination and cooperation was widely endorsed. In recent times, however, unilateralism, protectionism, and hegemonism have been spreading unchecked, while deficits in peace, development, security, and trust continue to expand. Reforming and improving global governance to resolve these challenges and letting the UN play a core role have thus become a critical topic for the future of humanity.

China has always been an active participant in, contributor to, and builder of global governance. In the new era, President Xi Jinping put forward the vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity. In promoting a global governance system characterized by extensive consultation and joint contribution for shared benefit, he has called for true multilateralism to foster an equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization. In 2025, at a pivotal historical juncture marking the 80th anniversary of the victory in the Global War Against Fascism and the founding of the UN, President Xi proposed a new initiative, the Global Governance Initiative (GGI).

The GGI is designed to offer a Chinese solution to the two pressing questions of the era: what kind of global governance system should be established, and how global governance can be reformed and improved. Upon its introduction, it swiftly gained support from nearly 160 countries and international organizations, with over 60 countries joining the Group of Friends of Global Governance. The international community believes that the GGI sends a clear signal: uphold multilateralism, unite forces, and pursue a fair future. The GGI aligns with the growing trend towards greater democracy in international relations and bolsters international confidence in practicing multilateralism. It offers a clear and feasible roadmap for improving global governance, bringing valuable stability and positive energy to a turbulent world.

China has proposed the GGI to expedite the building of a more just and equitable global governance system. Resolutely upholding the UN's authority and status is fundamental to the effective implementation of this initiative. Success will also hinge on major countries bearing a sense of responsibility, and on all nations uniting and cooperating to address deficits in peace and development. All countries should firmly uphold the international system with the UN at its core, safeguard the international order based on international law, and uphold the basic norms governing international relations underpinned by the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, instead of reinventing the wheel.

The Chinese government is publishing this white paper to introduce China's principles, proposals and actions in global governance, foster broader consensus within the international community, ensure more effective responses to global challenges, and build a more just and equitable global governance system.

I. The World Today Faces Severe and Complex Challenges

Our world has entered an era marked by profound change on a scale unseen in a century. The pursuit of peace and development remains a daunting challenge. The international system established after World War II has been severely disrupted by multiple crises, placing global governance at a critical crossroads. Progress is imperative; failure to advance risks falling behind. Now, more than ever, the world needs to revitalize multilateralism, uphold the rule of law, and ensure more efficient governance.

1. Growing Challenges Call for More Effective Governance

Currently, the international landscape is undergoing profound changes on an unprecedented scale, with turmoil and upheaval more intense and pronounced. Political and economic disputes worldwide are escalating, revealing deep-seated conflicts, while "black swan" and "grey rhino" events keep emerging continually. The ship of human civilization has entered dangerous waters with hidden reefs and violent storms.

Geopolitical tensions are intensifying, with armed conflicts erupting in multiple regions. The Ukraine crisis has entered its fifth year, hostilities in the Middle East are spilling over and spreading, and multiple hotspot issues remain unresolved. The Global Peace Index continues to decline: in 2025, the number of armed conflicts reached a new high after World War II, with more than 50 countries directly embroiled in conflict or war. Global military spending has surged, militarism has resurfaced, and nuclear proliferation and "nuclear sharing" continue to pose a grave threat, leaving international security in a precarious state.

Global economic fragmentation is exacerbating, significantly hindering development. Economic globalization is facing strong headwinds, as some countries erect fences and barriers, pursue decoupling, sever industrial supply chains, and impose unilateral tariffs, disrupting the global economic order. Overall progress in the implementation of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development has lagged far behind, with nearly 80 percent of assessable targets progressing slowly or even regressing. More than 830 million people worldwide still live in extreme poverty while 2.3 billion suffer from food insecurity, and the North-South divide and wealth gap continue to widen.

New challenges are arising in quick succession, with multiple crises intertwining and accumulating. The transition to a climate-resilient future is fraught with difficulties, the digital divide is deepening, and the misuse of artificial intelligence poses new security risks. Challenges to food and energy security are also intensifying, and non-traditional security threats such as terrorism, cyberattacks, transnational crime, and biosecurity risks are on the rise. The issues that human society must collectively address are becoming increasingly complex and diverse.

The universe has only one Earth, which is the shared home of all humanity. Countries are not riding separately in some 190 small boats, but aboard a single giant ship of shared future. Only by working together and supporting one another can we navigate through the storms of global challenges and sail towards a brighter future.

2. The Law of the Jungle Seriously Undermines the International Rule of Law

Built upon the ruins of the two world wars, the UN serves as a shelter for peace and development, and its Charter laid the institutional cornerstone for global governance. History can only move forward, not backward; we must draw lessons from the bloodshed and fires of war of the past and prevent a return to the law of the jungle at all costs.

Unilateralism and hegemonism cause only grave harm, openly trampling upon international law and the basic norms governing international relations. By bullying the small and weak and brazenly wielding force against sovereign states, certain countries have shown they prioritize their national interests above all else, applying double standards and challenging international justice for their own selfish gain. These nations gang up to form exclusive groups and blocs, inciting division and confrontation and carving spheres of influence today – in the 21st century – as they did in centuries gone by. By so doing they have become the major source of global turbulence.

De-globalization and protectionism are on the rise, while economic and trade issues are being politicized, instrumentalized, and weaponized. Some countries have instigated trade wars and tech wars, imposed unilateral sanctions illegally, and abused long-arm jurisdiction. They have single-mindedly sought to build "small yards with high walls" or "parallel systems", and have overstretched the concept of national security to suppress and contain the economic and technological progress of other countries. These retrogressive actions violate the principles of the market economy, trample on the rules of free trade, and severely disrupt the international economic order.

Humanity now faces several crucial questions. Fairness and justice, or the law of the jungle? Openness and mutual benefit, or isolation and confrontation? The rule of law, or power politics? At this historical crossroads, we must be responsible and make the right choice.

3. It Is Imperative to Shore Up the Governance System

The UN is the most comprehensive, representative and authoritative international organization, and the UN-centered international system plays an irreplaceable and vital role in global governance. Over time, however, the current global governance system has become increasingly incompatible and misaligned with the realities of today and the evolving international landscape, and its shortcomings and deficiencies are growing ever more pronounced.

The UN's authority is challenged. Disregarding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter, a certain major power has withdrawn from international organizations and agreements, defunded key bodies, blocked Security Council resolutions, and paralyzed the World Trade Organization's (WTO) dispute settlement mechanism. These actions have seriously disrupted the international order and caused further damage to multilateral mechanisms, eroding the foundation of trust in multilateral cooperation.

The effectiveness of multilateral institutions is in urgent need of improvement. As some countries refuse to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations, multilateral agendas are often left discussed but undecided, or decided but not implemented. Efforts must therefore focus on improving the operational efficiency, emergency response capabilities, and transparency of multilateral institutions such as the UN. At the same time, the existence of governance gaps in emerging fields – including artificial intelligence, cyberspace, and outer space – also demands attention.

The UN's representation is critically inadequate. To maintain their hegemony and protect their own interests, some countries have long obstructed the reform process of the UN and its agencies, causing significant delays in reforms such as the IMF quota and World Bank shareholding. Developing countries remain underrepresented and their voices insufficiently heard.

The current governance system is certainly not perfect, but it needs neither to be dismantled and rebuilt in full, nor replaced entirely by a new system. Instead, as an international community, we must focus on reforming and improving the existing system to make it more compatible and aligned with the world's realities, addressing governance shortcomings from a developmental perspective, and responding to the call of the times with a vision for progress.

4. More Global South Voices Need to Be Heard

The Global South is a vital force in seeking peace, pursuing development, and promoting cooperation, and its collective rise represents human progress. To stabilize and improve the world, the international community needs to be more responsive to the concerns of the Global South in international affairs and fully leverage its role.

The Global South has grown remarkably strong. After World War II, national independence and liberation movements swept across Asia, Africa, and Latin America, dismantling the global colonial system. The number of UN member states has increased from 51 at its founding in 1945 to 193 today. Based on purchasing power parity, the Global South now makes up over 60 percent of the world economy and contributes 80 percent to global economic growth, with multiple hubs of development across various regions. The monopolization of international affairs by a small number of countries is no longer sustainable, and long-standing historical injustices must be redressed.

This rise has brought a new dynamic to global governance. BRICS has undergone a historic expansion, and the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) has become the largest regional intergovernmental organization in terms of territory and population. Together, they are playing a positive role in the development and reform of the global governance system. The G20 has become the premier platform for global economic governance, with emerging economies now accounting for more than half of its membership. Championing fairness and justice, the G77 and China have deepened South-South cooperation. Meanwhile, Global South countries have hosted a series of multilateral summits, contributing their share to global governance and leaving their imprint.

The times call for a model of global governance that is more inclusive, equitable, and sustainable. The process of securing greater respect for the Global South countries' rights to development, voice, and decision-making in international affairs will mark a historic journey towards a more dynamic, effective, and hopeful global governance system.

II. The Global Governance Initiative Responds to Challenges of Our Times

The Global Governance Initiative upholds the purposes and principles of the UN Charter and embraces a global governance vision characterized by extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. It is built on five core concepts: sovereign equality, the international rule of law, multilateralism, a people-centered approach, and real actions. By addressing the crux and root causes of crises and challenges, the initiative provides sound guidance for building a more just and equitable global governance system.

1. Sovereign Equality

Sovereign equality is enshrined in the UN Charter as the first among all principles and the supreme norm regulating state-to-state relations. Countries, whether large or small, strong or weak, developed or developing, are equal members of the international community. Every nation's sovereignty and dignity must be respected, and all countries are equally entitled to participate in, deliberate on, and benefit from global governance.

Equality is the premise of state-to-state relations. Countries should, in the spirit of mutual respect, conduct consultations on an equal footing and manage their differences appropriately. Major countries should lead by example in honoring equality, good faith, and cooperation, rather than leveraging their position of strength to engage in hegemonic, high-handed and abusive acts. If allowed to deviate from the principle of sovereign equality, international relations would degenerate into a game among powers, and international law would become groundless, leaving the world in perpetual chaos.

Sovereign equality is an essential requirement for solidarity against challenges. The future of all nations is bound by shared interests, common challenges, and collective responsibilities. Global governance cannot be dominated by a select few developed nations. Only when all countries participate equally can all sides build the political trust essential for solidarity and collaboration; only in this way can the resulting rules and decisions receive extensive recognition and rest on solid legal ground. This is the necessary approach to reaching broad consensus and creating powerful synergy.

Equality and inclusiveness are the inexorable progress in the evolution of the global governance system. Coexistence in diversity is a fundamental characteristic of human society, and multipolarity is vital to the evolving international landscape. A global governance system that is more representative, inclusive, and beneficial to all is an irreversible trend, and equal rights, equal opportunities, and equal rules are the shared aspirations of all peoples. Hegemony and power politics that run counter to the tide of history are destined to fail.

2. The International Rule of Law

The international rule of law is the fundamental safeguard for global governance. Only a global governance system that is grounded in the rule of law can provide all countries with a fair and just environment for development, achieve a balance between rights and obligations, and make international order more just and equitable.

Rigorously enforcing the international rule of law is rooted in upholding the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. Confrontation and injustice in today's world do not arise because the UN Charter is outdated, but because it is not effectively implemented. Its purposes and principles, such as maintaining international peace and security, promoting international cooperation, settling international disputes by peaceful means, and refraining from the threat or use of force in international relations, have established the fundamental norms governing international relations and underpinned post-war stability in the international order, and thus must be honored without the slightest compromise.

Rigorously enforcing the international rule of law hinges on safeguarding its justice and integrity. Only when international law is applied equally and universally, rather than selectively, can we truly distinguish right from wrong and advance peace and development. All nations are stakeholders in the international rule of law – without it, anyone at the dining table today could appear on the menu tomorrow. Major countries are the key forces in advancing international rule of law. They should lead by example in following rules and upholding the rule of law, rather than putting their own interests above international law or, even worse, imposing their own rules upon others.

Rigorously enforcing the international rule of law calls for improving rulemaking in emerging sectors. Human society is constantly evolving, and global governance rules must keep pace. New domains such as the deep seas, polar regions, outer space, and cyberspace, some of which are the common property of humanity and some represent the frontiers of future development, require urgent attention in order to establish rules and close gaps in their governance. All parties should uphold the principles of peace, sovereignty, inclusiveness, and joint governance, and put law in place for the development and utilization of new domains, so that they expand the space for cooperation rather than become arenas of rivalry. The governance of artificial intelligence should guard the red line of security and ethics, and be pursued in the spirit of openness, shared outcomes, and equal rights, to ensure AI for good and truly benefit humanity.

3. Multilateralism

Multilateralism emerged for the cause of peace and development, and multilateral mechanisms are vital for addressing global issues. No country can achieve development outside the global governance system, nor can it secure a future without participating in international cooperation. It is not a matter of whether we choose it or not, multilateralism is the only viable path forward.

Countries should stick to the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. The essence of multilateralism lies in extensive consultation on international affairs and collective decision-making among all countries for the future of the world. Countries should pool wisdom through extensive consultation, gather strength through joint contribution, and promote universal interests through shared benefits. They should unequivocally oppose all forms of unilateralism, hegemony, dominance by a few countries, and bloc politics in the understanding that the deliberate erection of barriers will only push the world into the abyss of antagonism and confrontation.

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Countries should be steadfast in safeguarding the central role of the United Nations. The United Nations is the primary platform for practicing multilateralism and advancing global governance. Its leading position must be upheld and remain rock solid; its role can only be reinforced, not weakened. All countries should reaffirm the founding purpose of the United Nations, work to restore its authority and vitality under new circumstances, and enable it to play a central role in coordinating global actions to address common challenges.

Countries should be firm in promoting multilateral dialogue, consultation, and cooperation. In light of the complexity of global challenges, no country can remain insulated from their impacts or resolve all issues alone. Countries should build consensus through dialogue, resolve disputes through consultation, and pursue win-win results through cooperation, striving to expand their common interests. Global and regional multilateral mechanisms should play a constructive role in this, pooling the resources and strengths of national governments, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations to increase the synergy and efficiency of global governance.

4. A People-Centered Approach

People's wellbeing is a core concern of global governance. The people of every country across the world are the essential participants and direct beneficiaries of global governance. Only by serving public interests, boosting public confidence, and meeting public expectations can the global governance system win extensive support and function effectively.

Pursuing common development heightens the sense of gain among all peoples. Development concerns people's life and dignity; it is a matter of hope or disappointment. World prosperity and stability cannot be built upon ever widening gaps between rich and poor. Countries must restore development to the center of the international agenda, mobilizing global resources to implement the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development without delay. The North-South divide must be bridged as soon as possible, and help should be provided to developing countries to boost their capacity for independent development, so that all nations have greater and fairer access to the fruits of development.

Addressing common challenges heightens the sense of security among all peoples. In today's world, all countries share a common stake in security, and all must therefore embrace a vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative and sustainable security while addressing the threats to this stake – whether traditional or non-traditional. In responding to risks and challenges such as climate change, public health, and cyberspace security, it is important for the people to truly feel that countries are taking action and that unity can overcome all difficulties.

Promoting mutual understanding and friendship heightens the sense of fulfillment among all peoples. Civilizations become colorful through exchanges and are enriched through mutual learning. Countries should let cultural exchanges prevail over estrangement, mutual learning over clashes, and inclusiveness over superiority. Cultural and personnel exchanges should be strengthened to break down ideological barriers between nations and social groups. A shared conviction for safeguarding common interests will allow all civilizations to thrive and succeed together.

5. Real Actions

Global governance finds its source of vitality in practice, hinges on action, and is verified by its effectiveness. A vision is realized only through concrete action. It falls on the international community to turn this vision into reality – setting common goals, embracing a problem-oriented approach, and acting in concert.

Coordinating overall progress and individual breakthroughs. A coordinated approach should be adopted to advance global governance agendas, address governance deficits, and prevent fragmentation in the governance system. Targeted efforts should also be made for the most pressing issues in individual countries, particularly developing countries, to achieve tangible progress in poverty reduction and in improving people's wellbeing and closing the digital divide.

Addressing both symptoms and root causes. Given present conditions, feasible plans should be made to resolve the immediate challenges facing the world. The effectiveness in responding to major public crises and providing international public goods should be increased. With future development in mind, fundamental solutions should be explored to tackle chronic and persistent issues and bring change to the global governance system – which is lagging in reform – to align it with the evolving political and economic landscapes.

Synergizing North-South cooperation and South-South cooperation. The Global North and Global South should leverage their complementary strengths and move towards the same direction. Developed countries should diligently fulfill their international obligations and deliver on their commitments regarding development assistance and climate financing; they should not evade their international responsibilities under any pretext. Developing countries should unite to build their strength, improve South-South cooperation mechanisms, increase their capacity for collaborative development and their collective voice, and inject sustained momentum for improving global governance.

III. China's Contribution to Promoting Global Governance

As a responsible major country, China champions the building of a community with a shared future for humanity and takes the lead in practicing true multilateralism. It has consistently been a builder of world peace, a contributor to global development, a defender of the international order, and a provider of public goods, while actively advancing the efforts for building a more just and equitable global governance system.

1. Committing to Universal and Common Security

Humanity forms an indivisible community of security. As a major country with the best peace and security record, China has enshrined in its Constitution a commitment to peaceful development. It champions the vision of common, comprehensive, cooperative, and sustainable security, and has put forward the Global Security Initiative and acted on its principles, contributing to lasting world peace and stability.

Firmly safeguarding world peace within the framework of the UN. China faithfully fulfills its mission and duties as a permanent member of the UN Security Council, firmly supporting the UN in playing its core role in international affairs and the Security Council in playing its primary role in international peace and security. China also takes an active part in UN peacekeeping operations as the second largest contributor to the UN peacekeeping budget and the largest troop contributor among the permanent members of the UN Security Council. To date, more than 50,000 Chinese peacekeepers have been dispatched in 29 peacekeeping operations authorized by the UN Security Council. The country has also established the world's first standing peacekeeping police unit and maintains a peacekeeping standby force of 8,000 troops.

On September 3, 2025, China celebrated the 80th anniversary of its victory in the Chinese People's War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression and the World Anti-Fascist War. Together with the international community, China will safeguard the victory of World War II, promote a correct understanding of that war, and send the powerful message that peace must be safeguarded and justice will prevail.

Maintaining global strategic stability. China pursues a national defense policy that is in nature defensive, upholds a firm commitment to a policy of no-first-use of nuclear weapons and a nuclear strategy of self-defense, and resolutely safeguards the international nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regimes. It promoted the issuance of a joint statement of the leaders of the five nuclear-weapon states on preventing nuclear war and avoiding arms races, reiterating the view that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought, emphasizing the need to avoid military confrontation and prevent arms races and articulating a shared commitment to maintaining global strategic stability and reducing the risk of nuclear conflicts. China has put forward the principles of justice, cooperation, balance and effectiveness in arms control, and upholds the international arms control regime with the UN at its core.

Pioneering the use of a unique Chinese approach to addressing international flashpoints. China upholds the principles of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs, political settlement of issues, objectivity and fairness, and addressing both symptoms and root causes, offering a new approach for finding constructive solutions to flashpoints.

On the Ukraine crisis, China follows the four key principles [The principles are: The sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries should be upheld; the purposes and principles of the UN Charter should be observed; the legitimate security concerns of all parties should be taken seriously; all efforts conducive to the peaceful settlement of the crisis should be supported.] as its fundamental guide. It released China's Position on the Political Settlement of the Ukraine Crisis and, together with Brazil and other Global South countries, launched the Group of Friends for Peace on the Ukraine crisis, building synergy and creating conditions for ceasefire and peace talks.

On the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, China has urged the UN Security Council to pass the first ceasefire resolution for Gaza since the outbreak of a new round of conflict. It has provided emergency humanitarian assistance to Gaza and taken a clear stand in support of the two-state solution, promoting a comprehensive, just, and lasting resolution of the Palestinian question.

China has facilitated the historic reconciliation and restoration of diplomatic relations between Saudi Arabia and Iran, and 14 Palestinian factions visited China for reconciliation talks and signed the Beijing Declaration on Ending Division and Strengthening Palestinian National Unity. This wave of reconciliation in the Middle East has been widely welcomed. In promoting peace and stability in the Middle East, China has put forward the principles of peaceful coexistence, national sovereignty, international rule of law, and a holistic approach to development and security. Together with Pakistan, China has issued a five-point initiative of China and Pakistan for restoring peace and stability in the Gulf and Middle East Region.

Championing an Asian security model characterized by security for all, common ground amid differences, and dialogue and consultation, China has facilitated a ceasefire agreement between conflicting parties in northern Myanmar and played a constructive role in the border dispute between Cambodia and Thailand and the cross-border clashes between Afghanistan and Pakistan. It has proposed the Outlook on Peace and Development in the Horn of Africa, supporting countries in the region in responding to security challenges.

Reinforcing non-traditional security shields. China continues to support the development of the Global Public Security Cooperation Forum (Lianyungang) to build consensus among all parties and advance global public security governance. China advocates comprehensive measures for addressing both symptoms and root causes, and promotes international and regional counter-terrorism cooperation. It has facilitated the establishment of the Integrated Center for Countering Security Threats and Challenges of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) and its Center for Combating Transnational Crime and Information Security Center, and the SCO Narcotics Control Center, playing an active role in helping other developing countries reinforce their counter-terrorism capacities.

In resolutely cracking down on transnational drug trafficking, China leads pragmatic anti-drug cooperation operations in the Greater Mekong Subregion and by the SCO and BRICS countries, and has taken the global lead in scheduling the whole class of fentanyl-related substances. It has combated cross-border crimes such as online gambling and telecom fraud, accelerated the development of an international alliance on combating telecom fraud, and dismantled large groups of overseas scam centers in cooperation with countries including Thailand, Myanmar, and Laos. China has proposed the International Cooperation Initiative on Global Food Security within the framework of G20, facilitated the adoption of the BRICS Strategy on Food Security Cooperation, joined the Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty, and provided emergency humanitarian food assistance to multiple countries suffering food shortages or disasters.

2. Promoting Openness, Cooperation, and Common Development

China cannot develop in isolation from the rest of the world, nor can the world achieve overall prosperity without China. As the largest developing country, China has always pursued its own growth in the context of humanity's shared development and upheld openness, win-win cooperation, inclusiveness, and shared benefits. Through Chinese modernization, the country has provided the world with new opportunities and boosted the global drive for modernization.

Contributing to building an open global economy. China has promoted trade and investment liberalization and facilitation, and it has become the main trading partner of over 160 countries and regions, signing 24 free trade agreements with 31 countries and regions in the process. It has facilitated and achieved high-standard implementation of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) and signed the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area 3.0 Upgrade Protocol. It endeavors actively to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) and the Digital Economy Partnership Agreement (DEPA) to expand the globally-oriented network of high-standard free trade areas. The country firmly safeguards the rule-based multilateral trading system with the World Trade Organization (WTO) at its core, engages fully and deeply in WTO reforms, and has announced that it will not seek new special and differential treatment in current and future negotiations at the WTO.

Bringing broader opportunities to the world with higher-standard opening up. China has expanded institutional opening up, removed all restrictions on foreign investment access in the manufacturing sector, continued to shorten the negative list for foreign investment, and fostered a world-leading business environment that is based on market principles, governed by law, and up to international standards. Steps have been taken to expand voluntary and unilateral opening up, with the launch of 23 pilot free trade zones, island-wide special customs operations in the Hainan Free Trade Port, and open platforms such as the China International Import Expo, China International Fair for Trade in Services, China International Consumer Products Expo, and China International Supply Chain Expo. Additionally, zero tariffs have been placed on the least developed countries and African countries that have established diplomatic relations with China. During the 14th Five-year Plan period (2021-2025), China's imports of goods and services exceeded US$15 trillion, and its GDP is expected to increase from RMB140 trillion to RMB170 trillion in the next five years, as its vast market continues to realize its potential.

Achieving solid progress in deepening high-quality Belt and Road cooperation. China has promoted cooperation in the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) to a new stage of high-quality development. It has established the world's broadest and largest international cooperation platform and expanded the belt of development and road to happiness to benefit all parties.

Policy connectivity has built greater synergy. China has signed cooperation documents with over 150 countries and 30 international organizations, hosted three Belt and Road forums for international cooperation, established more than 30 special cooperation mechanisms in key areas such as economy, trade, energy and infrastructure, and established a secretariat for the forum.

Infrastructure connectivity has achieved leapfrog development. Flagship programs such as cross-border highways, railways, ports, and aviation hubs have made breakthroughs, and a general connectivity framework consisting of six corridors, six connectivity routes, and multiple countries and ports has now been realized. The China-Europe Railway Express freight service has operated more than 130,000 trips to date.

Trade connectivity has advanced despite challenges. In-depth alignment has been achieved in areas such as cross-border payments, digital authentication, and smart customs. In 2025, the volume of trade in goods between China and BRI participants reached RMB23.6 trillion, up by 6.3 percent year-on-year, accounting for 51.9 percent of the country's foreign trade.

Financial connectivity has embraced greater diversity. The Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the Silk Road Fund have provided financing support to hundreds of projects. Renminbi financing windows have been set up, and the two-way investment between China and its BRI partners totaled more than US$240 billion between 2021 and the first half of 2025.

People-to-people connectivity has become stronger. Landmark livelihood initiatives supported by Luban Workshops and Juncao technology have continued to advance, and communication and exchange have flourished in culture, tourism, education, and media, as well as between the youth of different nations.

Delivering effective results in implementing the Global Development Initiative. To accelerate the realization of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, China helps steer global development towards a new stage of balanced, coordinated and inclusive growth that delivers more robust, greener, and healthier global development.

Consensus on development as a priority continues to build, with more than 130 countries and international organizations supporting participation in the initiative and over 80 countries joining the Group of Friends of the Global Development Initiative. China has hosted the High-Level Dialogue on Global Development and the Forum on Global Action for Shared Development, encouraging all parties to make new commitments to and embark on a new journey towards realizing the Sustainable Development Goals.

Cooperation mechanisms continue to improve. China has signed more than 80 cooperation documents on implementing the initiative with other developing countries, international organizations, and financial institutions. Over 30 cooperation mechanisms have been established in eight key areas of the initiative, covering all 17 sustainable development goals. China has also set up a Global Development Promotion Center and a Global Knowledge Network for Development, and issued the Global Development Report. Together with the UN, it has established the China-UN Global South-South Development Facility, actively discussed the development of the Global Center for Sustainable Development in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme, and taken the initiative to establish the Institute of Global Development.

Resources for development cooperation continue to grow. More than US$23 billion of development funds of various types have been mobilized. China has established the Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund, increased its total to US$4 billion, and launched the China-FAO South-South Cooperation Trust Fund (Phase III).

Pragmatic cooperation has delivered remarkable results. China has established a project pool under the Global Development Initiative, launched more than 1,800 cooperation projects, and completed the training of 80,000 people within the framework of the initiative, assisting other developing countries in improving their capacity for independent and sustainable development.

3. Practicing True Multilateralism

No matter how the world changes, China will always uphold the international system with the United Nations at its core, the international order underpinned by international law, and the basic norms governing international relations based on the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. It advocates and practices true multilateralism and remains an active champion and strong proponent of multilateral cooperation.

Resolutely upholding the authority and status of the UN. As a founding member of the UN and the first country to sign the UN Charter, China has consistently upheld the central role of the UN in international affairs through concrete actions. The country's contribution to the UN regular budget increased from less than 1 percent in 2000 to over 20 percent in 2025, making it the second largest contributor. It has paid in full its assessed contributions to the UN in support of the effective operation of UN agencies. It has launched and renewed the China-UN Peace and Development Fund and increased its input to the fund, providing strong support to major UN agendas.

China supports the UN in advancing the implementation of the Pact for the Future and in enhancing the quality, efficiency, and vitality of the organization through the UN80 Initiative. It actively supports the UN and its specialized agencies in establishing new institutions in China, including the UNESCO International Institute for STEM Education in Shanghai and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Shanghai Center. China's efforts to supply outstanding talent to the UN have led to a steady increase in the share of Chinese employees in UN agencies and related international organizations. China has hosted the Global Leaders' Meeting on Women, boosting new progress in women's well-rounded development.

Panel 1 Global Leaders' Meeting on Women: China's Contribution to the Development of Women's Cause

From October 13 to 14, 2025, China and UN Women jointly hosted the Global Leaders' Meeting on Women in Beijing. Under the theme of "One Shared Future: New and Accelerated Process for Women's All-Round Development", the summit was attended by guests from over 110 countries, including heads of state and government, heads of parliament, officials at the vice-premier level, representatives at the ministerial level, representatives of UN agencies and international organizations, and diplomatic envoys. China's President Xi Jinping attended the opening ceremony and delivered a keynote speech.

To further support the global cause of women, China announced that in the next five years it would donate a further US$10 million to UN Women, earmark a quota of US$100 million in China's Global Development and South-South Cooperation Fund for implementing development cooperation projects for women and girls in collaboration with international organizations, and launch 1,000 small and beautiful livelihood programs with Chinese assistance, prioritizing women and girls as the primary beneficiaries. At the same time, it would invite 50,000 women to China for training and exchange programs and establish a Global Center for Women's Capacity Building aimed at conducting capacity building and cooperation for women's development with relevant countries and international organizations to train more female talent.

Upholding the authority of the international rule of law and pushing for progress in international law-based governance. China has joined nearly all universal intergovernmental organizations and signed over 600 international conventions and amendments, fulfilling its treaty obligations in good faith and honoring its international commitments. The country held a conference marking the 70th anniversary of the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, reaffirming and safeguarding the basic norms governing international relations and the principles of international law. China continues to provide firm support for the work of UN judicial bodies and remains an active participant in international judicial activities. Engaging in international law enforcement cooperation, it has increased efforts in anti-corruption action, the cross-border pursuit of fugitives, their repatriation and extradition, and recovery of assets. Additionally, it has initiated and led the creation of the International Organization for Mediation, filling a gap in the international mediation mechanism.

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Panel 2 International Organization for Mediation: Chinese Wisdom for the Peaceful Settlement of International Disputes

In 2022, China and like-minded countries initiated the establishment of the International Organization for Mediation (IOMed). On May 30, 2025, the signing ceremony of the Convention on the Establishment of the International Organization for Mediation was held in Hong Kong, with 33 countries signing the convention and becoming its founding members. On August 29, 2025, the convention entered into force, with Hong Kong becoming the location of IOMed's headquarters. On October 20, 2025, the organization commenced formal operations.

As the first intergovernmental legal organization dedicated to resolving international disputes through mediation, the IOMed focuses on mediating disputes to resolve conflicts and serves as an important mechanism that safeguards the purposes and principles of the UN Charter. It complements and creates synergy with litigation, arbitration, and other existing mechanisms to resolve international disputes, and provides a new platform for their peaceful settlement.

Participating in and leading G20 cooperation. China encourages the G20 – as a major forum for economic dialogue between developed and developing countries – to pursue international cooperation in the spirit of equal consultation and mutual benefit. In 2016, China hosted the G20 Hangzhou Summit, widely regarded as one of the most fruitful G20 summits to date. It issued what became a landmark G20 Leaders' Communiqué, put development at the center of macroeconomic policy coordination for the first time, and endorsed consensus documents such as the G20 Guiding Principles for Global Investment Policymaking and G20 Blueprint on Innovative Growth, leaving China's clear imprint in the group's history. During the G20 Summit in Rio de Janeiro, China set out its proposals for economic, financial, trade, digital, and ecological governance, promoting a world economy built on cooperation, stability, openness, innovation, and eco-friendliness. China also took the lead in supporting the African Union's membership in the G20 to increase the representation of developing countries.

Advancing an Asia-Pacific community. The Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) is the highest-level mechanism for economic cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region, with the broadest coverage and greatest influence. China advocates the spirit of an Asia-Pacific family and promotes an Asia-Pacific community of shared future characterized by openness and inclusiveness, innovation-driven growth, greater connectivity, and mutually beneficial cooperation. Facilitated by China, the Shanghai Accord of the APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration was adopted at the APEC meeting held in Shanghai in 2001, marking a new beginning for Asia-Pacific cooperation in the new century. In 2014, the APEC meeting in Beijing delivered multiple outcomes, including the 22nd APEC Economic Leaders' Declaration – Beijing Agenda for an Integrated, Innovative and Interconnected Asia-Pacific, in which all parties pledged to foster an Asia-Pacific partnership for the future and outlined a vision for the long-term development and shared prosperity of the region.

In 2026, China will host the APEC meeting for a third time, under the theme "Building an Asia-Pacific Community to Prosper Together". The meeting will focus on three priorities: openness, innovation, and cooperation. All parties concerned will come together to recommit to the original aspirations of Asia-Pacific cooperation, focus on concrete actions towards their goals, and strive to turn their blueprint for a better Asia-Pacific community into reality.

4. Supporting the Global South in Playing a Greater Role

China will always be a member of the Global South, and in the Global South its roots will remain. No matter what the future holds, it will always keep the wellbeing of the Global South in mind. Acting on the principles of sincerity, real results, amity, and good faith, and with a commitment to pursuing the greater good and shared interests, China has strengthened solidarity and cooperation with other developing countries, firmly safeguarded the common interests of the Global South in international affairs, and led the Global South in building strength through joint efforts.

Advancing high-quality development of greater BRICS cooperation. At the forefront of the Global South, BRICS countries are jointly committed to promoting world economic growth, improving global economic governance, and advancing democracy in international relations. China has played an active role in expanding and strengthening BRICS cooperation, reinforcing its institutions in response to the evolving times, and increasing its global influence. China and other BRICS countries have established the New Development Bank and formed the Contingent Reserve Arrangement, which have become an emerging force in the international financial system and landmark projects of Global South cooperation.

In 2017, the BRICS Xiamen Summit delivered more than 60 outcomes, giving rise to three key engines that drive cooperation – political security, trade and finance, and people-to-people exchange – as well as the "BRICS Plus" approach. In 2022, during the BRICS "China Year", the BRICS Summit issued the Beijing Declaration, marking the beginning of the organization's expansion. China has since worked with relevant parties to advance this historic enlargement, which represents a major milestone not only for BRICS, but also for the evolution of the international landscape. China has promoted a vision for BRICS centered on peace, innovation, green development, justice, and closer people-to-people exchanges. It continues to support more Global South countries in joining the cause of BRICS as full members, partner countries, or in the "BRICS Plus" format, to build the cooperation mechanism into a primary channel for strengthening solidarity and cooperation among Global South nations and a vanguard for advancing global governance reform.

Panel 3 New Development Bank: An Emerging Force in the International Financial System

The New Development Bank was jointly established by Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa in 2015. It is the first international financial institution to be headquartered in China, and the first multilateral development institution established and led by emerging market economies and developing countries. The bank aims to mobilize resources for infrastructure and sustainable development projects in BRICS countries and other emerging and developing economies. Since its establishment, the New Development Bank has made steady progress in its operations and institutional development, becoming an emerging force in the international financial system and a landmark project of Global South cooperation. As of March 2026, it had approved loans of US$42.9 billion for 139 development projects, covering key areas including clean energy and energy efficiency, transport infrastructure, environmental protection, water and sanitation, social infrastructure, and digital infrastructure.

Advancing the development and expansion of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The SCO is the first international organization named after a Chinese city, founded with China's participation, and headquartered in the country. China champions the Shanghai Spirit of mutual trust, mutual benefit, equality, consultation, respect for diversity of civilizations, and pursuit of common development, and works towards a closer SCO community of shared future. Through the joint efforts of its member states, the SCO has grown into a group of 27 countries spanning Asia, Europe, and Africa, and its economic aggregate is approaching US$30 trillion. It has carried out cooperation in more than 50 areas, having become an important force for world peace and development and a guardian of international fairness and justice.

In 2025, the SCO Tianjin Summit formulated a development strategy for the coming decade. Leaders of SCO member states witnessed the inauguration of the four security centers [This refers to the Integrated Center for Countering Security Threats and Challenges of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and its Center for Combating Transnational Crime and Information Security Center, and the SCO Narcotics Control Center.] and decided to establish an SCO Development Bank. China also announced the creation of three major China-SCO cooperation platforms, covering energy, green industry, and the digital economy, and three major cooperation centers for scientific and technological innovation, higher education, and vocational and technical education, and the decision to continue the implementation of the action plan for high-quality development of economic and trade cooperation among SCO members. Together, these initiatives have enhanced solidarity and coordination among member states and injected new vitality into the organization, propelling it into a new stage of high-quality development and towards even greater successes.

Promoting the creation of a global governance architecture that is more balanced and effective. China believes that the international financial architecture should be more balanced in representation and better reflect the realities of the world economy. It argues that the World Bank should conduct shareholding reviews and the International Monetary Fund should carry out quota share realignment in accordance with the agreed timeframes and roadmaps to address the democratic deficit in global financial governance.

China supports the reform of the UN Security Council, believing that increasing the representation of developing countries is the right direction of the reform, and that it is imperative to address the historical injustice suffered by Africa, with priority and special arrangements made for the continent's demands. It maintains communication and coordination with its partners in the Global South through mechanisms such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, and plays an active role in championing justice at major international events such as the UN General Assembly. Together, they have made joint efforts to safeguard international fairness and justice and defend their legitimate rights and interests.

Assisting the Global South in jointly embarking on a path towards modernization. China has proposed and advanced an initiative for open and inclusive Global South cooperation, implemented the eight measures in support of Global South cooperation, and encouraged the Global South to become a staunch force for peace, a driving force for open development, a builder of global governance, and an advocate for exchanges and mutual learning among civilizations.

At the Beijing Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation, bilateral relations between China and all African countries with which it has diplomatic ties were officially elevated to the level of strategic relations, and the overall positioning of China-Africa relations was elevated to an all-weather China-Africa community of shared future for the new era. China has also pledged to work with African countries to promote modernization in six areas [This refers to modernization that is just and equitable, open and win-win, diverse and inclusive, eco-friendly, underpinned by peace and security, and that puts the people first.] and implement 10 partnership actions [This refers to the partnership actions for mutual learning among civilizations, for trade prosperity, for industrial chain cooperation, for connectivity, for development cooperation, for health, for agriculture and livelihoods, for people-to-people exchanges, for green development, and for common security.].

The China-Arab States Summit decided to build a China-Arab community of shared future in the new era and carry out eight major cooperation initiatives for pragmatic China-Arab cooperation [This refers to cooperation initiatives on development support, food security, public health, green innovation, energy security, inter-civilizational dialogue, youth development, and security and stability.]. China has established a comprehensive cooperative partnership with Latin American and Caribbean countries based on equality, mutual benefit, and shared development. Together, they have founded the Forum of China and the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, jointly launching the five programs on solidarity, development, civilization, peace, and people-to-people connectivity. Adhering to the principles of the Four Fully Respects [China fully respects the sovereignty and independence of Pacific island countries and upholds the equality of all countries, big or small; China fully respects their will and follows the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, shared benefits, and win-win results; China fully respects their cultural traditions and pursues harmony without uniformity and the common development of diverse cultures; China fully respects their effort to seek strength through unity, and supports them in implementing the 2050 Strategy for the Blue Pacific Continent, so as to contribute to the building of a peaceful, harmonious, secure, inclusive, and prosperous Blue Pacific.], China has carried out friendly cooperation with Pacific island countries and developed seven cooperation platforms [This refers to cooperation platforms on emergency reserve, climate change, poverty reduction and development, disaster prevention and mitigation, Juncao technology, agriculture, and police affairs.] to support them in accelerating efforts to achieve independent and sustainable development.

5. Promoting Exchanges and Mutual Learning Among Civilizations

Recognizing the fundamental reality of diversity in world civilizations and the urgent need to transcend civilizational conflicts, China has proposed the Global Civilization Initiative and promoted its implementation, championing the common values of humanity and fostering deeper exchanges and understanding among different peoples, and wider interactions and greater integration of diverse cultures in a joint effort to advance the development and progress of human civilization.

Promoting global dialogue among civilizations. China upholds a vision of civilization characterized by equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness, and promotes harmonious coexistence among different civilizations to share and admire the beauty of all. On June 7, 2024, the country facilitated the unanimous adoption of a resolution at the 78th session of the UN General Assembly, which designated June 10 as International Day for Dialogue Among Civilizations. For its celebration, vibrant themed activities were held at UN venues in New York and Geneva and in countries around the world.

Elsewhere, China has convened the Conference on Dialogue of Asian Civilizations and the Global Civilizations Dialogue Ministerial Meeting, and erected many multi-level international platforms such as the World Conference of Classics, the Liangzhu Forum, and the Alliance for Cultural Heritage in Asia. It has signed cooperation agreements on culture, cultural relics, and tourism with over 100 countries, deepening cooperation in joint archaeological research, world heritage protection, and the translation of classic works. Through concrete actions, the country promotes global dialogue among civilizations and protects the cultural treasures of all humanity.

The CPC in Dialogue with World Political Parties High-Level Meeting and the CPC and World Political Parties Summit encourage mutual learning between Chinese modernization – a new model for human progress – and other civilizations, continuously enriching the garden of world civilizations, and making new contributions to humanity's exploration of paths to modernization.

Panel 4 Global Civilizations Dialogue Ministerial Meeting Builds a Bridge for Mutual Learning Among Civilizations

From July 10 to 11, 2025, the Global Civilizations Dialogue Ministerial Meeting was held in Beijing under the theme "Safeguarding Diversity of Human Civilizations for World Peace and Development". In a congratulatory letter, President Xi Jinping emphasized that China is willing to work with other countries to champion equality, mutual learning, dialogue, and inclusiveness among civilizations, implement the Global Civilization Initiative, and promote the building of a global network for dialogue and cooperation among civilizations, in a bid to provide fresh impetus for advancing human civilizations and promoting world peace and development.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres also sent a congratulatory letter to the meeting, which saw more than 600 representatives from the political, cultural, and educational sectors of about 140 countries and regions attend its opening ceremony. The meeting adopted the Beijing Declaration of the Global Civilizations Dialogue Ministerial Meeting and released a list of 110 actions to be taken.

Advancing the development and progress of human rights. China advocates protecting human rights through security, advancing human rights through development, and promoting human rights through cooperation, steering global human rights governance in a more just, fair, reasonable, and inclusive direction. It has acceded to or ratified 29 international human rights instruments and has played a constructive role in the formulation of several major international human rights documents, including the Declaration on the Right to Development and the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

China has served six terms as a member of the UN Human Rights Council, making it one of the most frequently elected and longest-serving countries. In this role, it has promoted the adoption by the council of resolutions such as "The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All Human Rights", "The Negative Impact of the Legacies of Colonialism on the Enjoyment of Human Rights", "Promoting and Protecting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Within the Context of Addressing Inequalities", and "Promoting Accessibility for the Full Enjoyment of All Human Rights by All".

Promoting people-to-people exchanges and friendship. China advances various forms of people-to-people diplomacy, city-to-city diplomacy, and public diplomacy. It has held cultural exchange years, tourism years, and education years with many countries, and established over 3,000 pairs of sister cities (provinces/states) with more than 150 countries, actively building bridges for people-to-people exchanges. Entry policies are being continually optimized, with unilateral visa-free access already in place for 50 countries, full mutual visa exemption for 29 countries, and 240-hour transit visa-free policy expanded to 55 countries across 65 entry ports. In 2025, 30.08 million foreigners entered China visa-free, accounting for 73.1 percent of all foreign arrivals, a year-on-year increase of 49.5 percent.

Sports also serve as a bridge for enhancing friendship among peoples. In recent years, China has successfully hosted the Beijing Winter Olympics, the Chengdu FISU World University Games, the Hangzhou Asian Games, and the Harbin Asian Winter Games, carrying forward the Olympic motto of "Faster, Higher, Stronger – Together". The youth represent the future of people-to-people friendship. In recognition of this, during Chinese President Xi Jinping's visits in the US and France in November 2023 and May 2024, China announced an initiative to invite 50,000 young Americans to China for exchange and study over the five years starting from 2023 and an initiative to invite more than 10,000 French students to study in China and double the scale of European youth exchanges in China over the three years starting from 2024. It has also held China-Africa Youth Festivals and "Chinese Bridge" summer camps for young students, planting the seeds of friendship in the hearts of the younger generation.

6. Providing More Public Goods for the International Community

Faced with ever-increasing global challenges, the global governance system must keep pace with the times, find solutions to old problems, and fill the gaps in rules in new areas. China has demonstrated the sense of responsibility of a major country that integrates knowledge and action, actively created international public goods, and contributed new solutions to global governance.

Firmly leading global climate governance. China firmly upholds and promotes the implementation of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Paris Agreement. The country adheres to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities, and works to build a fair and rational global climate governance system underpinned by cooperation for mutual benefit.

In 2020, at the UN General Assembly, China solemnly declared that it would strive to peak its carbon dioxide emissions before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. In 2025, at the UN Climate Change Summit, it announced a new round of nationally determined contributions, including reducing economy-wide net greenhouse gas emissions by 7 to 10 percent from peak levels by 2035, striving to do better; increasing the share of non-fossil fuels in total energy consumption to over 30 percent; and scaling up the forest stock volume and developing a carbon emissions trading market.

China has initiated the establishment of the BASIC and the Ministerial on Climate Action to build consensus, and has continued to help developing countries improve their capacity to address climate change through South-South cooperation. As of the end of October 2025, China had signed 55 cooperation documents with 43 developing countries, implemented over 300 sessions of capacity-building programs, and had provided and mobilized over RMB177 billion in program funding since 2016.

Panel 5 China's Green and Low-Carbon Industrial Transition Has Made Significant Contributions to the World

China is a steadfast champion of and a major contributor to green development. It has built the world's largest and fastest-growing renewable energy system and the largest and most complete new energy industrial chain, contributing about one-quarter of the world's newly increased green areas. It has carried out extensive cooperation on green energy projects with more than 100 countries and regions, consistently providing high-quality and efficient low-carbon energy equipment and products to the world, especially to developing countries. Its wind power, photovoltaic, and new energy vehicle products are now exported to over 200 countries and regions, supplying 70 percent of the world's wind power equipment and 80 percent of photovoltaic panels, driving down global wind and photovoltaic power generation costs by more than 60 percent and 80 percent, respectively. During the 14th Five-year Plan period (2021-2025), China's exported wind power and photovoltaic products reduced carbon emissions by approximately 4.1 billion tonnes for other countries.

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Advancing the development of artificial intelligence for good and for all. China has put forward the Global AI Governance Initiative, advocating a people-centered and AI-for-good approach. It supports the UN in playing a central role and promotes the formation of a global AI governance system with broad consensus to benefit all humanity, calling for strengthened international cooperation and assistance for developing countries to bridge the AI divide. The country has promoted the UN General Assembly's adoption of a resolution on enhancing international cooperation on AI capacity building, and proposed and implemented the AI Capacity-Building Action Plan for Good and for All. It initiated the establishment of the Group of Friends for International Cooperation on AI Capacity-Building, built the Digital South project under the Global Development Project Pool, and has held multiple capacity-building workshops and thematic dialogues in this regard.

Additionally, it has proposed the establishment of a World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization and put forward the Global AI Governance Action Plan and the AI+ International Cooperation Initiative, contributing Chinese wisdom and solutions to AI development and governance. China attaches great importance to preventing risks in the military applications of AI and proposes that all countries should adopt a prudent and responsible approach in the development and use of relevant technologies, to ensure that weapon systems remain under human control at all times and to prevent an AI arms race.

Contributing China's strength to safeguarding global public health security. China actively participates in global health affairs and conducts health exchanges and cooperation through multiple channels and at multiple levels. It provides substantial international assistance in the health sector, and has actively engaged in major international health actions such as fighting the Ebola outbreak and the Covid-19 pandemic. It strives to bridge the immunization gap and the health deficit, and advocates jointly building a community of health for all.

China has signed health cooperation agreements with over 160 countries and international organizations, and initiated and participated in nine international and regional health cooperation mechanisms, including those between China and African countries, between China and Arab states, and between China and Southeast Asian nations. China has dispatched more than 30,000 medical workers to 77 countries and regions and treated 300 million patients. It has carried out medical outreach programs such as the Brightness Action, the Heart Care Action, and the Smile Action to provide free treatment of cataract, heart disease and dental defects, and has implemented the New Shennong Initiative, a program named after the mythical Shennong who tasted 100 herbs to discover their medical properties, to find new medicinal herbs worldwide for application in Traditional Chinese Medicine. China continues to support the World Health Organization (WHO) in playing a central coordinating role in global health governance and has deeply engaged in and led key agendas, including the revision of the International Health Regulations, the negotiation of the Pandemic Agreement, and the reform of global health governance architecture and WHO governance.

Actively leading the global biodiversity governance. Guided by the principle that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, China advances eco-environmental conservation as a priority, pursues green development, and has become an important participant, contributor, and torchbearer in the global endeavor to build an eco-civilization. As the presidency of the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, China issued the Kunming Declaration and spearheaded the adoption of the historic Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, guiding the direction and drawing a blueprint for global biodiversity protection through 2030 and beyond. The country has since taken the lead in launching the implementation initiative on the framework and in establishing the Kunming Biodiversity Fund. With an investment of RMB1.5 billion, the fund has to date supported 31 projects and covered 45 developing countries, providing sustained momentum for the implementation of the framework. It has also advocated for the establishment of the International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road, continued to deepen bilateral and multilateral dialogue and exchange, and worked to promote the fruitful results of South-South cooperation on biodiversity protection. In 2019, China became the largest contributor to the core budget of the Convention on Biological Diversity and its protocols, as well as the largest contributor among developing countries to the Global Environment Facility, positions it maintains to this day.

Promoting the improvement of governance rules for new domains. China is advancing the transformation of the global internet governance system, advocating four principles: respecting cyber sovereignty, safeguarding peace and security, promoting openness and cooperation, and ensuring good order. It has held the World Internet Conference for 12 consecutive years since 2014, and put forward the Global Initiative on Data Security and the Global Cross-Border Data Flow Cooperation Initiative. China has supported the establishment of the World Data Organization in Beijing, and supported the United Nations as the main channel for advancing global cyberspace and digital governance, working with all parties to build a community of shared future in cyberspace.

China actively promotes global ocean governance, and facilitated the conclusion of the Agreement on Marine Biodiversity of Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction as one of the first signatories. The country holds observer status in the Arctic Council, advocates building a Polar Silk Road, and promotes joint international efforts to protect and sustainably use Antarctic marine living resources.

China is committed to lasting peace and security in outer space, firmly upholding the international space order based on the 1967 Outer Space Treaty. It opposes an arms race in this realm, supports the United Nations in playing its central role, and safeguards the common rights and interests of all countries in the peaceful use of outer space.

IV. Guiding the Direction of Change Towards a Bright Future

The Global Governance Initiative quickly received widespread support from nearly 160 countries and international organizations upon its announcement, and China's ideas and actions have increasingly resonated with and received positive response from the international community. The reason behind this lies in the fact that China understands how to meet the call of the day and shape the trends of our times; that the GGI, while rooted in China, benefits the world; and that grounded in today's realities while opening up the future, China is contributing wisdom and strength to the progress of human civilization.

1. Building Broad Consensus on Improving Global Governance

China has put forward a series of new ideas and propositions that champion shared values and joint action, responding to the common aspirations of the international community and addressing the most pressing issues in global governance.

Extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits are aspired by all. A world so vast is bound to face many challenges. What kind of global governance system benefits the world and all its peoples? China believes that global affairs should be discussed by all, the governance system should be built by all, and development outcomes should be shared by all. This approach tackles problems at their root, represents the common aspirations of the vast majority of countries, and seeks the greatest common ground of shared interests for all nations in the world.

An equal and orderly multipolar world and a universally beneficial and inclusive economic globalization are the trends of the times. China advocates that all countries have a place in global governance and play their due roles. Together, they should build the world economy stronger and share the fruits equitably. Let economic globalization penetrate the dark room of protectionism like fresh air and bright sunshine to the benefit of all. This truly aligns with the trend of the times and the aspirations of all people.

True multilateralism is the only path forward. Global governance is both broad in scope and specific in practice. China offers a clear and all-encompassing approach: to champion and apply true multilateralism. Time and again, experience has shown that only when multilateralism is acted upon and multilateral coordination and cooperation are strong and effective, can global governance advance and human wellbeing be guaranteed. Without multilateralism humanity cannot develop and the world cannot progress.

The common values of humanity are a universal guide. With more than eight billion people, over 200 countries and regions, and more than 2,500 ethnic groups and many religions in our world, respecting diversity and differences while forging a great synergy across systems, civilizations, and countries is crucial to the success of global governance. China promotes the common values of humanity – peace, development, fairness, justice, democracy, and freedom. These values align with the core ideas of solidarity, coexistence, and win-win cooperation advocated by various civilizations, laying a value foundation for jointly improving global governance.

2. Demonstrating a Global Vision and a Sense of Responsibility

By sharing its philosophy on global governance and proposing the Global Governance Initiative, China has demonstrated a sense of responsibility in fulfilling the CPC's original aspiration and founding mission. Upholding fundamental principles while breaking new ground, it champions the country's rich diplomatic traditions and draws strength from its fine traditional culture, advancing with and leading the times while remaining committed to action.

China's global governance philosophy originates from the CPC's global vision. Since its founding 105 years ago, the CPC has always taken as its mission the pursuit of progress for humanity and great harmony for the world. It is this mission that determines China's noble goal in participating in global governance: to strive to turn the aspirations of the Chinese people and people of all countries for a better life into reality. The Fourth Plenary Session of the 20th CPC Central Committee emphasized the building of a community with a shared future for humanity and the implementation of the Global Development Initiative, the Global Security Initiative, the Global Civilization Initiative, and the Global Governance Initiative, providing clear guidance for China to work hand in hand with other countries to reform and improve the global governance system.

China's global governance philosophy carries forward the fine traditions of its diplomacy. As early as the 1950s, Chairman Mao Zedong said that China ought to make a greater contribution to humanity. Acting on this vision, the PRC has remained committed to an independent foreign policy of peace, and put forward the Five Principles of Peaceful Coexistence, the Three Worlds theory, and the idea of establishing a new global political and economic order, proactively safeguarding the interests of developing countries. For over 70 years, its foreign policy has remained steadfast in its original aspiration to uphold fairness and justice, and its mission to promote human progress has only deepened over time. This record continues to provide a source of strength for China's participation in and leadership of global governance in the new era.

China's global governance philosophy is rooted in the profound heritage of the Chinese civilization. Throughout its more than 5,000 years of civilization, the Chinese nation has always pursued peace, concord, and harmony across generations. Since ancient times, it has cherished the lofty ideal of "great harmony under Heaven", the governance philosophy of "great wisdom governing through sound institutions", the spiritual pursuit of "pulling together in times of difficulty", the strong conviction that "the people are the foundation of the state", and the practical approach of "applying knowledge in action". Under new historical conditions, these elements of wisdom have undergone a creative transformation and innovative progress, offering timeless insights for addressing global challenges.

3. Expanding the Practical Pathways for Building a Community with a Shared Future for Humanity

Over a decade ago, President Xi Jinping put forward the important vision of building a community with a shared future for humanity, with the goal of creating a better world and a better life for people of all countries. Since then, under the banner of building a community with a shared future for humanity, China has adopted a series of initiatives to confront various global risks and challenges, continuously enriching the practice of global governance.

In the face of a widening North South divide and severe delays in implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, China has proposed the Global Development Initiative to advance common development. In the face of complex international and regional situations and security governance challenges – especially when certain countries seek absolute security at the expense of other countries' security – China put forward the Global Security Initiative in time to address the peace deficit and tackle security problems. Amid a rising clamor of "clash of civilizations" and "confrontation between different systems", and the stoking of "antagonism of values" by some countries, China has proposed the Global Civilization Initiative to promote exchange and mutual learning among civilizations. Now, faced with a widening governance deficit and growing efforts to undermine the United Nations and multilateralism, China has put forward the Global Governance Initiative, expanding on the institutions of the other three global initiatives and aiming at building a more just and equitable global governance system.

Providing systematic solutions, China's four major global initiatives run in parallel with a focus on different domains and form a complete action framework that promotes prosperity through development, ensures stability through security, enhances mutual trust through exchanges between civilizations, and seeks justice through governance. Together, they lead to an open, inclusive, clean, and beautiful world that enjoys lasting peace, universal security, and common prosperity, constituting an important pillar for building a community with a shared future for humanity.

4. Opening Up New Horizons for Political Civilization of Humanity

Throughout history, humanity has experienced innumerable wars – either hot or cold – but has emerged from each to achieve remarkable progress. Today, the world faces a broader and deeper transformation, and where it will head to depends on the choices of individual countries. By proposing the Global Governance Initiative and a series of new ideas and approaches, China has deepened its understanding of the laws governing the development of human society and promoted the advancement of human political civilization.

Breaking free from the outdated "core-periphery" framework of the old international order. A world in which just a few countries dominate and most are subordinate, and where the rich become richer while the poor become poorer, is not a good world. Whether through the so-called "hegemonic stability theory", "Western-centrism", "neoliberalism", or the "democratic peace theory", the result has been a world marred by disunity and injustice, with turmoil and chaos in many regions. China stands firmly on the right side of history, is committed to promoting greater democracy in international relations so that developing countries can truly become equal members of the international community and masters of their own future.

Transcending the flawed logic that "might makes right". The outdated mindset of hegemonism and power politics cannot adapt to the new reality of a multipolar world. Frequent bullying and big-stick coercion and extortion have opened the Pandora's box for a return to the law of the jungle. China stands firmly on the side of fairness and justice, remaining a pillar of strength amidst the tumultuous changes and upheavals of the world. It clearly advocates the international rule of law and will never allow whoever has the bigger fist to call the shots. Through its efforts, the international community has formed a consensus that calls for fairness, not hegemony.

Abandoning the zero-sum mentality of "winner takes all". Blocking others' path will not get you further; when blowing out others' lamps, the fire will burn your beard. Protectionism is a fire that burns those who set it, and the pursuit of absolute security only adds fuel to the flames. China stands firmly on the side of win-win cooperation, taking concrete actions to pursue harmonious coexistence and seeking its own success while helping others succeed. It advocates that the fruits of governance should be shared by all and that no country should be left behind, so that every member of the international community becomes a winner.

V. Moving Forward Hand in Hand at a Critical Juncture in History

The world has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation, and humanity once again faces a choice: a future marked by peace, dialogue, and win-win cooperation, or one marred by war, confrontation, and zero-sum competition. It is encouraging to see that with broad support from the international community, the Global Governance Initiative is drawing wide participation. It must also be understood, however, that great undertakings are rarely achieved overnight. To advance the initiative, all parties must persevere in the face of challenges, rise above disputes, and work together to build a more just and equitable global governance system.

1. Acting in Global Interest and Planning for the Benefit of Future Generations

Global governance concerns the shared and long-term interests of all people, and its essence lies not in deal making but in the pursuit of justice. China calls on all countries to bear in mind the future of humanity and the wellbeing of their people, to translate the vision of the GGI into concrete actions, and to work towards lasting achievements that benefit all the people for generations to come.

In our global village, all countries are connected, and their interests are closely intertwined. A nation's interests are better realized only when they align with the interests of all. Putting one's own interests first leads only to going it alone, and actions that harm others only serve to harm oneself. In participating in global governance, all countries should adopt a broad vision of shared global responsibility that transcends narrow self-interests. Division and conflict should be overcome with an open mind, with all nations working for humanity's shared future and building a shared home to prevent the "tragedy of the commons".

Global governance is about establishing rules and managing the world on a long-term basis. It requires upholding the principle of intergenerational equity and balancing present needs with those of the future. We must neither deplete the resources left to us by our ancestors – jeopardizing the future of posterity – nor pass on to the next generation the problems that we should solve. The baton of history is in our hands, and the question of where global governance is headed demands an answer. Our generation must offer a response worthy of our times and demonstrate vision and wisdom to build a global governance system that is fairer and more equitable, stable, and effective. Only then can we pass on to future generations a more peaceful, prosperous, and beautiful world.

2. Rising to Challenges with Firm Confidence

Building a more just and equitable global governance system is a noble goal that is feasible and attainable, but it is also a gradual historical process. China believes that as long as all parties remain steadfast in their resolve and persist in their efforts, step by step, this vision is sure to become a reality.

A multipolar world is rapidly emerging, and the trend towards democracy and the rule of law in international relations is unstoppable. Human society is bound to evolve, from confrontation to cooperation, imbalance to balance, division to coexistence. As the times progress and the people awaken, power politics and "exclusive governing clubs" are losing their foundation. As long as the torch of multilateralism is held high, the cause of global governance will pierce through the darkness and reach a brighter future.

The world today is marked by both change and turbulence. Turning chaos into order is no easy task, and reaching a consensus on global governance requires overcoming conflicts and differences through arduous effort. The road is long, but we will reach our destination if we keep moving forward. The task is formidable, but we are sure to succeed as long as we persist. All countries must work hard and make unremitting efforts to push forward the great cause of reforming and improving global governance – no one should look on, hesitate, or slack off.

3. Let's Unite and Act

Global governance promotes the common wellbeing of the international community and relies on the collective efforts of all nations. China advocates that countries unite and cooperate, take concrete action, and transform the vision and blueprint of the GGI into a roadmap and timeline for joint action.

In addressing the diverse interests of different countries, the key lies in seeking common ground while shelving differences. We should create the greatest synergy for peaceful development and win-win cooperation, united under a single system, order, and set of rules. We must strengthen the UN as the core mechanism for practicing multilateralism and the primary platform for global governance. Unity is strength. Only through solidarity and cooperation can we deliver results and overcome major challenges for the benefit of all. Only then can we translate GGI principles into the broadest consensus and the most powerful action.

The successful implementation of the GGI requires major countries to shoulder their responsibilities, multilateral mechanisms to play their roles, and the international community to take concrete action. We need to prioritize urgent issues and work to de-escalate flashpoints. We should focus on improving communication and cooperation in areas where there is an urgent need for better governance. These include reform of the international financial architecture, artificial intelligence, cyberspace, climate change, trade, and outer space. We will build consensus, secure outcomes, and strive for an early success in global governance.

Conclusion

This is an era of challenges. But it is also one of hope. An era where a brighter future beckons, provided we work continuously for the good of generations to come. The Global Governance Initiative is a path to this goal, balancing lofty ideals with practical action and driving progress towards more effective global governance, step by step.

The initiative stands at the forefront of our era, offering fresh momentum for building a community with a shared future for humanity and serving as a compass to help the great ship of history chart its course through turbulent waters. It is yet another significant public good that China has contributed to the world.

Looking ahead, as the international community gains a deeper understanding of this initiative and participates in it, the progressive forces championing multilateralism will grow stronger, and the grand goal of building a more just and equitable global governance system will gradually become a reality.

China stands ready to work hand in hand with all other countries to implement the initiative under the principles of extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits. Together, we can expand the scope and influence of multilateralism, let the light of fairness and justice illuminate the world, and bring the achievements of global governance to all nations. Together, we can create a brighter future for humanity and the progress of human civilization.

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CULTURE



Exhibition makes mythical connections

Exploring the origins of Maya and Andean civilizations brings about comparisons that expose similarities to ancient Chinese beliefs, **Wang Ru** reports.

In ancient Chinese myth, human beings were created by the mother goddess Nyuwa, who kneaded a mixture of soil and water until it took the form of a self-resembling doll-like creature. That myth is strikingly similar to one in remote Mesoamerica: in Maya myth, humans were made by a god who used maize dough.

Today, when visiting Mesoamerican countries, people find that maize remains the soul of local people's lives. It appears as the staple in daily meals, and is frequently added to other delicacies. Ceremonies related to maize can also be witnessed throughout the year.

This crop has been a lasting cultural symbol for millennia, as demonstrated by *Maize·Gold·Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations*, which is currently on view at the Capital Museum in Beijing.

For over 3,000 years, from around 2000 BC to the 16th century AD, the Maya civilization flourished in present-day Mexico, Guatemala, Belize, Honduras, and El Salvador, renowned for its advanced writing system, astronomy and monumental pyramid-temples. Andean civilization, which thrived in South America's Andes Mountains from around 3000 BC to the 16th century AD, was also remarkable, known for its achievements in architecture, metallurgy and pottery production.

With about 800 artifacts from more than 20 cultural heritage institutes in Mexico and Peru, the exhibition, as the largest in the museum's history, showcases a historical lineage of more than 3,000 years through three cultural symbols — maize, gold and the jaguar — systematically demonstrating the productive foundations, spiritual symbols and power systems of Maya and Andean civilizations.

"Maize was the origin of life in ancient Mesoamerica," says Tan Xiaoling, deputy director of the Capital Museum. "Gold, in Andean civilization, was the sweat of the sun, representing the supreme authorities of divine and royal power. The jaguar, however, was the king of the forest and a symbolic totem connecting the human world with the divine realm. Together, they form a complete spiritual spectrum of ancient American people from survival to faith and then power."

Cosmic chapter

The first chapter draws visitors into the Maya world, displaying how ancient people from that remote area created outstanding achievements, including farming, hieroglyphic, and the astronomical calendar, during its classical era from 200 to 900, roughly the same time as China's Three Kingdoms (220-280) to the Tang Dynasty (618-907), says Shao Xinxin, curator of this section of the exhibition.

He highlights a sandstone head statue on display from 600-900, adorned with a cosmic tree headdress with geometrics, animal and deity patterns. It is speculated that this figure played an important role in ancient Maya sacrificial or other ceremonial activities.

Behind this artifact lies the Mayan worldview and the cosmos. Shao says they believed the world had three realms — the upper realm for the sun, the moon and the stars; the middle realm was where humans thrived; and the bottom realm was where the dead paused before rebirth. Linking the three realms is the cosmic tree, which holds the universe together.

Horizontally, with the tree at the center, Mayans divided the earthly realm into five directions, each associated with a symbolic color: the east, red; the north, white; the west, black; the south, yellow; and the center, green.

Shao says such ideas, whether the world is three realms or the five directions of different colors, can also be traced in traditional Chinese culture. The Chinese also used five colors to denote the same five directions, though the color assignments differed.

Another fascinating parallel appears in the representation of the moon. The display showcases a limestone stele from 900 to 1521 depicting the Maya moon goddess Ixchel. She holds a rabbit in her arms. In Maya belief, the rabbit symbolizes the moon and is an important partner of the goddess.

"This is highly similar to the moon goddess Chang'e and her rabbit in traditional Chinese myth," says Shao. "It is generally guessed that Maya and Chinese people both believed the shadow they witnessed on the moon was a rabbit. Connecting the rabbit to the moon is rare in world civilizations elsewhere."

While the exhibition's first section focuses on the Maya civilization, the second section shifts the viewer's attention southward into the Andes Mountains. Here, the organizing symbol is gold.

Heavy metal masks

In the second section, the Andean civilization is introduced mainly through its metal vessel-making techniques. A gilt-copper mask on display, unearthed from the Royal Tombs of Sipan in Peru, is the masterpiece that showcases this achievement. Its facial features are clear and lifelike, showing the craftspeople's mastery of human expression.

Such masks were often placed on the faces of tomb owners or appeared in groups as accompanying burial artifacts. In Andean belief, masks held a protective function: they guarded the soul of the deceased and helped the dead gain their identity in the underworld, says Zhao Yazhuo, also a curator of the exhibition, adding that the mask is highly similar to the jade and metal masks found in ancient Chinese tombs.

The 72 artifacts from the Royal Tombs of Sipan are highlighted in the display, with more than 80 percent making their debut in China. More than half have never been showcased in Peru.

The royal tombs were discovered first in 1987, when some were looted. Then archaeologist Walter Alva carried out rescue excavations of the tombs with a team and discovered the giant tomb group, where the king of the Moche culture (an ancient Peruvian culture from 100 to 850) was buried. Its high level of preservation is often compared to that of the tomb of Tutankhamun in Egypt.

"People in Peru's northern coastal region overcame the desert through engineered irrigation systems, giving rise to a unique civilization. The Moche culture, in particular, stands as an outstanding example," says Alva. "I believe this exhibition enables China, a country that also has a long history, to understand Peru's past and appreciate the best examples of its artistic creativity."

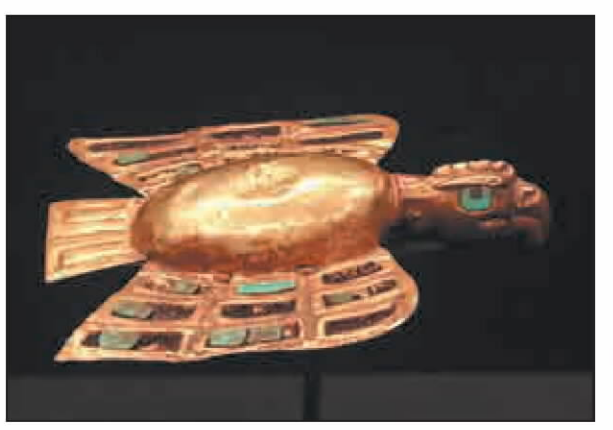
The exhibition also traces a lesser-known historical connection that linked the Andes to China through the global silver trade. Since the 16th century, when the Inca Empire (about 1400-1532) of Andean civilization gradually declined, Spanish colonizers exploited local silver in enormous quantities, which then traveled all the way to Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) China through maritime trade.

The Ming economy, Zhao explains, faced a silver shortage for use as currency. "The paper currency issued in the early Ming Dynasty had lost significant value, and there was also a shortage of bronze coins. Thus, the public had an earnest demand for a stable, reliable currency. The import of silver from Americas filled that gap.

"In this way, the remote Chinese and Andean civilizations were truly connected at that time, all becoming part of the entire world history," she adds.











From top: A feline-shaped ceramic jar, from 600 to 1000, unearthed in Peru. Peruvian archaeologist Walter Alva introduces artifacts from the Royal Tombs of Sipan on display at the Capital Museum's new exhibition last month. A gold headdress (inset), unearthed from Peru from 100 to 850. People appreciate a sandstone statue of Maya culture from 600 to 900 on display at the exhibition. A gold Andean condor plaque (left) from 1300-200 BC. A gold Peruvian warrior figurine from 100 to 850 on display. Bronze figurines unearthed from Peru from 600 to 1000. PHOTOS BY JIANG DONG / CHINA DAILY

Animal instincts

While the first two sections focus on human creations, the final section turns the spotlight on animals in Americas, introducing their bond with human society.

Wei Yi, curator of the last section, says that in Mesoamerica, people believed each individual had a guardian spirit animal and was endowed with the spirit and character of their protective animal. For example, if someone's guarding spirit is a jaguar, then the person likely has strength and courage. If one is protected by a monkey, then they may be elegantly flexible with artistic talent.

An object on display directly illustrates this belief: a soldier's figurine in jaguar attire, found in western Mexico and dating from approximately 100 BC to AD 400. The soldier wears a jaguar skin as a garment, and his posture is aggressive and powerful. The meaning is clear: by dressing as the jaguar, the soldier would gain the animal's strength and fighting skills, ensuring victory in battle.

"Ancient people in Mesoamerica understood the relationship between people and animals in this way, deeply integrating animals in their lives and social culture," says Wei.

"Following this belief, visitors can find out their own guardian animal when touring the display," he adds.

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SPORTS

WORLD CUP 2026

Messi hails 'beautiful moment' after tying Cup goals record

Argentine's hat-trick puts him level with German Klose



Messi celebrates after scoring his second goal during a World Cup Group J match between Argentina and Algeria on Tuesday. AP





Left: Lionel Messi scores his second against Algerian keeper Luca Zidane, doubling Argentina's lead in the process. **Right:** Messi lines up the hat-trick shot as Algeria's Riyad Mahrez (7) and Nabil Bentaleb (19) attempt to close him down. AFP / AP

Lionel Messi saluted a "beautiful moment" after becoming the World Cup's joint all-time leading goalscorer in his record-breaking appearance at his sixth World Cup on Tuesday.

The 38-year-old Argentina captain penned another memorable chapter in his storied career with a brilliant hat-trick in the South Americans' 3-0 win over Algeria at Kansas City's Arrowhead Stadium.

Messi's hat-trick — his first ever in a World Cup — put him alongside Germany's Miroslav Klose as the top scorer in the tournament's history with 16 goals.

"To enjoy this with my family, with my teammates, the ones who are always there, is a really beautiful moment," Inter Miami star Messi said afterwards. "I'm happy."

Messi's razor-sharp eye for goal augurs well for Argentina's hopes of becoming the first team since Brazil in 1962 to win back-to-back World Cup titles.

"The squad, it's a very united, very strong group," Messi said.

"I feel good; we were lucky enough to win a tough match. It's important to start off with a win in the first game.

"I'm grateful to the fans, because, once again, they've shown that Argentina is crazy about this — we packed the stadium again."

On a night for the ages in Kansas City, the records kept tumbling for Argentina's miracle man, considered by many to be the greatest footballer of all time.

When the match kicked off at the home of the NFL's Kansas City Chiefs, Messi became the first player to feature in six World Cup tournaments, in his 200th international match.

And the star veteran, who made his first appearance at a World Cup as a teenager in 2006, lit up the occasion with three goals in a clinical display by Argentina.

Messi produced a majestic finish from distance in the 17th minute, sparking a frenzy among his adoring fans, who had turned the match into a virtual home game.

He netted again in the second half from close range, gobbling up a rebound to take him just one goal behind the all-time record held by Klose.

Messi completed his first World Cup hat-trick with an unstoppable finish in the 76th minute.

The diminutive genius was substituted shortly afterward, forcing Argentine fans to wait to see their hero have a shot at the outright record.

Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni, meanwhile, said he no longer has "the words to describe Messi".

"For 20 years, he's had us used to seeing things like this, and he inspires everyone who watches him play," Scaloni said of his star player.

Scaloni is now targeting Argentina's second Group J game against Austria on Monday, as the South Americans look to lock up their place in the knockout rounds.

"We're going to take it one game at a time. The team is happy; we gave playing time to a lot of players," Scaloni said.

"Hopefully, we can win the next one so everyone can be in the third group stage match."

Fluid in attack

The Group J match in the open-air stadium started at a frantic pace and both sides had early goals ruled out for offside, including one from Messi.

But Argentina took the lead when Rodrigo De Paul played a beautifully measured through ball, which Messi picked up before driving at goal and unleashing a fierce shot from outside the penalty area that curled away from goalkeeper Luca Zidane.

The South American team was largely in control, fluid in attack with its revered No 10 pulling the strings.

But, as the clock ticked toward halftime Algeria enjoyed a better spell, with Argentina goalkeeper Emiliano Martinez forced to parry a shot from Fares Chaibi.

Messi curled another effort over the bar in the early minutes of the second half and Zidane kept out a shot from Lautaro Martinez.

But the crowd did not have to wait long to celebrate another goal from the veteran Inter Miami forward.

Zidane failed to deal with a sizzling Alexis Mac Allister strike and Messi was there to sweep home in the 60th minute.

Time stood still six minutes later as Messi was through again, but this time Zidane pushed the ball over the bar.

It was enough to make Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes leap from his seat in anticipation.

Messi, though, was not to be denied, completing his hat-trick after being set up by substitute Nico Gonzalez.

'A madman'

Messi's hat-trick upstaged two of soccer's other stars — Kylian Mbappe of France and Erling Haaland of Norway — who had big games of their own on Tuesday. Mbappe scored twice in France's 3-1 win over Senegal, moving him into joint fourth on the World Cup goals list with 14, while Haaland scored twice for Norway in its 4-1 victory over Iraq.

"Messi is a madman," Haaland said in a post on Snapchat.

Messi, who turns 39 next week, had been dealing with a minor hamstring injury with Inter Miami that had slowed him in the lead-up to the World Cup, but the eight-time Ballon d'Or recipient had no problems in a tuneup against Iceland last week, scoring on a penalty kick while playing 20 minutes in a sharp performance.

"When I'm in good shape," Messi said, "I give it my all."

Earlier, the roads around the stadium were clogged as tens of thousands of Argentine fans streamed toward the ground dressed in blue and white, many with Messi's name on the back of their shirts.

Argentina's all-time top scorer is just the third man to reach 200 caps after Cristiano Ronaldo and Kuwait's Bader Al-Mutawa.

Ronaldo will equal Messi's record of six World Cup appearances if he plays for Portugal against DR Congo on Wednesday.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

Mbappe calls the tune in France win



Kylian Mbappe scores his second goal, and France's third, during a World Cup Group I match against Senegal in East Rutherford, New Jersey, on Tuesday. AP



Kylian Mbappe celebrates scoring the opening goal in France's World Cup match against Senegal on Tuesday. AP

EAST RUTHERFORD, New Jersey — After a flat first half, Kylian Mbappe got France back in tune.

Mbappe scored twice to move past Pele with 14 World Cup goals, celebrating by mimicking a flutist as he had promised, and helping Les Bleus beat Senegal 3-1 on Tuesday in their World Cup opener.

"He could have scored four or five goals, OK, theoretically, but we're happy with two," France coach Didier Deschamps said.

He began the day one goal behind Olivier Giroud, his teammate in France's victorious 2018 World Cup campaign, but is now one ahead of the former Arsenal striker on 58 goals in 99 appearances.

"I am really pleased and very happy to make a little more history for my country," Mbappe said.

"It is something I always wanted to do, although we know why we are here, so I think I will have the time to think about all these things once I stop playing."

He added: "We want to keep writing the biggest page in the history of the French national team. We know the road is very long, but we are ready."

Mbappe had 14 touches in the scoreless first half, the fewest of any player, then put France ahead in the 66th minute. He burst past Senegal captain Kalidou Koulibaly, turned onto a diagonal pass from Michael Olise and slid the ball past goalkeeper Edouard Mendy from just outside the six-yard box.

In a segment with Mbappe taped on May 20 and aired Friday by US broadcaster Fox, award-winning actor and television host James Corden suggested the 27-year-old star striker celebrate his next World Cup goal by imitating a flute player. Mbappe practiced the instrument for a year or two as a child at the behest of his parents.

"I'll do it for you in the first game," Mbappe said.

Mbappe ran toward a corner, brought both hands to his lips and mimicked the instrument.

"If he wants to miss the first half again and score two goals in the second half in another match, that's OK with me," Deschamps said.

Bradley Barcola doubled the lead in the 82nd, two minutes after entering. Ibrahim Mbaye cut the deficit in the fifth minute of stoppage time. Senegalese celebrations, though, were short-lived. Mbappe scored just 68 seconds later on a spectacular right-footed shot from 30 yards. The ball dipped perfectly between Mendy's outstretched left arm and the crossbar.

"A crazy goal," French defender William Saliba said.

Mbappe, who led the 2022 tournament with eight goals, moved one ahead of Lionel Messi and fellow Frenchman Just Fontaine on the World Cup scoring list before Messi scored his 14th, 15th and 16th for Argentina later Tuesday. Mbappe is tied with Germany's Gerd Muller, trailing Messi, Germany's Miroslav Klose (16) and Brazil's Ronaldo (15).

"I'm sure that he will do it," Saliba said of Mbappe setting the record.

"He can, from time to time, miss a game or two, but on one action he really is able to tip the scales and bring his team to victory," Deschamps said.

"People say he doesn't defend enough. Well, he's not here to defend."

Mbappe brushed off critics.

"It's not about revenge," he said. "If I started playing for all the people who criticize me just to silence them, I'd have to play until I was 80."

Trying to reach its third straight World Cup final, France plays Iraq on Monday in Philadelphia, then closes Group I on June 26 against Norway at Foxborough, Massachusetts. Senegal meets Norway on Monday at MetLife Stadium and finishes the first round against Iraq in Toronto.

With fans in Senegal denied visas by the United States government, supporters of the Lions of Teranga appeared limited to a few sections in MetLife's southwest corner on a sunny 25 C afternoon.

While most of the stadium was filled with a just-under-sellout crowd of 80,545, there were empty seats on a mezzanine club level, which has air-conditioned suites behind the outdoor chairs.

Two hours before kickoff, tickets dropped to as low as $69 on FIFA's resale site.

FIFA sold tickets at $220-$620 in December.

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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Woven wonders

Master craftswoman resurrects Song brocade tradition PEOPLE, PAGE 5



Caring for the seas

China urges fairer governance of ocean's resources

WORLD, PAGE 4

CHINA DAILY

GLOBAL EDITION 中国日报 FRIDAY, JUNE 19, 2026

Importance of founding ideals stressed

Xi urges all Party members to strive for new accomplishments in new era

Xi Jinping, general secretary of the Communist Party of China Central Committee, has called on Party members in the new era to carry forward revolutionary traditions and strive for new accomplishments on the new journey.

Xi, who is also Chinese president and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks in a letter of reply to Zhang Liansheng, a 102-year-old Party member with Xinhua News Agency, ahead of the 105th founding anniversary of the CPC, which falls on July 1.

Xi extended sincere greetings to Zhang and veteran Party members and comrades across the country.

In the reply, Xi noted that Zhang, as a radio operator with the "Fourth Brigade" of a central armed force during the War of Liberation (1946-49), followed the Party Central Committee through the flames of war in northern Shaanxi in Northwest China about eight decades ago, devoted his entire life to communications technology with hard work and still cares about the cause of the Party and the country.

"I would like to express my respect to you," Xi wrote, speaking highly of Zhang's sincere and profound love for and faith in the Party.

Xi asked all Party members never to forget their original aspiration and founding mission, emphasizing the importance of faithfully performing their duties, working diligently and taking responsibility.

The "Fourth Brigade" was a Xinhua working team that followed the Party Central Committee and Mao Zedong in northern Shaanxi during that war, and was responsible for news reporting and liaison work.

It initially had over 40 members, including editors, translators, radio operators and logistics personnel, and later grew to more than 100.

In a recent interview, Zhang expressed gratitude to the Party, Xi and fellow Party members for their care and support. "I am an ordinary Party member," he said. "I have always received care and education from the Party, and I feel deeply honored and moved. I will remain loyal to the Party and to the Party's cause."

Zhang said he could no longer recall many details clearly due to his age, but the sound of Morse code has stayed with him.

"The Party organization sent me to Yan'an to learn how to receive and send telegrams," he said. "I am old now, and I have forgotten many things. But dit-dit-dah, dah-dit-dit, dah-dah-dit-dit — I will remember that for the rest of my life."

From March 1947 to March 1948, over the course of one year and five days, members of the "Fourth Brigade" followed the Party Central Committee for more than 1,000 kilometers across northern Shaanxi under harsh and tense conditions, enduring shortages of food and medical care and, at times, the danger of nearby enemy forces.

"Life was hard and we had no vehicles. We relied on our own legs," Zhang recalled. "But we were young and cheerful then, and we were not afraid. We did whatever we were asked to do."

The deeds and names of the "Fourth Brigade" remained little known for decades and after years of research, the names of 70 members have now been confirmed.

XINHUA—CHINA DAILY

Making a splash



Children from a kindergarten in Congjiang county, Guizhou province, take part in a boat race in a shallow pool on Thursday to celebrate the Dragon Boat Festival that falls on Friday. LUO JINGLAI / FOR CHINA DAILY

Envoy delves into China's history in Shaanxi

By MO JINGXI in Yan'an, Shaanxi province
mojingxi@chinadaily.com.cn

A small handmade iron hoe for tending a garden, a bag of apricots and a pair of cloth shoes were among the souvenirs Peter Wilson bought during a visit to Yan'an in Northwest China's Shaanxi province on Wednesday — the sort of keepsakes any tourist might bring home.

But for Wilson, the United Kingdom's ambassador to China, the visit yielded something less tangible: a closer look at the historical experiences that continue to shape China today.

Standing outside the cave dwelling that once served as Chairman Mao Zedong's residence at the revolutionary site of Yangjialing, Wilson said that he had not expected the Communist Party of China to have grown in strength under such austere conditions.

"Foreigners also need to understand your history. I think it is very important to come here and visit the sites where history unfolded," he said.

Wilson traveled to Yan'an on Wednesday with Lu Kang, vice-minister of the International Department of the CPC Central Committee, after visiting Xi'an, the provincial capital, on Tuesday.

The trip came during Wilson's third posting in China. He took up his current role as ambassador in August last year, more than three decades after first working in the commercial section of the British Embassy in Beijing in the 1990s. He also served as political counselor at the embassy from 2007 to 2010.

"For me, wherever I work, it is very important to understand that country's history in depth, as well as how that country views its own history," Wilson said in fluent Chinese.

"That is why I greatly value this opportunity to visit Shaanxi, Yan'an and Liangjiahe."

Lu said the visit would help the British side gain a more comprehensive, objective and accurate understanding of China and the CPC, while contributing toward greater mutual understanding and the development of China-UK relations.

For Wilson, that process was as much about asking questions and talking with people as it was about visiting historical sites.

At the Yan'an Revolutionary Memorial Hall, he paused before statues depicting international friends and asked about the different roles they played.

See ***Visit,*** *page 2*

BEYOND THE HEARTH, ZONGZI STILL THE HEART OF HOLIDAY

Dragon Boat Festival dumpling delicacy goes from family kitchens to online platforms, supermarkets

By YANG ZEKUN
yangzekun@chinadaily.com.cn

When Lin Kai bites into a *zongzi* during Dragon Boat Festival, he doesn't think about prestige brands, gift boxes or online discounts.

He reminisces about a kitchen in Anhui province, where his grandparents sat by the stove, folded bamboo leaves, and filled them with soaked glutinous rice and pork.

When he was a child, they taught him how to tie each dumpling tight enough to hold together in the pot. The 40-year-old Beijing office worker remembers his first clumsy attempts at making the dumplings. He folded the leaves incorrectly with the rice spilling out, and the *zongzi* often came loose while boiling in the pot. But his grandparents never scolded him.

"Even if a *zongzi* I made looked ugly, it tasted especially good," he said. "The whole family was there, talking and laughing. That was the taste of the festival."

A traditional Chinese delicacy, the *zongzi* is a pyramid-shaped dumpling made of glutinous rice wrapped in bamboo or reed leaves. It is especially loved as a treat during the Dragon Boat Festival.

Lin still prepares *zongzi* every Dragon Boat Festival, but rarely by hand these days. Like many urbanites, he usually buys ready-made ones from the supermarket or e-commerce platforms. Some are classic pork *zongzi*, some come in gift boxes, and others are lighter, healthier versions with less sugar and oil and fewer additives.

See ***Delicacy,*** *page 3*

US, Iran sign MoU remotely to end conflict

By JAN YUMUL in Hong Kong, **CUI HAIPEI** in Dubai, UAE, and **JI HAISHENG** in Beijing

United States President Donald Trump and Iranian President Masoud Pezeshkian have signed a Memorandum of Understanding, which came into immediate effect, to end the war in the Middle East. A formal ceremony is scheduled to take place in Switzerland on Friday.

Iranian and US media showed the two leaders signing and holding up a document finalizing the deal without an in-person ceremony. The provisions of the deal include stopping the war on all fronts, including in Lebanon.

Pakistani Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif wrote in a post on X on Thursday that he was "honoured" to announce that the "historic Islamabad Memorandum of Understanding has been electronically signed today between the United States of America and the Islamic Republic of Iran", which was "also endorsed by me as the mediator".

"Islamabad MoU shall enter into force with immediate effect and as a first step," Sharif said. He added that Iran "will instantly reopen the Strait of Hormuz and the US will immediately lift the naval blockade".

A spokesperson later said that Sharif was postponing his visit to Switzerland for the US-Iran ceremony because the agreement on ending the Middle East war had been signed remotely.



Ships at Bandar Abbas port in Iran wait to set sail through the Strait of Hormuz on Thursday. AMIRHOSSEIN KHORGOOEI / ISNA / AFP

Speaker of the Iranian Parliament Mohammad Bagher Ghalibaf said in a televised interview that Iran has conducted negotiations with the US from a position of strength. "When I speak of negotiations and diplomacy, I mean a diplomacy of strength," Ghalibaf said.

Before signing the document at the Palace of Versailles in Paris, Trump said that it was "not easy".

Trump, who was in France to attend the G7 Summit, told reporters that he did not want to see "economic catastrophe" as he defended his deal with Iran. But he also said that if Iran did not honor the deal, "we would probably go back to bombing them".

According to the 14-point MoU text published by the US and Iranian media, the provisions of the deal include the US undertaking steps to terminate all types of sanctions against Iran within an agreed upon schedule.

The US will also work with regional partners to develop a definitive, mutually agreed plan with at least $300 billion for the reconstruction and economic development of Iran. The mechanism for the implementation of this plan will be finalized as part of a final deal within 60 days.

Pending the final deal, Iran and the US agree to maintain the status quo. Tehran will maintain the current status quo of its nuclear program, and the US will not impose any new sanctions and will not deploy additional forces in the region.

The provisions also stipulate that the final deal will be endorsed by a binding United Nations Security Council resolution.

China welcomed the conclusion of the first phase of the MoU between the US and Iran, saying that it provides favorable conditions for easing regional tensions, while urging Israel and other relevant parties to do more to facilitate the implementation of the deal and the upcoming second phase of negotiations.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Lin Jian made the remarks at a regular press briefing. "China stands ready to continue leveraging its influence and work with the international community to make unremitting efforts for the early realization of lasting peace and security in the Middle East," Lin said.

Rafael Grossi, director general of the International Atomic Energy Agency, also welcomed the deal. "Now it is for us to sit down with our American and Iranian colleagues and start formulating concrete steps that will have to be taken," Grossi was quoted as saying by Reuters.

The Swiss Ministry of Foreign Affairs said that talks between the US and Iran would continue at Switzerland's Buergenstock resort.

See ***Deal,*** *page 2*

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NATION

Visit: Need to understand history highlighted

From page 1

At the site of the Seventh National Congress of the CPC, which was held in 1945, he discussed with an interpreter how best to render the Chinese phrase *tongxin tongde* — *"to be of one heart and one mind" — in English*.

At the China Executive Leadership Academy, Yan'an, Wilson told reporters that officials from China and the UK should have more opportunities to exchange views and learn from one another.

He expressed hope that officials from both countries would take part in more exchange visits, thus broadening their perspectives and improving their work by learning from each other.

At Liangjiahe, where President Xi Jinping spent seven years — from 1969 to 1975 — living and working alongside local villagers, Wilson asked what time people began and ended their working day decades ago and how village life had changed since then.

According to the organizers, Wilson is the first ambassador from a major Western country to visit Liangjiahe since the 20th National Congress of the CPC in 2022.

At the invitation of local villagers, he sat down with them to eat locally grown apples and drink jujube-bud tea.

Asked what message he would share with other foreign diplomats in China after the trip, Wilson said that he would encourage them to travel more widely and see different parts of the country for themselves.

"We should do that in every country, rather than stay in one place," he said.

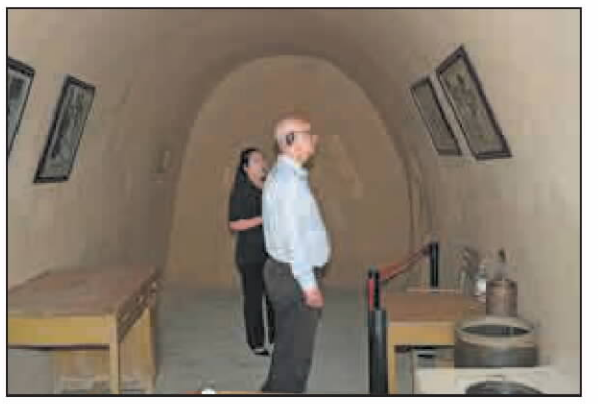
Wilson recalled that when he presented his credentials to Xi in January, the Chinese president encouraged the newly appointed ambassadors to travel widely across the country, gain a full and in-depth understanding of the real and multifaceted China, and actively contribute to deepening friendship and cooperation between China and their respective countries.

Wilson said that learning about a country also meant listening to the personal experiences of both its leaders and the ordinary people.

"I really enjoyed talking to people who live in Liangjiahe, hearing how their lives have changed, and also hearing about what life was like before."

As they walked through the village, Shi Chunyang, who worked with Xi when he lived in Liangjiahe, and then went on to become village Party secretary later, told Wilson that even the asphalt road beneath their feet had not existed in those days.





Top: Peter Wilson, ambassador of United Kingdom to China, selects handmade gardening tools crafted by villagers in Yan'an, Shaanxi province, on Wednesday.
Left: Wilson visits a cave dwelling at the revolutionary site of Yangjialing in Yan'an.
PHOTOS BY SHAO RUI / XINHUA

Online
See more by scanning the code.

> "For me, wherever I work, it is very important to understand that country's history in depth, as well as how that country views its own history."
>
> **Peter Wilson,** ambassador of United Kingdom to China

Before a biogas digester was successfully fired up in 1974, lighting the first biogas lamp on the northern Shaanxi plateau, villagers relied on kerosene lamps for illumination, Shi said.

Those stories resonated with Wilson, who has observed China's broader transformation since first visiting Beijing in 1981.

He last visited Xi'an in 2007. Much of the city he saw on this trip, he said, either had not existed or had yet to be developed at the time.

He was similarly struck by the ecological transformation around Yan'an.

"In the old photographs, almost everything was yellow. Now, everything is green," he said, referring to changes in the once largely barren landscape.

Wilson said understanding how China views the history of the CPC can also offer insights into how the country sees its future and shapes its policies.

Britain and China have different political systems, Wilson noted, but that made understanding rather than assumption all the more important.

For diplomats, Wilson said, gaining an in-depth understanding of their host country was essential both to performing their duties and helping their governments understand that country's perspectives.

More exchanges would not necessarily mean that people of Britain and China would see every issue in the same way, he said, but it would allow both sides to see more for themselves, communicate more openly and better understand their common ground as well as their differences.

As permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, Britain and China both bear international responsibilities, Wilson said, noting that understanding how China views its own history also helps explain how it sees the wider world, he added.

To address global challenges ranging from climate change and international conflicts to the governance of artificial intelligence, countries must understand one another's perspectives and work together to shape their shared future, he said.

In colloquial Chinese, he summed up the task more simply:

"Get things done together."

Pottery-making attracts tourists to Huamao

By **LIU BOQIAN** and **YANG JUN** in Zunyi, Guizhou

PATH TO GLORY

The pottery jars that once filled village kitchens across Guizhou province are no longer everyday necessities. In Huamao village, however, they have become symbols of a rural revival.

The village, located along the route of the Red Army's Long March (1934-36) in Southwest China, was once known as Huangmaotian, a name that reflected its poverty and remoteness. Today, tourists wander its stone pathways, visit craft workshops and sample local specialties, fueling a transformation driven by tourism and traditional industries.

Mu Xiancai, a fourth-generation inheritor of Huamao's pottery making tradition, is one of those at the center of that transformation.

Inside his workshop, a pottery wheel spins steadily as clay takes shape beneath his hands. Within minutes, a bottle-shaped vessel emerges.

"In the 1960s, even the bottles used for Moutai liquor were made in Huamao," Mu said.

Rich in kaolin clay, Huamao has produced pottery for generations. The village's yellow-brown earthenware was once a common sight in homes across the region, used for everything from cooking to food storage. However, as industrial products replaced traditional ceramics, their demand sharply declined.

Before 2014, Mu spent his days making storage jars and earned less than 30,000 yuan ($4,430) a year.

That changed as Huamao began developing rural tourism. Roads were upgraded, environmental improvements were carried out and visitors began arriving.

For Huamao, the revival of traditional crafts has become closely linked with the growth of tourism.

According to village Party secretary Zhu Jiao, Huamao's collective operating income exceeded 1 million yuan in 2025, while annual per capita income surpassed 27,000 yuan.

"I used to make pickle jars. Now I make vases and decorative ornaments," Mu said. "I never imagined this old craft could find new uses."

Today, he also offers pottery-making experiences for tourists. During peak season, his workshop can attract more than 400 visitors a day, generating an annual income of 200,000 to 300,000 yuan.

Among his most distinctive products is a large clay vessel known as a *guzi*, traditionally used to prepare one of the village's signature dishes.

The dish, called *guzi* chicken, is cooked without adding a single drop of water.

As steam rises from boiling water beneath the vessel, it condenses inside the upper chamber and drips onto the chicken, gradually creating a rich broth. The cycle continues until the meat is fully cooked, a process that often takes more than four hours.

The unusual cooking method has turned the dish into a major attraction, drawing visitors from nearby Chongqing and Sichuan province eager to taste the local specialty.

At the Red Home farmhouse restaurant, owner Wang Hao offers the dish to visitors and has witnessed the village's changes firsthand.

His father opened the village's first farmhouse restaurant years ago on a site once traversed by the Red Army during the Long March, naming it "Red Home."

When Wang returned to Huamao in 2017, he expanded the business by building a camping site, updating the menu and working with travel agencies to develop tourism routes.

"Our record was serving more than 100 tables during a single lunch service," Wang said. "Annual revenue has grown from just over 100,000 yuan in 2014 to nearly 1 million yuan in 2025."

The business now provides jobs for more than 10 local residents.

Traditional crafts are finding new markets elsewhere in the village as well.

In a small handmade paper workshop, founder Zhang Shengdi carefully presses freshly picked flowers and leaves onto wet mulberry paper, creating decorative artworks inspired by local scenery.

Plum blossoms, orchids, chrysanthemums and scenes from Huamao's countryside all appear in her designs.

"The challenge isn't making the paper," Zhang said. "The challenge is making people want to buy it, use it and appreciate it today."

Her workshop has expanded beyond traditional paper products to include bookmarks, notebooks and decorative lamps, each featuring classical Chinese quotations or poetry.

"This handmade notebook sells for more than 50 yuan and is especially popular," she said.

Environmental improvements have also accompanied economic growth. More than 8,800 trees have been planted, 8.8 kilometers of waterways restored and sewage treatment coverage extended to all concentrated residential areas. Household waste is now fully collected and treated.

On a summer afternoon, visitors strolling through Huamao encounter rice paddies, streams and white-walled houses scattered beneath green hills. The aroma of home-cooked meals drifts through narrow lanes as tourists move between workshops, restaurants and guesthouses. The pottery jars that once filled village kitchens now hold new value.

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E-commerce giants race to power "618"

Shopping platforms reshape mid-year sales festival with AI-driven tools

By **CHENG YU**
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Artificial intelligence took center stage this year during China's annual 618 shopping festival on Thursday, as the country's e-commerce giants raced to turn chatbots, digital hosts and AI shopping agents into the next gateway to billions of dollars in consumer spending.

From JD's digital livestream hosts to Alibaba's AI shopping assistant and ByteDance's AI-powered recommendation tools, this year's shopping extravaganza marked the deepest integration of AI into China's online retail ecosystem.

Within the first four hours of the promotion, the number of merchants using JD's JoyAI model and its AI livestreaming host, JoyStreamer, increased sixfold from a year earlier. Those AI-powered streams generated more than 70 million yuan ($10.3 million) in sales.

Cao Peng, chairman of JD's technology committee, said: "This year's 618 shopping festival was JD's first to fully integrate AI across all scenarios and throughout the entire value chain."

"For businesses, AI is reshaping the economics of commerce by lowering costs and boosting efficiency. For consumers, it is fundamentally transforming the shopping experience," he said.

Notably, Alibaba's Qwen AI application has been connected to the full product catalog of Taobao, allowing users to compare products, calculate discounts and complete purchases through conversational prompts.

Xu Xiao, a 27-year-old bank employee from Beijing, said she uses AI-powered virtual try-on tools when considering clothes in unfamiliar colors or styles. "It helps me avoid making bad purchases and improves the chances that I'll be satisfied with what I buy."

The e-commerce unit of ByteDance's Douyin has also made large-scale computing resources available to merchants and rolled out AI customer service tools aimed at reducing labor costs. Short-video platform Kuaishou has deployed AI diagnostic systems that help sellers identify operational problems and optimize marketing strategies in real time.

The shift is also changing how platforms understand consumer intent.

Liu Bangzheng, a senior executive at Alibaba's advertising unit Alimama, said: "AI can move beyond understanding keywords and begin understanding intent."

Liu cited an example in which AI discovered unexpected consumer groups for certain products. Smart lock manufacturers, which usually focus on homeowners, discovered potential demand among young women with long fingernails who preferred keyless entry, Liu said.

According to Huatai Securities, AI has evolved from a supporting tool into critical operating infrastructure, helping merchants manage marketing, customer service, livestreaming and advertising in China.

A white paper jointly released by Alibaba's Taobao and Tmall Group and industry partners said that roughly 70 percent of merchants operating on Alibaba platforms are already using AI tools to support business decisions.

Hong Yong, an associate research fellow at the Chinese Academy of International Trade and Economic Cooperation under the Ministry of Commerce, said that over the longer term, AI could shift the competitive dynamics of e-commerce from a battle for traffic to one centered on consumer decision-making.

"Future growth will hinge on whether AI recommendations genuinely serve users rather than becoming another advertising channel, whether small merchants can afford advanced AI tools, and whether platforms can address concerns around pricing transparency, privacy protection and accountability," he said.

However, he also cautioned that many AI services still struggle with accuracy and reliability. Some consumers reported receiving irrelevant recommendations, while merchants say AI-generated business reports often require extensive human verification.



At a public distribution center in Lianyungang, Jiangsu province, staff sort and dispatch packages on Thursday as the 618 shopping festival wraps up. GENG YUHE / FOR CHINA DAILY

Deal: Some of Iran's main demands find mention

From page 1

Dina Yulianti Sulaeman, director of the Indonesia Center for Middle East Studies, told China Daily that Iran is now "better off" and the MoU was not a triumph for the US, but the recognition of the situation.

Sulaeman noted that the targets that had been discussed by Washington and Tel Aviv from the start of the war were regime change in Tehran, destruction of Iran's nuclear program, curbing its ballistic missile program and reducing its regional militant network.

"The present MoU, however, does not appear to have (met) any of these goals. Instead, Iran keeps its political system, is acknowledged as a legitimate negotiating partner, has access to frozen assets, has sanctions relief and doesn't have to stop all of its missile programs," said Sulaeman.

"Indeed, some of Iran's main demands, including an end to the war and the normalization of trade and shipping routes, are in the agreement. Thus I believe this MoU is not a triumph of American diplomacy but a recognition of the situation," she added.

Meanwhile, Reuters reported, citing a senior Israeli official close to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, that Israel is "conducting stubborn negotiations" with the US on continued deployment of troops in southern Lebanon.

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COVER





From left: A *zongzi* is being filled with glutinous rice at a community in Rongcheng, Shandong province, on June 13. LIN HAIZHEN / FOR CHINA DAILY A worker pushes a cart of *zongzi* into a sterilizer at a food factory in Zhaoqing, Guangdong province, on June 10. CHEN JIMIN / CHINA NEWS SERVICE A worker collects air-dried *zongzi* at a factory in Congjiang, Guizhou province, on June 11. WU DEJUN / FOR CHINA DAILY

Delicacy: Appeal remains in emotional value

From page 1

This shift from making to purchasing *zongzi* has become one of the most notable changes of today's Dragon Boat Festival. Once a seasonal food made at home with little packaging or a price premium, the *zongzi* has moved from the family kitchen to supermarket shelves, livestreaming rooms and social media feeds. Nonetheless, it remains a symbol of the festival.

According to the 2025 China Zongzi Industry Consumption and Brand White Paper released by China Data Technology, China's *zongzi* market was expected to reach 11 billion yuan ($1.52 billion) in 2025, with year-on-year growth of about 7 percent.

The country's *zongzi* output rose from 450,000 metric tons in 2021 to 560,000 in 2024.

The white paper said the growth has been driven by the revival of traditional culture, the expansion of holiday gifting and the integration of *zongzi* with tourism and cultural experiences. It also reflected a broader shift in Chinese food consumption from simply "eating enough" to "eating better", as consumers placed more emphasis on quality, nutrition, convenience and emotional value.

For older generations, however, *zongzi* is still closely tied to home cooking and family memories.

Chen Guiying, 58, who grew up in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, said her family would begin preparing for the festival about a week in advance. Fresh bamboo or reed leaves were washed and soaked. Glutinous rice was left overnight until the grains became full and soft. The fillings were simple — red dates, red bean paste, pork, chestnuts, or salted egg yolk.

"There were no fancy gift boxes or unusual flavors," Chen said. "Every family made *zongzi* at home. Neighbors also gave them to one another. The fragrance of leaves and rice would fill the courtyard," Chen said.

In those days, *zongzi* was not a branded product. It was plain, filling food and a family activity. Children learned the skill from elders. Relatives shared the finished dumplings, and neighbors exchanged sweet and savory versions as a gesture of goodwill. The value of a *zongzi* came from the time and care put into it, not from the packaging.

But urbanization, busy work schedules and smaller households have gradually changed the pastime. Many young people no longer have the time or skills to wash leaves, soak rice, prepare fillings and boil *zongzi*.

For Lin, buying the specialty is a pragmatic choice. He and his wife, both fond of southern-style savory *zongzi*, usually prepare several varieties before the holiday.

"It is convenient and saves a lot of effort," he said. "The products on the market are also quite good now. But honestly, no matter how good they taste, they still seem a little different from the ones my grandparents made. What is missing is the warmth of making them together."

A wide range of the dumplings are commercially available.

Affordable loose *zongzi* and bagged products meet daily household needs. Midrange gift boxes have become a common choice for visiting relatives and friends. High-end *zongzi*, made with ingredients such as abalone, sea urchin, scallops, black truffle or high-quality pork, are intended as business gifts and for consumers seeking a more upmarket culinary experience.

Fancier dumplings have also entered the market, with gift boxes becoming an important part of corporate gift-giving and family consumption, the report said. It also noted that more than 5,600 businesses in China had names or product focuses related to *zongzi* as of May. About 40 percent are located in the southeastern coastal region.



Students and community workers present a crate of *zongzi* they have just wrapped in Qinhuangdao, Hebei province, on June 10. CAO JIANXIONG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Commercial offerings

In supermarkets, the competition is visible.

Retail giant Metro launched a Dragon Boat Festival campaign last month offering about 140 *zongzi* products, with nearly 50 of them new this year. They range from loose and bagged *zongzi* to paper-bag souvenirs and creative gift boxes. Prices reach up to several hundred yuan. The retailer is also offering *zongzi*-making activities inspired by intangible cultural heritage in stores nationwide.

Some products combine traditional symbols with novelty. One popular gift box features *zongzi* shaped like a dragon boat with seven whole salted egg yolks inside.

In Jiaxing, Zhejiang province, an area known for its *zongzi* culture, traditional producers are also catering to new demands. At one established *zongzi* company in Youchegang town, Xiuzhou district, production began rising in March to prepare for the holiday rush.

"Every year before the festival is our busiest time," said Qiu Shaowei, the company's marketing director. The company can produce 1.5 million *zongzi* a day and ships orders nationwide.

This year, it invested nearly 10 million yuan to upgrade its production lines, using digital and intelligent equipment to improve efficiency and food safety. It also launched kale and oat *zongzi*, low-sugar, soft-centered corn *zongzi* and a "one soup, one *zongzi*" series that pairs broths with the dumplings.

Health has become a major direction for product innovation. The white paper said low-sugar, low-fat and additive-free *zongzi* were expected to become mainstream products. Healthy *zongzi* products could account for more than 40 percent of the market by 2030, it added.





From top: A host wraps a *zongzi* during a livestream session on June 10. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY
Crates of *zongzi* are specially decorated and promoted at a shop in Shaoxing, Zhejiang province, on June 13. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Breaking with tradition

Young consumers are another force reshaping sales of the dumpling. Consumers born in the 1990s and 2000s have become important buyers of domestic brands and are helping drive innovation in traditional cultural products, said the white paper. Those age 26 to 35 are especially willing to try new *zongzi* flavors, with sales of such flavors during special shopping periods rising sharply.

That willingness to experiment has given rise to many internet-famous *zongzi*.

Some dumplings stretch the boundaries of fillings with flavors including spicy snacks, river snail rice noodle, and stinky mandarin fish.

Other *zongzi* borrow from tea drinks and desserts, featuring jasmine Longjing tea, rose black tea, durian ice, mango pomelo sago and chocolate hazelnut flavors. Low-GI (glycemic index) grains such as quinoa, purple rice and black rice have also been introduced to appeal to health-conscious consumers.

These new products may not replace classic red date, pork or salted egg yolk ones, but they help bring the traditional festival food into new conversations, especially on social media.

Online channels have also changed how *zongzi* is sold.

Consumers now buy gift boxes of the dumplings through supermarkets, e-commerce platforms, online grocery services, and livestreaming platforms.

On Douyin and Kuaishou, livestreaming hosts cut open *zongzi* on camera, show the fillings, explain the texture and offer discounts. On Xiaohongshu and Weibo, food bloggers compare flavors and packaging, while users share holiday shopping lists and regional recommendations.

Sweet or savory?

These online conversations have also kept alive one of the Dragon Boat Festival's most playful annual debates: should *zongzi* be sweet or savory?

For many northerners, a proper *zongzi* is often simple and sweet — filled with red dates or bean paste, dipped in sugar or honey, and eaten for the fragrance of glutinous rice. For many southerners, especially in places such as Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Guangdong provinces, *zongzi* should be rich enough to serve as a meal, with pork, salted egg yolk, mushrooms, ham or seafood inside.

Every year, as the festival approaches, the online argument returns with good-natured banter.

Northerners ask why anyone would put meat in a "rice dumpling". Southerners reply that red dates alone hardly count as a filling. Then someone from another region joins in arguing the superiority of spicy meat, gray-water (alkaline-water-soaked) or flower *zongzi*, reminding everyone that the "taste map" is never as simple as "North versus South".

Logistics companies and online retailers have made it easier for northern consumers to order southern pork *zongzi*, and for southern shoppers to buy red date or bean paste versions. Many families now enjoy both.

Some producers have built *zongzi* museums, cultural displays and offer factory tours to provide visitors with intangible cultural heritage experiences.

Traditional patterns, illustrations and cultural themes used in gift box designs are highlighted in short videos where the wrapping process and culinary skills are depicted.

Yet for many people, the appeal of *zongzi* remains in the emotions and memories the treat evokes.

For Lin, *zongzi* carries recollections of childhood, his hometown and family reunions. His parents worked away from home when he was young, and he lived with his grandparents. Some years, his parents would return for the Dragon Boat Festival for two or three days before returning to work.

"At that time, I felt happy that everyone was together," Lin said. "Only after growing up did I understand how precious those short reunions were."

Now, when he chooses *zongzi* for his family or sends gift boxes to friends and colleagues, he looks at brand reputation, the ingredients and health labels. He appreciates the convenience and variety of today's market.

But one bite still takes him back to the old kitchen, the bamboo leaves and the family gathered around the stove.

For Chen, too, the meaning of *zongzi* has not disappeared simply because many people now buy it instead of making it.

"The form has changed," she said. "But as long as people still eat *zongzi* at festival time and think of home, the tradition is still there."

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WORLD

China calls for fairer ocean governance during UN meeting

By **MINLU ZHANG**
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China on Wednesday called for stronger multilateral cooperation and a fairer global ocean governance system at a United Nations meeting on the law of the sea.

"The ocean is the common home of humanity and an important field of global governance," Sun Lei, China's deputy permanent representative to the UN, said in a general statement at the 36th Meeting of States Parties to the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea.

The meeting, held from Monday through Friday, reviews issues related to the implementation of the 1982 UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the main international legal framework governing maritime rights, resource use and ocean affairs.

This year's meeting comes after the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction entered into force on Jan 17. The agreement focuses on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biodiversity in areas beyond national jurisdiction.

Sun said that against the backdrop of a changing international situation, China "stands ready to work with all parties to uphold the authority of the UN" and "revitalize and strengthen the UN".

This year marks the 30th anniversary of China becoming a state party to the Convention, he said, adding that China has "faithfully fulfilled" its obligations and made important contributions to improving global ocean governance.

"China has consistently supported the peaceful settlement of maritime disputes through means voluntarily chosen by the parties concerned, especially negotiation and consultation," Sun said. He added that China has sent 48 escort task forces to the Gulf of Aden and waters off Somalia to help maintain maritime peace and order.

Turning to the South China Sea, Sun responded to remarks by some countries that raised the so-called South China Sea arbitration during the meeting. He said the gathering was not the appropriate venue to discuss the South China Sea issue.

"The so-called South China Sea arbitration violated the principle of state consent," he said, adding that China "neither accepts nor recognizes" the ruling.

"The South China Sea situation is generally stable," Sun said, urging relevant countries to "stop hyping up the issue in multilateral settings and return to resolving disputes through bilateral consultation".

Sun said China attaches great importance to "the conservation and rational use of marine resources". He noted that China has designated 150,000 square kilometers of marine ecological conservation red lines and established 353 marine ecological protected areas.

China has joined the Agreement on Port State Measures, adopted "zero tolerance" toward illegal fishing, carried out voluntary fishing moratoriums on the high seas, and constructively participated in the establishment and operation of high seas protected areas, he said.

Sun also highlighted China's support for developing countries in maritime capacity building. China has provided marine disaster prevention and mitigation warning services to more than 130 countries and trained more than 100,000 marine professionals for over 50 developing countries, he said.

Sun said all parties should "practice multilateralism and defend international fairness and justice", uphold the international order based on international law, and oppose unilateralism and hegemonic acts.

He also warned against actions that "disregard international rules" and "unauthorized development of international seabed resources", saying such moves would undermine the common heritage of humanity.

Sun said "conservation" and "sustainable use" are two inseparable aspects of global ocean governance. The international community should protect the marine environment while promoting the orderly development of marine resources to support food security, energy security and critical mineral supply chains, he said.

On the Agreement on Marine Biological Diversity of Areas beyond National Jurisdiction, Sun said its implementation "concerns the overall interests of the international community" and requires a secretariat matching the agreement's importance and future development.

China has nominated Xiamen in Fujian province to host the secretariat, he said, calling the city "an ideal location" given its maritime foundation, developed blue economy and extensive maritime cooperation.

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Digital refuge



Ahmed Matar, 11, participates in a psychological support session using a virtual reality headset in a tent operated by a medical technology team in the Al-Zawaida area in the central Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. Israeli operations in the Gaza Strip have killed 1,005 Palestinians since a ceasefire was reached between Israel and Hamas last October, the Gaza Health Ministry said on Wednesday. ABDEL KAREEM HANA / AP

China's action on global governance draws praise

Experts welcome Beijing's latest white paper as commitment to a fairer future

By **YANG HAN** in Hong Kong,
YANG WANLI in Bangkok
and **XIN XIN** in Sydney

China's latest white paper on global governance shows its commitment to multilateralism and to building a more just, equitable and inclusive global governance system, experts say.

China has again sent the world a clear signal that it will uphold multilateralism, unite forces, and pursue a fair future, said Bhokin Bhalakula, former president of the National Assembly of Thailand.

He noted that the world is experiencing unprecedented polarization, and it is ordinary civilians who suffer most in wars and conflicts. Bhokin argued that subordinating the interests of other nations to those of a single state will not command respect.

"This is also what the majority of international community is pursuing to build a more just and equitable global governance system," he said. "People don't want conflicts, and it's the duty of mankind to hold generosity and take care of others, live together, promote peace and development together."

On Wednesday, China released a white paper titled "More Just and Equitable Global Governance: China's Principles, Proposals, and Actions".

It offers a comprehensive explanation of China's ideas and efforts to promote global governance and foster a broader consensus within the international community, ensuring more effective responses to global challenges and building a more just and equitable global governance system.

The Global Governance Initiative was first proposed by President Xi Jinping in 2025. Since then, it has been endorsed by nearly 160 countries and international organizations, receiving extensive and positive responses from the international community.

"The paper raises important themes, including the role of the United Nations, multilateralism, sovereign equality, development, and greater participation by the Global South in international decision-making," said Frank Alafaci, president of the Australian Business Summit Council Inc.

Respectful dialogue

At a time of significant geopolitical, economic, and social uncertainty, it is important that nations continue to engage in respectful dialogue and seek practical pathways for cooperation, said Alafaci, noting that business and people-to-people links remain valuable bridges between nations.

"We believe that global challenges, including economic fragmentation, climate change, food security, technology governance, and development inequality, require cooperative and inclusive responses," said Alafaci.

The GGI represents a timely and comprehensive contribution to strengthening international multilateralism, said Kin Phea, director-general of the International Relations Institute of Cambodia at the Royal Academy of Cambodia.

"It emphasizes safeguarding the United Nations-centered international system, promoting extensive consultation, joint contribution, and shared benefits, and ensuring that all countries, regardless of size or power, have an equal voice in global affairs," said Phea.

Instead of replacing existing global governance mechanisms, the GGI supports reform and boosts Global South participation while contributing ideas across various sectors of development and peacebuilding, Phea said.

He noted that the white paper's call to uphold multilateralism and strengthen the United Nations-centered international system is particularly relevant to global challenges.

"The white paper stresses that global affairs should be discussed by all countries, governance systems should be built by all, and the benefits of development should be shared by all," said Phea.

Bhokin, the former president of the National Assembly of Thailand, said the GGI aligns with the growing trend toward greater democracy in international relations and offers a clear and feasible roadmap for improving global governance.

"This is consistent with the concept previously proposed by the Chinese leader of building a community with 'a shared future for humanity'. Both affirm the rights and interests of all countries in international affairs and resonate with the global yearning for peaceful development," he said.

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Briefly

FRANCE

No final communique issued at G7 summit

The G7 summit, chaired by France, concluded on Wednesday in Evian-les-Bains without issuing a final communique. This marks the second consecutive year, following the G7 summit under Canadian chairmanship in 2025, that the group of seven Western powers has failed to adopt a final communique. Organizers had already abandoned the idea of a final communique during the preparatory phase, opting instead to publish thematic documents to avoid highlighting the differences between the US and its allies, Japanese news agency Kyodo reported, citing diplomatic sources.

UNITED STATES

Gemini co-lead to join IPO-bound OpenAI

Noam Shazeer, a vice-president of engineering at Google and co-lead of its Gemini artificial intelligence models, said on Wednesday that he will leave the company to join IPO-bound ChatGPT maker OpenAI. Shazeer's move comes as leading AI firms compete for talent while racing to develop advanced models. The surprise departure comes less than two years after Google reportedly paid $2.7 billion to bring Shazeer back to the company along with a team of his researchers. The timing of Shazeer's departure from Google was not immediately clear. "I'm incredibly proud of the amazing team at Google and everything we've built together," Shazeer said on X, adding that he was "excited" to join OpenAI.

AGENCIES—XINHUA

What we call a summer glow may be lasting damage

By **YANG GAO** in Toronto
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A tan may look healthy, but to dermatologists it tells a different story — one of DNA damage that can lead to skin cancer decades later.

"Skin cancer is one of the most preventable cancers and yet one of the fastest rising," said Ivan Litvinov, an associate professor of dermatology at McGill University in Montreal.

According to Melanoma Canada, an estimated 11,300 Canadians were newly diagnosed with melanoma in 2024, a 17 percent increase from the previous year.

UV exposure remains the main driver of melanoma and several other forms of skin cancer. Yet many people continue to seek tans, often viewing them as a sign of health or attractiveness.

"There is no safe tan, unfortunately, just as there is no safe cigarette," Litvinov told China Daily.

According to the World Health Organization's International Agency for Research on Cancer, ultraviolet radiation and artificial tanning devices are classified as Group 1 carcinogens, the same category as tobacco and asbestos.

"Every tan is the skin's distress signal, visible evidence of DNA damage," Litvinov said.

The continued rise in melanoma reflects a combination of historical, cultural and environmental factors, he said.

"Melanoma has a 'long memory'," Litvinov said. "The melanomas being diagnosed today are, in many cases, the biological receipts for sunburns that happened in the 1980s and 1990s," he said.

While awareness of UV risks is far greater than it was a generation ago, knowledge alone often fails to change behavior.

"Knowledge alone has never cured an epidemic," Litvinov said. "If awareness were enough, nobody would smoke, nobody would overeat, and nobody would tan."

He said many people understand the long-term risks but continue tanning because the perceived benefits are immediate.

"Skin cancer is viewed as a distant threat; the perceived rewards of tanning are immediate and visible," he said.

Litvinov said the appeal of tanning remains deeply embedded in Western culture, where bronzed skin is often associated with leisure, fitness and social status.

"A tan is not a sign of health — it is a scar you can see," Litvinov said.

He said research shows that many adolescents and young adults feel more attractive, healthier and more confident when tanned.

"For a 16-year-old, a tan is not about cancer risk in 30 years — it is about how they feel at the beach this weekend," he said.

Social media may be reinforcing those attitudes, particularly among young people. Litvinov said image-focused platforms continue to promote appearance ideals in which tanned skin is portrayed positively.

His research has found troubling trends among Canadian youth. More than 40 percent reported at least one sunburn within a 12-month period, and protective behaviors tend to decline after age 14.

"What worries me most is the developmental trajectory," he said.

The challenge, he added, is that adolescence is often when tanning habits become established.

"Sometimes I say to myself that we are trying to fight evolution with pamphlets," he said.

Litvinov has also studied what he calls the "sunscreen paradox" — the tendency for people to stay outdoors longer because they feel protected after applying sunscreen.

"Sunscreen saves lives — but only if used correctly, and only if it is not treated as a license to bake," he said.

According to Litvinov, sunscreen can reduce the immediate warning signs of overexposure, particularly sunburn, leading some people to spend more time in the sun than they otherwise would.

Many people also misunderstand what sunscreen can and cannot do.

"It is important to address myths because — myths kill," Litvinov said.

Among the most common misconceptions, he said, are the beliefs that sunscreen alone provides complete protection, that cloudy days are safe from UV radiation, or that a "base tan" offers meaningful protection.

"There is no such thing as a safe tan," he said.

Instead of relying solely on sunscreen, Litvinov advocates a layered approach that includes seeking shade, wearing protective clothing and hats, using UV-blocking sunglasses and avoiding intentional tanning.

"The most attractive skin is healthy skin, not damaged skin," he said.

He believes lasting progress will require more than individual behavior change.

"The most powerful shift is cultural," Litvinov said.

Pointing to Australia's long-running SunSmart campaign, he noted that large-scale public health efforts have helped reduce melanoma rates among younger generations.

"If Australia can turn the tide, so can Canada," he said.

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PEOPLE



Song brocade with various traditional patterns designed by Qian Xiaoping, a national-level inheritor of Song brocade weaving techniques. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

The ageless architect of ancient silk

Master craftswoman uses precise technological innovation to resurrect and preserve China's endangered, centuries-old Song brocade tradition, **Deng Zhangyu** reports in Suzhou, Jiangsu.

At 87, Qian Xiaoping shows no signs of slowing down. One moment, the veteran craftswoman is leaning over a worktable, discussing fabric textures and structural details with young apprentices as they develop trendy, gold-ingot-shaped handbags from traditional Song brocade at her studio in the Suzhou Silk Museum in Suzhou, Jiangsu province. The next, she is focused on her phone, holding remote meetings with factories to refine weaving patterns and optimize production processes.

Despite her age and a recent leg injury, Qian remains energetic, sharp-minded, and devoted to reviving and reinventing Song brocade, one of China's most treasured forms of intangible cultural heritage.

A national-level inheritor of Song brocade weaving techniques, Qian has spent more than seven decades rescuing, innovating and promoting the elegant silk craft. More than a craftswoman, she sees herself as part scientist, part inventor and part artist — someone determined to reshape the fate of a fading tradition through technological research and creative vision.

Dating back to the Song Dynasty (960-1279), Song brocade embodies the subtle, refined aesthetics prized by ancient Chinese literati. Unlike the lavish Yun brocade reserved for royalty, Song brocade is known for its soft texture, understated sheen and delicate patterns. Its quiet elegance made it a favorite among scholars and officials, who used it to mount treasured calligraphy and paintings and, at times, to make garments for the elite.

Qian's love for Song brocade began in childhood. Her mother and grandmother both cherished silk garments, and she too became captivated by the fabric's softness and luster. In 1954, at just 15, she was admitted to the silk-weaving program at Xushuguan Sericulture School. After graduation, she joined the Suzhou Silk Research Institute.

A turning point came in 1981. As foreign museums showcased Chinese silk and Suzhou's traditional looms gave way to imported machinery, Qian sensed that centuries-old weaving traditions were in danger of disappearing. Driven by that concern, she conceived an ambitious idea: establishing China's first silk museum in Suzhou.

"China, the land of silk, should have a silk museum! If we don't protect it ourselves, who will remember thousands of years of silk civilization?" she wonders.

She spent years raising funds and rallying support. After a decade of relentless effort, the Suzhou Silk Museum — a condensed chronicle of China's silk civilization — finally opened its doors. During preparations for the museum, Qian encountered numerous fragments of Song brocade, sparking a deeper fascination with the craft and setting her on a new path of research.

Reviving a dying craft

The year 1998 marked another turning point. As mechanization swept through the industry, the last professional Song brocade factory shut down. Living directly across from the factory, Qian was confronted with a painful question: Would this centuries-old craft disappear forever?

Driven by a profound sense of responsibility, she resolved to bring it back. The task was daunting. Weaving a complete piece of Song brocade is a highly complex process requiring thousands of warp and weft threads to interlock with absolute precision.

"Every procedure, including pattern design, artistic drawing, and weaving, is like coding that leaves no room for error," she explains.

The biggest obstacle was the absence of intact samples. By chance, she found a small fragment with a rarely seen pattern in a local antique shop. Recognizing the importance of her mission, the shop owner lent her the fragile relic.

Finding the right antique loom exclusively used for Song brocade proved equally difficult. Although the silk museum housed many traditional looms, none could produce authentic Song brocade. While they appeared similar externally, their internal structures were entirely different. Qian had to redesign the loom from scratch while searching for workshops willing to assist.

Inspired by her determination, a local silk enterprise offered free workshop space, equipment and skilled workers. After years of experimentation and countless technical breakthroughs, Qian finally succeeded in reviving Song brocade.

She later returned to the antique shop with two pieces: the original worn fragment and a brand-new, perfectly restored piece. The shop owner was astonished — the last surviving seed of Song brocade had bloomed once again.

After restoring the core weaving technique, Qian turned her attention to reproducing ancient Song brocade treasures held in major museums across China. Her most challenging project began in 2009: re-creating *Western Paradise*, a priceless Song brocade scroll preserved by the Palace Museum in Beijing.

The scroll, *Western Paradise*, depicts 278 lifelike figures, each with distinct expressions, and stands more than three meters tall. The artwork boasts gorgeous colors and intricate patterns.

Qian never had access to the original. Working solely from photographs, she immersed herself in research, producing stacks of hand-drawn sketches and technical drafts. After six years of painstaking work, she completed the restoration, filling another important gap in the preservation of China's ancient silk heritage.

Qian likens restoring and designing Song brocade to constructing a building, describing herself as "an architect in the field of silk".

"I first determine the original style," she says. "Then I develop the pattern, create sketches, calculate the silk structures, materials and techniques required, and finally hand over a thick stack of design blueprints to skilled craftsmen."

Beyond the loom

Qian's expertise in textile structures also led her far beyond traditional craftsmanship.

At age 20, she was invited to collaborate with a hospital in Shanghai on the development of artificial blood vessels. To achieve the required fiber structures, she spent evenings and weekends researching and refining designs. Eventually, using silk as the primary material, she "wove" China's very own artificial blood vessel.

The project pushed her to study textile engineering, materials science and structural mechanics. She compared the vessel wall to a thatched roof — capable of keeping rain out while still allowing air to pass through. In 1977, the second generation of textile artificial blood vessels successfully passed clinical trials, helping save countless lives.

The experience transformed her understanding of silk. It made her realize that silk is not only for beautiful clothing, it is also a soft technology capable of carrying life itself.

While remaining committed to preserving traditional techniques, Qian believes Song brocade must evolve to remain relevant. "Inheritance never means rigid conservatism," she says. "If ancient craftsmanship never changes, young people will eventually turn away from it."

Her studio reflects that philosophy. She has recreated iconic Chinese landscapes such as West Lake's Curved Yard and Lotus Pool onto delicate Song brocade fabrics, bridging traditional craft and modern aesthetics. She also developed the double-sided color-changing gauze brocade weaving technique, integrating the finest craftsmanship of classic Song brocade and other silk-weaving skills.

Qian takes great pride in one innovation in particular: collaborating with the European Art Union to reproduce Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani's oil paintings using Song brocade as the medium. With her unique design skills, the women in the master painter's canvases acquire a three-dimensional texture of silk light, shadow, and color.

"Song brocade has a rich palette and distinct layers, giving these oil paintings a relief-like feel," Qian says. So far, she has reproduced six portraits.

Such works require extraordinary dedication. Traditional Song brocade production typically demands two weavers operating a loom together, producing only a few centimeters each day. A single Song brocade interpretation of an oil painting can take an entire year to complete.

Yet, Qian considers the effort worthwhile. She hopes audiences beyond China can appreciate Song brocade through a visual language they already understand.

"Silk is China's unique treasure that belongs to the world," Qian says.

At 87, she no longer pursues fame or profit. Her remaining ambition is to preserve authentic Song brocade craftsmanship, expand cross-cultural collaborations, and allow people around the world to experience the beauty of Chinese intangible cultural heritage directly through exquisite silk creations.

Alongside her preservation work, Qian has devoted herself to training the next generation. She has published three professional books on Song brocade and regularly mentors young artisans through apprenticeships and national training programs, sharing both her weaving expertise and design philosophy.

Today, many of Suzhou's leading Song brocade designers once studied under her. Among them is Shi Yi, a 30-year-old designer who is reimagining Song brocade for younger consumers through contemporary products and fashion-forward designs. She now operates stores in both Shanghai and Suzhou, where her creations have gained a strong following among young customers.

"In my eyes, Qian is someone who gives her all to everything she does. If she sets her mind to something, she pursues it to the highest standard possible. For us, the new generation of Song brocade artisans, she is a spiritual beacon," Shi says.

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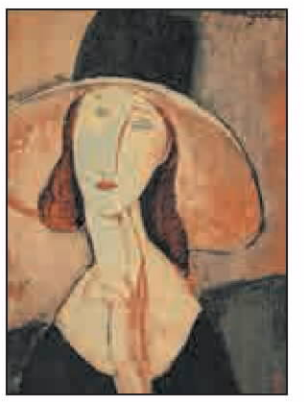
Above: Qian guides a craftswoman in weaving Song brocade in Suzhou, Jiangsu province, which is a highly complex process requiring thousands of warp and weft threads to interlock with absolute precision. **Below middle:** A Song brocade scroll reproducing *Western Paradise*, and housed at the Suzhou Silk Museum, attracts visitors with its presence in the Palace Museum collection.

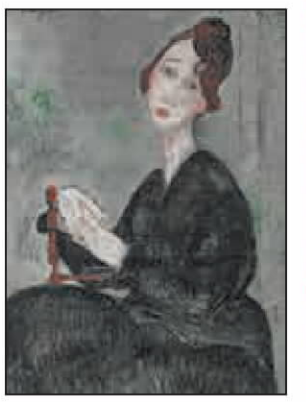


> "Inheritance never means rigid conservatism. If ancient craftsmanship never changes, young people will eventually turn away from it."
>
> **Qian Xiaoping,** inheritor of Song brocade weaving techniques











Far right from top: Song brocade with different traditional patterns designed by Qian. **From Right:** Qian's replicas of Italian artist Amedeo Modigliani's oil paintings *Portrait of Jeanne Hebuterne in a Large Hat* and *Seated Woman*, using Song brocade as the medium.

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READ





Left: A retired worker undergoes a health check at a traditional Chinese medicine clinic for occupational hazards in Tianjin in September last year. The clinic has adopted an artificial intelligence system that helps medical workers identify abnormalities and make diagnoses. **Center:** Wang Lei, chairwoman of Tianjin Pharmaceutical Da Ren Tang Group, tries a TCM diagnostic analyzer during the Tianjin 2026 Global Business Leaders Roundtable in March. **Right:** An elderly woman tries a TCM health analyzer during the World Intelligence Expo in Tianjin on May 31. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

AI used to enhance bespoke TCM treatments

Digital technologies being integrated with ancient medicinal techniques

By YAN DONGJIE in Tianjin
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When the Tianjin 2026 Global Business Leaders Roundtable drew to a close in March, Hussain Dawood did not head for the exit. Instead, the prominent Pakistani industrialist and chairman of Engro Corporation waited behind at the venue, hoping to secure a private consultation with attending experts of traditional Chinese medicine.

His wife suffers from chronic high blood pressure and has undergone various treatments in Pakistan with limited effect. For Dawood, whose family has long trusted Eastern therapeutic philosophies, the trip to Tianjin presented a rare window to access personalized treatment from Da Ren Tang, a century-old Chinese pharmaceutical brand.

"TCM analyzes the root cause of a patient's condition to fundamentally resolve issues, unlike Western medicine or other therapies that merely focus on alleviating symptoms," Dawood said.

"The Western medical tradition is to prescribe the same medication for the same ailment, thus providing uniform treatment," he added.

Wang Lei, chairwoman of Tianjin Pharmaceutical Da Ren Tang Group, said the wisdom of TCM lies in its personalized approach. Even for the most common cold, TCM recognizes that some people catch it due to "heat" while others due to "cold". When TCM spreads to different countries, it must also adapt to the local climate and physical characteristics for effective diagnosis and treatment, Wang said.

That tension between age-old customization and the demands of global scale is driving a massive technological overhaul within China's TCM sector. At the Tianjin summit, which drew nearly 300 political, business and academic delegates, the modernization of TCM emerged as a highly anticipated focal point.

"The core of TCM modernization lies in the deep integration of technological and industrial innovation. We are actively participating in new projects to achieve this goal," Wang said.

The flagship initiative driving this shift is the Tianjin Modern TCM New Quality Productive Forces Innovation Project. Proposed and implemented by a team under Zhang Boli, an academician of the Chinese Academy of Engineering and a renowned TCM specialist, the project involves a total investment of 180 million yuan ($24.8 million) aimed at digitizing production.



Wang Lei (front left) talks with Hussain Dawood (right) during the Tianjin 2026 Global Business Leaders Roundtable in March. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"This project utilizes AI to achieve full traceability and monitoring throughout the production process," said Zhang. For instance, during the decoction of TCM herbs, which requires a gentle boiling state, traditional pharmacists can only estimate the temperature by observing bubble size, with a margin of error of around 10 C. Now, with robotic control, the optimal temperature of 102 C can be precisely maintained. This can contribute to a 15 percent reduction in energy consumption and an improvement in the quality of the medicine.



Residents experience a TCM robot diagnostic service in Chongqing in September last year. CHEN CHENG / XINHUA

At the scientific and technological achievements exhibition area of the Global Business Leaders Roundtable in Tianjin, an AI-powered TCM diagnosis instrument attracted foreign guests, who came to experience it. They were amazed by the fact that a diagnostic report containing physical constitution identification and health advice could be generated within just a few seconds.

The instrument captures visual information such as tongue patterns and facial features, uses AI algorithms for constitution identification and health status analysis, and quickly generates TCM constitution identification reports.

"The TCM industry transitioned from manual operations to mechanization and electrification in the 1970s and 1980s. Now it has entered the digital era," Zhang said.

According to Zhang, this digital evolution aligns directly with national policy. During the 2026 National People's Congress, the government's work report explicitly called for "promoting the inheritance and innovation of TCM and facilitating the integration of traditional Chinese and Western medicine".

For example, while Western medicine is highly effective in lowering blood sugar for diabetes patients, TCM has greater advantages in preventing complications. After five or six years, diabetes patients often develop microvascular complications. By incorporating TCM herbs, treatment can prevent or delay the onset of these complications while lowering blood sugar, a model that has received positive feedback from many patients, Zhang said.

This clinical efficacy is translating into overseas expansion. Da Ren Tang, which secured a regulatory pathway into international markets via its listing on the Singapore stock exchange back in June 1997, now exports over 140 products to more than 20 countries and regions.

By 2025, 31 Da Ren Tang products had obtained Singapore standard certification, with core products like Suxiao Jiuxin Pills and Qinggong Shoutao Pills entering mainstream retail stores in the city-state. Da Ren Tang's market value in Singapore has grown by 326 percent, with overall overseas sales increasing by 41 percent, gaining recognition from local consumers, according to the company.

Traditional medicine represents a new frontier for Sino-foreign cooperation and a new growth point for health and cultural exchanges, Zhang said.

Da Ren Tang chairwoman Wang said that over the past 12 years, more than 500 types of its products have entered 47 countries and regions as health supplements, food additives, or dietary supplements.

Chen Yijun contributed to this story.

International sports officials impressed by 'China speed' e-commerce deliveries

By YAN DONGJIE

On the eve of the 10th World Junior Wushu Championships in Tianjin, Anthony Sims, a *sanda* (Chinese martial arts sparring) judge from the United States, faced an immediate professional crisis: the upper sole of his athletic shoe had completely unglued, threatening his ability to officiate the next day's bouts.

Hoping to find an exact replacement for his 361 Degrees sneakers, Sims turned to tournament volunteer Li Yazhao, a student at Tianjin Foreign Studies University.

What happened next introduced the US official to the blistering pace of China's on-demand digital economy. Li bypassed traditional retail entirely, placing an order on an instant-delivery e-commerce platform. By the time Sims walked off the mat from his afternoon session, a brand-new pair of shoes was waiting for him at the venue.

"They fit perfectly. Absolutely perfect," Sims said. Having no local currency on hand, the judge moved to hand the volunteer two $20 bills — one to cover the retail cost, and the other as a gesture of appreciation.

The seamless experience quickly rippled through the international judging team. Days later, Roberto Nell Jone Astudillo, a referee from the Philippines, spotted Sims' new footwear in a shuttle bus and tracked down volunteers to purchase the exact same Chinese-branded shoe to take home.

The tournament's logistics hub quickly evolved into an impromptu gateway to China's domestic tech and sports markets. Mayanglambam Sachidananda, an official traveling with the Indian delegation, utilized e-commerce platform Meituan's flash-delivery service via a volunteer to procure a carbon-fiber retractable fishing rod. Impressed by the delivery speed, he immediately placed a second order for a DJI action camera to document his travels.

"I had heard friends in India recommend DJI many times because it's user-friendly and portable," Sachidananda said, noting that the camera arrived at his hotel just hours after he clicked "purchase".



Li Yazhao (second from left) guides Anthony Sims in placing an order on a Chinese e-commerce platform. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For Sachidananda, the experience disrupted long-held assumptions. "My previous impression of Chinese-made products was 'affordable but ordinary'," he admitted. "But looking at everything from my new sportswear to this action camera, the reality today is high quality, great design and impressive technological features."

That shift in consumer perception matches a global push by domestic Chinese brands. According to financial reports from 2025, the retail turnover of shoemaker 361 Degrees' international business surged by roughly 125.4 percent year-on-year as the brand transitions from simple product exporting to localized overseas retail operations.

Similarly, the rapid adoption of DJI equipment by visiting sports officials reflects a broader market shake-up. Recent data from market research firm IDC shows that DJI captured nearly 50 percent of the global action camera market share in 2025, maintaining a year-on-year growth rate of over 150 percent and surpassing former industry pioneer GoPro in its largest segment.

For the student volunteers on the ground, watching international sports officials fall in love with domestic tech and apparel brands has been a lesson in modern cultural exchange.

"Many of these guests first fell in love with China through old-school kung fu movies," said Li, the university volunteer. "But when they arrive here in 2026, they get to understand a multi-dimensional, modern country through something as practical as a pair of running shoes or a highly advanced camera."

As the tournament drew to a close, the professional relationship between the US official and the local student crystallized into a lasting cross-border connection. Before boarding his flight out of Tianjin, Sims sent Li a final message over WeChat.

"Too often, we do not fully appreciate the value of making new friends from other parts of the world," Sims wrote. "Those experiences and new connections enrich our lives in immeasurable ways. My new friendship with you is an example of such experiences, and I look forward to our friendship growing over the years to come."

Xu Xinran contributed to this story.

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IMAGE



Some researchers prepare for another release of the Yangtze sturgeon on April 12. PHOTOS BY HE HAIYANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Sturgeon returning to the Yangtze River

In a meandering stretch of the upper Yangtze River in Jiang'an county of Yibin, Sichuan province, a remarkable chapter is unfolding for the Yangtze sturgeon.

The Yangtze sturgeon, one of the oldest vertebrates on Earth, lived alongside the dinosaurs.

Endemic to China's Yangtze River, it is classified as a nationally protected first-class wild animal, once mainly found in the river's upper reaches and tributaries.

But because overfishing and habitat degradation took a heavy toll, the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) declared the Yangtze sturgeon extinct in the wild in July 2022.

China has been working out ways to save the Yangtze sturgeon — through fishing bans, legal protection, captive breeding, releasing fish into the wild, and most recently, encouraging natural reproduction in riverine habitats.

In late 2022, some research institutions launched a series of experiments aimed at inducing wild reproduction of the Yangtze sturgeon.

On April 14 this year, a scientific team announced a breakthrough: for the first time, Yangtze sturgeon had been observed spawning naturally and successfully hatching in an original spawning ground without any human intervention.

This marks the first time natural reproduction of the Yangtze sturgeon has been documented in an entirely unassisted, wild setting.

It represents a critical step toward rebuilding a wild population of a species once declared extinct in nature, and adds an important page to the story of ecological restoration and biodiversity recovery in the upper Yangtze.

Still, rebuilding a self-sustaining wild population remains a long and arduous journey.

Zhuang Ping, former director of the East China Sea Fisheries Research Institute at the Chinese Academy of Fishery Sciences, noted that the observation of natural breeding of the Yangtze sturgeon is an encouraging sign, a signal that ecological restoration in the Yangtze is taking effect.

But Zhuang added that larger-scale conservation of the Yangtze River must continue and deepen.

He pointed out that the upper Yangtze River alone is home to more than 100 rare fish species found nowhere else on Earth, and that the recovery of the entire Yangtze ecosystem is essential for rebuilding a wild Yangtze sturgeon population.

Looking ahead, research teams will continue to monitor year-round changes in the spawning ground's habitat and study the sturgeon's migratory movements in this section of the river, in order to systematically evaluate the success of natural reproduction in the spawning ground.

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1. At a fish conservation base in Changning county, Yibin, Sichuan province, a researcher retrieves a Chinese sturgeon from a spawning pond before its release into the wild, on June 5, 2023.
2. Researchers monitor the released Chinese sturgeon by using an ultrasonic telemetry tracking system on April 14.
3. A researcher implants a PIT tag into a wild Yangtze sturgeon before its release on June 5, 2023.
4. A researcher releases Chinese sturgeon fitted with ultrasonic tags into the Yangtze River on April 12.
5. Researchers set up an ultrasonic telemetry system in the spawning ground of Yangtze sturgeon on March 23.
6. An aerial view of the Chinese sturgeon spawning ground in Changjiang village, Jiang'an county, Yibin, on March 24.



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TREND

China's commuters trade traffic for two-wheelers

Subways open doors to cycling as weekend warriors escape the city, **Wang Songsong** reports.



Across China, taking off on a bicycle into the morning light is becoming a more common part of daily life. As more people trade cars or bus rides for a more physically rewarding experience, cities like Beijing and Shenzhen have adjusted their transport rules to allow bicycles on subways.

These measures have opened new doors for the fitness lifestyle, making parked bicycles a common sight on public transit as riders take advantage of the opportunity to conveniently get away from city streets. Country roads, reservoir shores, and mountain trails are now accessible for day trips.

Personal convenience

Many young professionals in Beijing treat the weekend as a time to unwind. For Duan Di, a man who works in the financial sector, that means waking up early, strapping on a helmet, and heading for the hills with his folding bike and a subway ticket.

Duan started cycling around 2015 while studying abroad. "I was new to the environment and found it hard to make friends," he said. "Joining a cycling community gave me a simple, genuine way to connect with people."

He brought that sense of connection back home in Shanghai in 2019 and moved to Beijing a year later. Duan likes to tour the western and northern suburbs. In summer, he starts before dawn to avoid the midday heat.

A weekend ride often totals 100 to 150 kilometers a day. "For road cycling, that distance is quite reasonable," he said. "The outskirts have good roads, less traffic, coffee shops, restaurants, and medical services. It feels safe."

On May 10, Beijing launched a "rail + cycling" pilot service on four subway lines to better accommodate cyclists. The trial covers 11 designated stations on Lines 6, 17, the Changping Line, and the S1 Line.

Passengers are allowed to bring two-wheeled bicycles with a wheel diameter no larger than 28 inches (about 71 cm) on board. According to the Beijing Commission of Transport, the service will be available only on weekends during normal operating hours, excluding public holidays.

The 11 stations were chosen for their proximity to popular cycling routes, relatively low rail passenger flow, and station facilities suitable for bike integration.

"The pilot is a service innovation based on existing connectivity improvements," the transport commission said. Throughout the pilot program, it is monitoring operations and collecting passenger feedback to gradually optimize services.

Duan was among the first to try the new service. He took the Changping Line from Xitucheng Station to Changping Dongguan. Staff measured his bike, guided him through security, and accompanied him to the platform.

Though Duan is happy with the service thus far, he sees room for improvement. The current flat fare of 30 yuan ($4.43) per trip, regardless of distance, is expensive, he noted. "More flexible pricing, based on distance or time of day, would encourage more people to use the service."

He also suggested dedicated parking areas for bikes inside carriages and clearer rules so that cyclists do not inconvenience regular passengers.

While Beijing launched its pilot in May, Shenzhen in Guangdong province had already been running a similar program for months.

On Nov 15, Shenzhen's metro authority introduced a cycling-friendly service on four lines. Originally only available on weekends, this service requires reservations one workday in advance for individuals and three workdays in advance for groups.

A flat fare of 35 yuan per person and per bike is charged, and only non-electric, single-seat bicycles with wheel diameters under 28 inches are permitted. Bicycles must be packed in protective covers and are only allowed in the front or rear carriages. Its service expanded on Feb 15, adding 28 new subway stations on more lines and including public holidays.







From top: Cyclists ride through rapeseed flower fields in Chengdong village of Wuhu, Anhui province, in March. PHOTO BY XIAO BENXIANG / FOR CHINA DAILY

Guan Fumin cycles in a 100-km event on May 20 in Jining, Shandong province. Yin Bo rides on Luofu Mountain, Guangdong province, in January 2025. Guan Fumin (center) participates in a cycling event on March 8 in Jining. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

For residents like Yin Bo, a 42-year-old cyclist and social media influencer, this initiative is a significant step toward realizing Shenzhen's ambition to become a "bike-friendly metropolis". Yin views this policy as a welcome change that complements his lifestyle and passion for cycling.

"Cycling keeps me healthy, connected, and young at heart," he said. "It's excellent aerobic exercise and helps maintain a good physique."

Having ridden everything from mountain bikes to road bikes to folding bikes, Yin is a seasoned guide to the region's greenways and leisure routes.

He appreciates the small touches that lower the barrier for beginners, such as the subway's provision of free bike bags that don't require disassembling the wheels. "When you reach your destination, you return the bag to the staff. The whole process is very smooth," he added.

Looking ahead, Yin hopes the city will host more cycling events and continue expanding its network of safe, enjoyable routes.

"Greenways are nice for the first six months, but to keep people cycling long-term, we need more variety like coastal rides and hill climbs. If the riding experience improves, more people will join," he said.

Elsewhere, cities such as Suzhou in Jiangsu province and Hefei in Anhui province have introduced similar policies.

Booming business

The new policies are appearing in response to a growing lifestyle trend and the business opportunities it affords. According to an industry report released by the General Administration of Sport of China in October 2025, the number of cyclists nationwide had surpassed 130 million by the end of August, while the total output value of China's bicycle industry had exceeded 300 billion yuan.

Guan Fumin, a cyclist and a bicycle business operator in Jining, Shandong province, is part of the booming industry. Her story with bicycles began in 2022 when she wanted an outdoor activity. "I knew nothing about bikes at that time," she said. Despite planning to spend around 4,000 yuan, she ended up walking out of the shop with a bike priced at 18,000 yuan.

"In 2021 and 2022, very few women were riding," Guan said. She quickly stood out for her style. People often asked her where she bought her cycling clothes and gear. That curiosity sparked an idea.

"I started to feel that I really liked the industry," she said. She and a friend opened a small shop selling bikes in her hometown Jining in 2024.

The trial worked. Guan found that her experience as a rider gave her an advantage in understanding what customers wanted. She began posting short videos and photos of her rides on the social media platform Douyin, where her popularity grew. She began to be recognized for the gear she wore after races and group rides.

A second shop followed in 2025, focusing on high-end bicycles, cycling apparel, and accessories. Her business model combines a physical store as the anchor with online content to bring in more customers.

The strategy has worked. In the first few months of this year, her second shop averaged more than 200,000 yuan in monthly sales.

Guan emphasizes what she calls "emotional benefit". "Customers want more than just a bicycle; they want to go out and ride together, to join in activities," she said.

For Guan, a hobby can double as a lifestyle and a business. "If you do what everyone else can do, it means nothing. Do what others can't. Think what others don't. That's how customers will pay for what you offer."

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Beijing cyclist rides at his own pace

By **WANG SONGSONG**

For Zhang Zhi, a 47-year-old freelancer in Beijing's Chaoyang district, cycling is not about chasing speed, beating personal records, or weaving through packs of riders in matching jerseys. It is about something quieter and harder to find in a city of more than 20 million people: balance.

"In my school days, almost every household had a bicycle," Zhang said. "There's an emotional connection."

That childhood attachment has evolved into a deliberate lifestyle. While many of his peers have traded two wheels for four, Zhang has done the opposite.

He calls his philosophy the "balanced triangle of people, bike, and life". It is a motto he lives out in carefully planned rides across Beijing's sprawling urban landscape and beyond.

Unlike the weekend warriors who measure success by average speed or elevation gain, Zhang prefers themed excursions exploring old Beijing's corner food stores and forgotten alleyway histories. On other days, he pedals toward the suburbs to absorb the shifting scenery.



Zhang Zhi brings his bike into a subway station in Beijing in May. PHOTO PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

"At my age, I don't chase speed or power," he said. "I pay more attention to the balance between living, riding, and my state of mind."

His approach to cycling changed around 2020, when he started recording his rides and sharing them on social media. His commute evolved into a form of storytelling.

It was a practical shift. After being hit by a car going the wrong way, Zhang now carries camera gear on every ride.

"I treat it like a dashcam. It's for safety, and also for social media content production," he said.

He films everything himself, narrates live without dubbing, and does all of his own editing. "If I rode with a team, people couldn't learn from it. I want to show what one person can do," he added.

Since May, Zhang has been able to do more. He has taken advantage of the city's new policy of allowing bikes on select subway lines to expand his reach and show new stories to his audience.

As he steps onto new paths, bicycle in tow, Zhang envisions a bright future among the unexpected.

"Fear comes from not knowing how well you can handle things," Zhang said.

Though he mostly rides alone, his family has long since stopped worrying about him. "Over time, they saw I could manage."

He hopes others will see that too. "Not everyone needs a fancy bike," he said. "Just start riding. Anytime."

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BIZ LIFE

Netizens turn topiary into iconic showpiece

The 'scruffy little dog' is a green sensation and a boost for tourism, consumption

By **ZHENG YIRAN** in Shanghai
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On a spring day in Shanghai, on a grassy area of Suhewan center in Jing'an district, a giant green sculpture of a West Highland terrier unexpectedly went viral.

It does not have many gorgeous flowers adorning its body. Instead, it is covered in wild grass, with fluffy hair and a color that gradually blends from fresh green to natural beige, with a hint of lazy and messy relaxation.

Netizens gave it a down-to-earth and highly resonant nickname — scruffy little dog.

On major social media platforms, topics such as "Shanghai's scruffy little dog cures workers", and "scruffy little dog check-in guide" continue to be flooded with posts, striking an emotional chord and resonating with young people, thanks to its casual and sloppy appearance.

Scruffy little dog becoming the top internet celebrity of this year's Shanghai International Flower Show is not a fluke, but an inevitable coincidence, experts said.

Wang Mian, a 28-year-old local, said that he and his family visit the scruffy little dog frequently, and they all like it very much.

The builder — Jing'an landscaping and city appearance administrative bureau — has been deeply involved in three-dimensional greening and green sculpture landscaping, accumulating rich practical experience.

Back in the early stages of forming ideas, the Jing'an landscaping and city appearance administrative bureau and the Shanghai green maintenance project team visited the site multiple times for on-site surveys. The plot where the scruffy little dog is located is a pet-friendly area at Suhewan center, and people often come to walk their dogs.

So it came to mind to create a cute pet amusement park in this area with a theme of a small dog green sculpture. But, which type of pet dog? The initial list from the project team contained a Chinese rural dog, a Yorkshire terrier, and a West Highland white terrier.

After repeated on-site observations, the team concluded that the West Highland white terrier is cuter and more likely to evoke emotional resonance. Furthermore, they learned that this breed has a mild body odor and sheds less hair, and has become very popular in recent years. At the same time, they have a lively and relaxed temperament, which aligns with the positioning of the Shanghai International Flower Show as an "international" showpiece.

The follow-up building process was assigned to three design teams: styling design, structural design and horticultural design. Feng Rui, manager of the project team, said the plot covers an area of approximately 700 square meters, with an open space. The scruffy little dog is expected to have a height of 5 meters. Controlling the spatial proportion and visual hierarchy of large installations, and accurately adapting to open spatial scales, require professional art sculptors to refine.

After the art sculptor refined the shape, the structural designer appeared. The scruffy little dog has a large body shape. Its wind resistance, pressure resistance and load-bearing capacity determine its safety.

At this point, a professional structural designer controls the entire process of building the structure, accurately calculating the stress points and load-bearing limits of the sculpture, and setting the principle that the overall weight of the green plant canopy should not exceed 10 metric tons.

Next comes the highlight — horticultural design. Green sculpture commonly uses ready-made plug seedlings, but the difficulty of this design stems from how to replicate the long hair of the West Highland white terrier. The gardening team decided to adopt herbaceous plants such as fine-leaved needle grass.

"Since we had not tried green carving of fine-leaved needle grass before, we first made a 1:1 dog head for sampling and observed the effect of the dog's fur. When the experimental results meet expectations, we can boldly implement them," said Feng.

Moreover, the styling method of gardeners is also very important. There is a group of horticulturists from Zhejiang province who specialize in green carving techniques. Up to 10 garden artists completed the planting process of the scruffy little dog in three days.

Their techniques are delicate and precise, following the natural growth pattern of dog hair: the facial plants are short and stretched to both sides, while the cheek and limb plants are slender and fluffy, controlling the tilt angle and spacing of each plant.

Lin Xianping, associate professor at Hangzhou City University, said: "The popularity of the scruffy little dog is not accidental. It breaks the shackles of traditional floral aesthetics."

"In the past, flower green carvings pursued beautiful flowers with regular and symmetrical shapes. However, this West Highland terrier's green carving is made of wild grass, with fluffy and messy hair, natural gradient grass color, and a native rough grass form, breaking away from the homogenized aesthetic of artificial refinement. The visual contrast is extremely easy to attract the public's attention," he said.

Ultimately, the scruffy little dog "accurately hits the emotional pain points of contemporary young people. Currently, some young people are trapped in internal anxiety and have been in a tense state of life for a long time, which generally leads to a psychological appeal of rejecting perfection and accepting relaxation", he further posited.

"The lazy and unkempt appearance of the messy puppy has provided a carrier for young people to vent their emotions and empathize with themselves."

The allure of the scruffy little dog is self-perpetuating, and is underpinned by a sense of trust, as there is no official marketing plan for the showpiece. It relies on netizens to spontaneously check-in and spread memes, according to Lin, who noted that its appeal had subsequently led citizens to collectively call for a delay in retiring it.

"Departments responded flexibly, giving the landscape a humanistic warmth," Lin said.

That was despite the realization that cold season grass seeds find it difficult to survive in summer, and the green sculpture faced inevitable retirement. Netizens called for the scruffy little dog to be kept up longer.

Jing'an landscaping and city appearance administrative bureau, in response to public appeals, have tentatively planned to extend the project for three months, and they are currently screening for locally grown grass species that are resistant to high temperatures as replacements.

Feng said: "The grassy area in Suhewan has become a public living space, and the public are virtually raising the scruffy little dog, becoming their mommies and daddies. From the initial building, to the call for delayed retirement, and the brainstorming of naming and designing cultural and creative products for the puppy in recent days, every step of it has public participation, becoming urban intellectual property, co-created by the whole city."

Data from Suhewan showed that because of the attraction of the scruffy little dog, between April 18 and May 5, Shanghai Suhe MixC World registered as many as 1.701 million visits, up 192.53 percent on a year-on-year basis. The visitors generated consumption of nearly 61.57 million yuan ($9.1 million), 49.22 percent higher than the same period last year.

Lin said: "From an economic value perspective, the scruffy little dog brings lightweight and low-cost cultural and tourism dividends. In the short-term, the massive check-in flow will activate consumption in the Suhewan area, directly driving the growth of surrounding catering, retail, photography exploration, and other businesses, and extending the cultural and tourism consumption chain of Suhewan."

"On a long-term level, it creates the business card of Jing'an Suhewan city with zero marketing costs, enhances the commercial visibility of the area, and drives the premium investment of surrounding shops. At the same time, it provides new ideas for the landscaping industry. Original ecological and emotional landscapes will become a new trend in landscape design."



A resident holds a West Highland white terrier at a flower festival in Suhewan, Jing'an district, Shanghai, on May 11, echoing the popular scruffy little dog image. PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Chinese embrace new twists on gelato textures, flavors amid tea crossover

By **ZHENG YIRAN** and **HE QI** in Shanghai

With competition in China's new-style tea sector heating up, merchants are opening up a new track — gelato.

This ice cream category, which was once a preserve of Italy's high-end dessert shops, is now appearing on the menus of China's food and beverage districts, the basement level of core business districts and even tea shops.

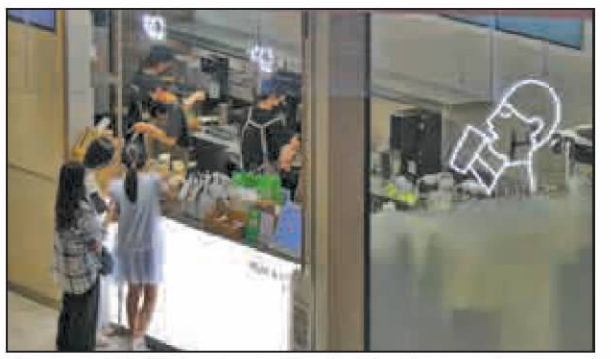
Priced around 30 yuan ($4.4), and with descriptions of "handmade", "fresh ingredients" and "dense texture", gelato is attracting young people to lock in and make repeat purchases.

With all the frenzy, players of all sizes are vying to enter the game. New brands are being incubated, old brands are accelerating their expansion, and tea beverage brands are following suit.

In February, Heytea launched a limited-edition gelato blended with meat floss and salted egg yolk at its Fengshengli outlet in Shanghai. Meanwhile, it sells four laboratory sections, including gelato lab, to explore different combinations with tea.

On May 21, Chagee launched geelato — a combination of gelato and tea — at nine of its outlets in five cities — Shanghai, Shenzhen in Guangdong province, Beijing, Chengdu in Sichuan province and Wuhan in Hubei province. The new products combine original leaf tea with Italian ice cream craftsmanship to provide consumers with a diverse modern tea experience.

The new products contain 10 flavors including jasmine green tea, matcha peak latte and caramel infused pu-erh tea, and three types of "geelato" tea products. During the Labor Day holiday in May, geelato went on trial sales at the Wukang Road outlet in Shanghai, becoming an instant hit with customers.



Shoppers visit a Heytea store in Qingdao, Shandong province, on May 31. TANG KE / FOR CHINA DAILY

"Compared to simply adding tea elements to the product, we hope to further expand the product form of tea through the new element of Italian ice cream. In order to maintain the layering and recognition of tea aromas in low-temperature dessert form, the research and development team repeatedly adjusted the ratio of milk and tea, stepping times, temperature control and other aspects," said the spokesperson of Chagee.

"In order to find the 'right' moment, we often have to test nearly a hundred times until we find the non-greasy and non-stagnant flavor critical point. Finally, while retaining the dense taste, the product retains a unique aroma, aftertaste and flavor changes of the original leaf tea," the spokesperson said.

Jin Tao, senior director of the public relations center of Chagee, said: "Culturally speaking, Chinese people have a tradition of 'eating tea', where tea is ordered and ground. Making tea-flavored gelato is a new way of modern 'eating tea'. Ever since the Labor Day holiday, we have had good feedback."

Gao Chengyuan, president and CEO of Guangzhou TY Marketing, said: "Gelato itself has a 'high-end feel' — Italian handmade, low-fat and healthy and visually appealing, which coincides with the transition of new-style tea — from 'functional thirst quenching' to 'emotional consumption'. The pricing of 18 yuan to 26 yuan is stuck between milk tea and specialty coffee, which not only increases the average purchase price, but also does not discourage those who try new things."

Huang Tao, an independent expert in public relations, said: "Gelato's popularity in the tea beverage industry is somewhat sustainable, but it may not sustain explosive growth over the long term. In the short term, gelato's unique taste, freshness, and social attributes (such as being suitable for taking photos) can attract consumers to try it out, especially catering to the innovative needs of young people."

"Over the long term, whether the business can be sustainable depends on the following factors: whether the price is affordable, the product can realize constant innovation, the supply chain is stable, the consumption level is supportive, and the channel distribution is complete," he said.

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TRAVEL



Tourists wander among blooming flowers at the Sayram Lake scenic area in Xinjiang's Bortala Mongolian autonomous prefecture in June.
ZHANG HONGKE / FOR CHINA DAILY

A lake of love

Sayram is a destination where legend, landscape and lifelong vows are reflected in the 'Mirror of the Sky', **Erik Nilsson** reports in Bortala, Xinjiang.

Sayram Lake whispers "I love you" in numbers, fizzes with countless ice bubbles and teems with impossible fish where nothing swam for as long as anyone knew — unless you count the lake monster.

Its identity churns like a potion: part love spell, part captured breath, part miracle of life.

The 1,314-square-kilometer scenic area in Xinjiang's Bortala Mongolian autonomous prefecture loosely rhymes with *yisheng, yishi* (one lifetime). Its 2,073-meter elevation sounds somewhat like *ai ni qing shen* (love you deeply). And its 520-kilometer distance from the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region's capital, Urumqi, sounds a bit like, *wo ai ni* (I love you).

Sayram Lake transliterates numeric data into romantic verse and translates human affection into marital bliss. Over 10,000 couples have chosen to tie the knot here because of its "love codes".

Couples who say "I do" here enjoy free entry for life. Many buy registration-plus-honeymoon packages that include photo shoots, tours and wedding banquets.





Above: A newlywed couple takes photos at the frozen Sayram Lake scenic area in -23 C weather in March.
Below: The icefalls attract many visitors to Bortala in winter, which lasts until March. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

Local lore

Legend has it that love physically formed the lake itself in a meadow freckled with flowers.

A demon kidnapped a young man's lover, and he rushed to rescue her, only to discover she'd leapt into the abyss in despair. So he did too. Suddenly, water gushed from the void, filling Sayram. In another version, it's formed from their tears.

Tradition says that Sayram will judge the vows made near its shores. After weddings, a pair of swans will cross paths with newlyweds whose love is true. If they're disingenuous, the weather will change abruptly — and usually for the worse — during the ceremony.

Other legends claim the lake is a mirror for celestial beings that — like a crystal ball — can reveal a human's destiny, including their soulmate's identity, if they stare at it on the darkest night of winter. It's also said the surface glistens with shifting tints of green and blue because it reflects the facets of a jewel that a Tianshan Mountains fairy lost in its depths while bathing. Other tales claim it's a sacred well or the lair of a dragon whose icy breath chills its waters.

Incidentally, the lake hosts ice dragon boat races in winter.

Many names

Sayram's literal meaning in Mongolian is "saddle strap" because its long, cinched form appears to bind the surrounding peaks. Its name in the Uygur and Kazak languages translates as "Lake on the Ridge".

It has a long list of nicknames, each a shorthand for a story that endows it with a description beyond mere title.

One, the "Last Tear of the Atlantic", flows from mythology, not hydrology. It imagines the ocean's last, lonely tear, blown inland until it crashed against the Tianshan Mountains, dribbled down its sides and settled into a lost memory of the sea, landlocked and forsaken.

Although this description is more myth than science, Sayram actually delineates the furthest inland location that the Atlantic's atmospheric moisture travels before the soaring range wrings it from the sky. On the massif's other side lies the Taklimakan Desert, also called the "Sea of Death", whose waves crash as dunes and whose arid mists swirl as dust rather than vapor.

The "Pearl of Tianshan" bejewels the crown of the "Heavenly Mountains". The "Most Beautiful Sky Lake" is Xinjiang's highest and largest alpine lake, with an elevation of 2,073 meters and a surface that ripples across 458 sq km. The "Plateau Lake of Many Hues" whirls from deep sapphire to brilliant cobalt, vibrant turquoise, soft emerald and pale milky gray, shimmering as a vibrant palette of watercolors.

The "Purest Sea in the Western Region" is pristine by virtue of sheer isolation.

Frozen fantasies

This convergence of numerology, folklore and geology has forged a unique destination where the quest for eternal love is mapped by numbers, which become words that transcribe the story of the land.

But in addition to functioning as formulas or pages of poetry, Sayram becomes a canvas in winter, an iridescent blue-ice "Mirror of the Sky" festooned with silvery filigree — bulbs, flowers and needles wrought by the forge of ice. Such structures, typically formed by the effervescent exhalations of decaying plants captured and suspended in time by a sudden freeze, are only reliably found in two other places on the planet: Canada's Abraham Lake and Russia's Lake Baikal.

And in its most elusive moments, Sayram stares back at us with rare, unblinking "ice eyes" — phantom irises that gaze from glassy sockets toward the sky straight above, like Earth searching for furtive gods veiled by gauzy curtains of clouds.

Another spectacular formation — actually, millions of them — appears as the weather warms. The ice mantle splinters into countless tinkling shards that slosh in the waves like avalanches of crystal puzzle pieces dancing up and down the swells.

After the mirror shatters, it melts into a massive lens revealing a hidden world below — one inhabited by the lake's living triumph over desolation.

Unlikely life-forms

The Arctic salmon — actually, silvery Siberian peled or northern whitefish that aren't technically salmon — float like pale ghosts through otherworldly waters that had contained only emptiness for millions of years. These "Queens of Cold-Water Fish", as they're locally called, glide like pallid angels, fluttering around a netherworld they were never meant to populate.

Sayram was too cold and isolated — amputated from every stream where life swam — for fish to arrive naturally, let alone survive or even thrive.

Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) official Lin Zexu, who's best known for destroying mass quantities of opium, recounted his 1840s banishment to the region in his book, *Journey Into Exile*: "(Sayram Lake) has never had boats, nor has it been a source for fish such as carp. The water is undrinkable, and drinking it makes your hands and feet weary due to the coldness of the snowmelt."

However, other Qing records and centuries-old oral history whisper tales of an aquatic cryptid that resurfaced in 2007, when competitors in the Xinjiang Sayram Cycling Race claimed to see what appeared to be a 10-meter-long creature writhing roughly 100 meters offshore. It seemed to swim for 50 meters before vanishing. Photos show what some people think are three black dorsal ridges but, as is common with such claims, the images are too blurry to confirm.

This mass sighting prompted experts to conduct sonar scans that failed to detect any large beasts but did find new microbial communities. So, the "monster" still served as an unintentional guide who led humans to find unknown life lurking in the deep.

A common theory is that the sightings were actually of taimen — colloquially called "dinosaur trout" because of their hulking statures — although none are known to live in the lake.

Again, the lake instinctively repels inhabitation by finned organisms.

The first fish — over 30 species — were introduced by experts in the 1960s. They died immediately.

Scientists kept trying. And the fish kept dying.

That was until 1998, when peled whitefish endemic to Russia's Arctic Ocean drainage basins were transplanted and survived.

Today, they're sold in high-end restaurants, and their caviar is exported to Europe. They're prized not only for their flavor but also nutrition. They contain more protein — around 19 percent — and unsaturated fatty acids than most farmed fish.

Visitors can try to hook one of these improbable catches themselves or dine on them in mobile cabins near the shoreline.

They're not just a meal, but a story of the impossible come true, a scientific triumph that swims alongside a lake monster that lives in mystery.

Sayram is a place where the landscape is not just what it is but what we wish it to be.

It's a mathematician, a mythmaker and a magician. It's a love letter written in numbers, a dragon's frozen breath and a sacred destination. It's a witness, a test, a promise, an experiment, a storybook, an equation and a mirror reflecting not just the sky above but the deep desires of our hearts — especially for true love.

Contact the writer at erik_nilsson@chinadaily.com.cn

Where glorious nature displays its many arts

By **ERIK NILSSON**

Circling Sayram Lake is like spinning a ring inlaid with dazzling jewels.

The gems embedded along the 90-kilometer loop of its perimeter shine with different facets — scenic, sacred and storied.

Some destinations sparkle with every luster, depending on the angle they're viewed from.

They're display cases exhibiting nature's many creative talents, not just as a jeweler but also a painter, sculptor, architect, musician and gardener. They show the penmanship of an unseen calligrapher, the chronicles of a timeless historian and the prose of a mythmaker manifested.

For instance, Gangjige Mountain materializes not merely as consecrated land but as deities assuming physical form. Mount Foshan traces the silhouette of a Buddha meditating beside a stone shaped like the hand of the Chinese Goddess of Mercy, Guanyin. Some say the peak was formed from the body of Laozi (Lao Tzu), the legendary founder of Taoism, before he mastered Buddhist enlightenment and turned to stone.

According to Western Han Dynasty (206 BC-AD 24) historian Sima Qian's *Shiji*, or Records of the Grand Historian, Laozi rode a green ox from Hangu Pass, and "no one knew where he went". The Eastern Han Dynasty (25-220) *Book of the Later Han* mentions: "Some say Laozi entered the (western) land of the barbarian tribes and became a Buddha." Local lore says he fused with the land to become Foshan, and his ox melted to form Sayram.

And so, a story born from an ancient syncretic impulse to unify Taoism and Buddhism lingers. It's written not as scripture on scrolls but rather is inscribed in the silent script of stone and water, narrating a dialogue between our world and the next.

This convergence of beauty and belief is embodied in several sites.

At the Source of the Milk Sea, pilgrims make offerings where springs nurse the waters at the foot of Keguqin Mountain. At Kele Yongzhu, sanctified by the 10th Panchen Lama in 1984, the lake's perpetual thaw creates a chromatic ritual, its springs shifting hue as they drift into the depths.

Beyond Kele Yongzhu's watercolors, nature paints prairies in assorted pigments and genres. Qicai (Seven Color) Bay is a pointillist masterpiece of Technicolor flowers, while Jinhua Zihui is an impressionist swirl of golden buttercups and purple primroses.

The vast mural that is the West Sea Grassland — often called "China's Most Beautiful Sky Grassland" — unfurls across rolling green hills speckled with yaks and framed by the stark Shalicheku Mountain, a 4,189-meter peak whose snowmelt trickles into Sayram like a faucet.

The splotched patterns and vegetive colors of the Camouflage Mountains give this several-kilometer-long subrange its vibrant name. The dappled blobs are clumps of Xinjiang junipers — aka Eurasian, Tianshan or creeping junipers — that smear the tawny slopes with dark-green daubs. These shrubs are harvested and burned to smoke meat and as incense, imparting an olfactory allure in addition to their visual appeal.

Beyond painting Sayram's grasslands, nature also acts as a sculptor and musician, endowing its depictions of color and texture with form and resonance.

In Donghai Tingtao (Listening to the Waves of the East Sea), millennia of tidal forces have carved the bluffs into colossal sound boxes, tuning the rock to a deep, booming pitch. The surf performs percussion against dozens of kilometers of overhangs that resound with the pounding of each whitecap.

Further along, the sandy strand of Waterfront Bay displays unintentional statues chiseled by erosive forces.

The roughly 10-meter-high pair of stone sails is celebrated as a flagship of Sayram's identity as the "Purest Sea in the Western Region". To the north, the "Turtle Diving Into the Water" seems to plunge into the depths, motionlessly.

But Sayram's most famous figures are carved by one of nature's most curious inventions and depict its very creators — humankind. Two 2,000-year-old "stone men", 38 centimeters and 32 cm tall, stand guard on the lake's northern rim. They gaze eastward over the 27-square-kilometer Three-Tai Grassland, which takes its name from its location in a string of Qing Dynasty (1644-1911) military outposts, called *tai*, connecting Ili Kazak autonomous prefecture with Urumqi. Its appellation comes from its martial functions, but its descriptions hail from the literati who have penned verse venerating its magnificence.

The vast mountain walls that enclose them show Sayram is an architect that builds not only with stone but with life — specifically, living trees rather than lumber.

Its vicinity hosts three tremendous corridors of conifers, the grandest of which is the roughly 50-km Keguqin Spruce Gallery. This palisade leads to the Pine Head Mist Waterfall, where the final breaths of Atlantic moisture land against the Guozi Gorge and precipitate not as rain but as a vertical river of vapor cascading soundlessly into Sayram.

Ultimately, Sayram is a grand hall where Earth exhibits its sublime artistry.

Yet, the final piece of this jeweled band, this vibrant collage of rock and living wood, is us — the human audience. It is we who appreciate its colors, forms, and sounds and interpret these oeuvres into tales that endow water, soil and stone with substance beyond their surface.

To circle Sayram is to understand that its true depth isn't measured in meters but in the layers of meaning we give it.





Above: The West Sea Grassland and Jinhua Zihui (golden buttercups and purple primroses) scenic spot at Sayram Lake in Xinjiang's Bortala Mongolian autonomous prefecture.
Below: Tourists engage with swans at Sayram Lake's Kele Yongzhu scenic area. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

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SPORTS

SOCCER

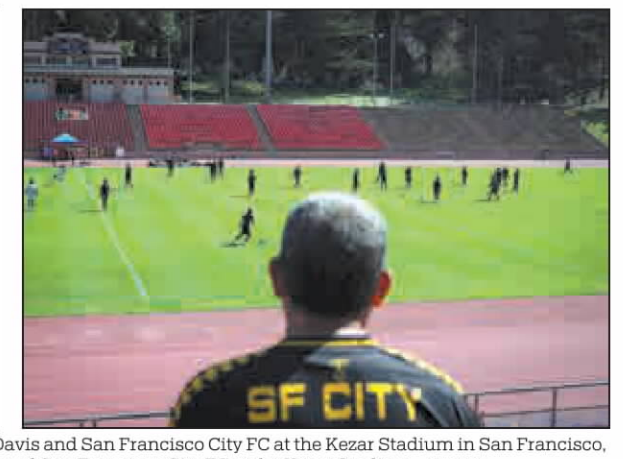
BAY OF HOPE

Grassroots clubs around San Francisco bet on a boost in interest on the back of the World Cup



A general view of Levi's Stadium (temporarily renamed San Francisco Bay Area Stadium for the 2026 World Cup) in Santa Clara, California, on June 7. The stadium has already hosted two World Cup matches with another four to come. **Inset:** An enthusiastic Oakland Roots fan shows his support for the USL Championship side. AFP





Left: A ball boy practices his ball control before a game between FC Davis and San Francisco City FC at the Kezar Stadium in San Francisco, California, on May 17. **Right:** A fan watches a game between FC Davis and San Francisco City FC at the Kezar Stadium. REUTERS

For years, Jorge Bejarano has been one of the San Francisco Bay Area's most passionate soccer fans, banging a drum for the second-tier Oakland Roots. With the World Cup underway in the US, he and others are counting on their cheers for local soccer to resonate across the nation.

Soccer fans are a minority among sports supporters in the United States. Despite its strength as a youth sport, soccer still lags other major sports in viewership, especially American football. Interest is also low compared to global averages.

According to the latest Ipsos poll, around 36 percent of Americans plan to watch the World Cup.

But fans are betting that the tournament will lift the relevance of soccer and its importance for the community. In California's Bay Area, Santa Clara will host six games.

"Now that we get the World Cup here in the Bay Area, we definitely do see interest from tourists and soccer fans from around the world just digging into what other teams are there around that same area," said Bejarano, who leads the official Los Roots supporter group. "What I hope people take away is just how diverse Oakland is, how special, how fun and how welcoming."

The Roots were founded less than a decade ago, and quickly filled a gap for local sports fans, as Oakland's major American football, baseball and basketball teams relocated to other areas. Attendance skyrocketed when the Roots took over the empty Coliseum stadium for home games.

Previously a longtime season ticket holder for the NFL's Oakland Raiders, Bejarano went all in for the Roots. "Having a team here that dedicates their passion and their love for the city — I can only respect something like that," he said.

Local expectations

For Roots head coach Ryan Martin, the World Cup games being held at Santa Clara's Levi's Stadium are a huge statement about the interest in soccer in the Bay Area. He hopes that the attention during the World Cup will bring more people out to watch Roots games as well.

Beyond organizing community watch parties for World Cup games, the Roots are hosting the Australian national soccer team at their training facilities.

They are also partnering with local restaurants to bring Australian-inspired items to menus.

The Bay Area is home to diverse soccer leagues and teams: the Roots play in the lower-tier USL Championship league, while San Jose in the south is home to Major League Soccer's Earthquakes and the National Women's Soccer League's Bay FC. The latter broke the single-game record for NWSL attendance, with over 40,000 people watching at San Francisco's Oracle Park.

Semi-professional and amateur teams also abound.

"We have so much grassroots soccer that happens here," said Aaron Mansfield, a volunteer who oversees membership organization for the San Francisco City soccer club. The semi-professional team has a member-ownership model, with members having the right to vote on the club's direction and be elected to the board of directors.

Mansfield hopes that the World Cup will be an opportunity to show how they do things locally.

"General interest in soccer culture is good, because we get to explain what we do differently and why that matters in the context of both local, national and global football," he said.

Shelley and Josh Estelle have been fans and members of SF City for three years. They attended a recent game, together with their daughter, on an unusually sunny day at Kezar Stadium, where there is a view of San Francisco's landmark Sutro Tower.

"I really like the community-supported club here," said Josh. "It's not corporate and it feels like just the people in my neighborhood watching soccer together."

While they plan to watch broadcasts of World Cup games as a family, they didn't get tickets to see a game at Levi's Stadium. "It's very expensive," said Shelley. "We can watch much more affordable soccer right here at Kezar."

REUTERS

BASKETBALL

As NBA offseason begins, all eyes are on Antetokounmpo and James

And just like that, it's next season in the NBA.

The New York Knicks were feted with a championship parade through the streets of Manhattan on Thursday after a postseason in which they successfully rallied from six double-digit deficits to win games in the playoffs, including all four of their victories in the NBA Finals against the San Antonio Spurs.

It continued the unprecedented run of NBA parity, with eight different franchises winning championships in the last eight seasons — Toronto in 2019, the Los Angeles Lakers in 2020, Milwaukee in 2021, Golden State in 2022, Denver in 2023, Boston in 2024, Oklahoma City last year and now New York.

"To me, it just really speaks to the state of NBA basketball and the state of the future of the game," NBA Commissioner Adam Silver said. "And now, with this draft class coming in this year — again, not just the first pick, but a draft that's considered the deepest in many years — there's so much talent everywhere. So, it's a really bright future ahead for the league."

It is, but every team is now chasing the Knicks. They had all the answers.

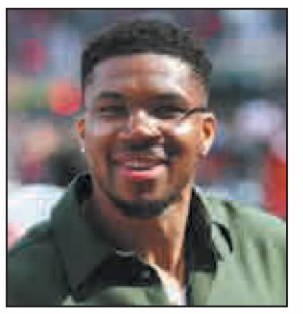
For 29 other franchises, at least on some level, there seems to only be questions.

- Will Milwaukee really trade Giannis Antetokounmpo after 13 seasons, 10 All-Star selections, two Most Valuable Player awards and an NBA championship in 2021?
- Will LeBron James come back to the NBA for a 24th season? If so, will it be with the Los Angeles Lakers for a ninth year? Or will he look for a, presumably, final chapter somewhere else?
- What will Washington do with the No 1 pick in the draft later this month?
- And, who will coach in Dallas and Portland?

Those are just some of the major issues facing teams around the league as summer gets underway.

It's going to be hard for the Knicks to repeat, because it's hard for any team to repeat — as the Thunder found out this season.

"The history of the NBA is littered with teams that were not able to find ultimate success again," Thunder general manager Sam Presti said. "I think there have only been three teams that have repeated since we've been in Oklahoma City, and the reasons for that are many, probably too many to list. But, the fact is, it helps illustrate how rare and how special it is when you do have a chance to win at the highest level in this league, or in professional sports in general.





Where Giannis Antetokounmpo (left) and LeBron James will be next season is the biggest question of the summer. REUTERS

"However, NBA history is also built on the backs of those teams that saw their losses as a continued quest for improvement and progress. Most importantly, they saw it as what competition boils down to, what it's all about at any level of sports."

The Giannis question

Antetokounmpo, the biggest star in Milwaukee, will be eligible this fall for an extension that could be worth up to $275 million.

But the Bucks don't have a roster that's a championship contender. If they trade Antetokounmpo, they can essentially start over with what would be a slew of players and draft picks. If they keep him, there's no guarantee he'll be happy — because it seems like he's primarily interested now in trying to win more titles.

"I just think before the draft is a natural time, right, because if Giannis does play somewhere else, we're going to get a lot of assets. You've got to get it right," Bucks co-owner Jimmy Haslam said in May, when the team introduced new coach Taylor Jenkins — who was told that Antetokounmpo may or may not be with the franchise when next season starts.

The draft is next week. And logic would suggest that the Bucks — if they are going to trade Antetokounmpo — may do so at least a few days before the draft, so they have some specific idea of whom to target with the capital that they'll get as part of whatever deal might go down.

Miami has been mentioned in the Giannis sweepstakes for months, and the Heat is involved in talks with the Bucks again.

LeBron watch

James has never gone into a summer with this much freedom.

He could stay with the Lakers. He could pick another spot. He could retire. He could demand a max salary. He could take less money to help a team out. Or he could just continue posting videos of chip-ins on Instagram; yes, James has the golf bug.

"When the time comes, you guys will know what I decide to do," James said when the Lakers were eliminated this spring by Oklahoma City in a 4-0 sweep.

The Lakers have a lot of other decisions, including how to handle an extension for Austin Reaves. But getting some sense from James about his plans will surely go a long way toward having other moves fall into place.

Spurs tipped for title run

Victor Wembanyama is eligible for a four-year extension that would top $250 million, and there's obviously no reason San Antonio wouldn't want to commit to keeping the game's most fascinating player around. The extension would start in 2027-28.

There are some other roster spots to address, but the starters are under contract.

It will be interesting to watch how free agents view San Antonio as a destination, especially since the Spurs will go into next season as one of the favorites — if not the biggest one — for the 2027 NBA title.

"Competitiveness, that's what makes you better," Spurs coach Mitch Johnson said.

"That's what pushes you to continue to improve in the dark, long hours when nobody is around. We improved a whole lot this year. We have more motivation to continue to get better."

AGENCIES VIA XINHUA

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SPORTS

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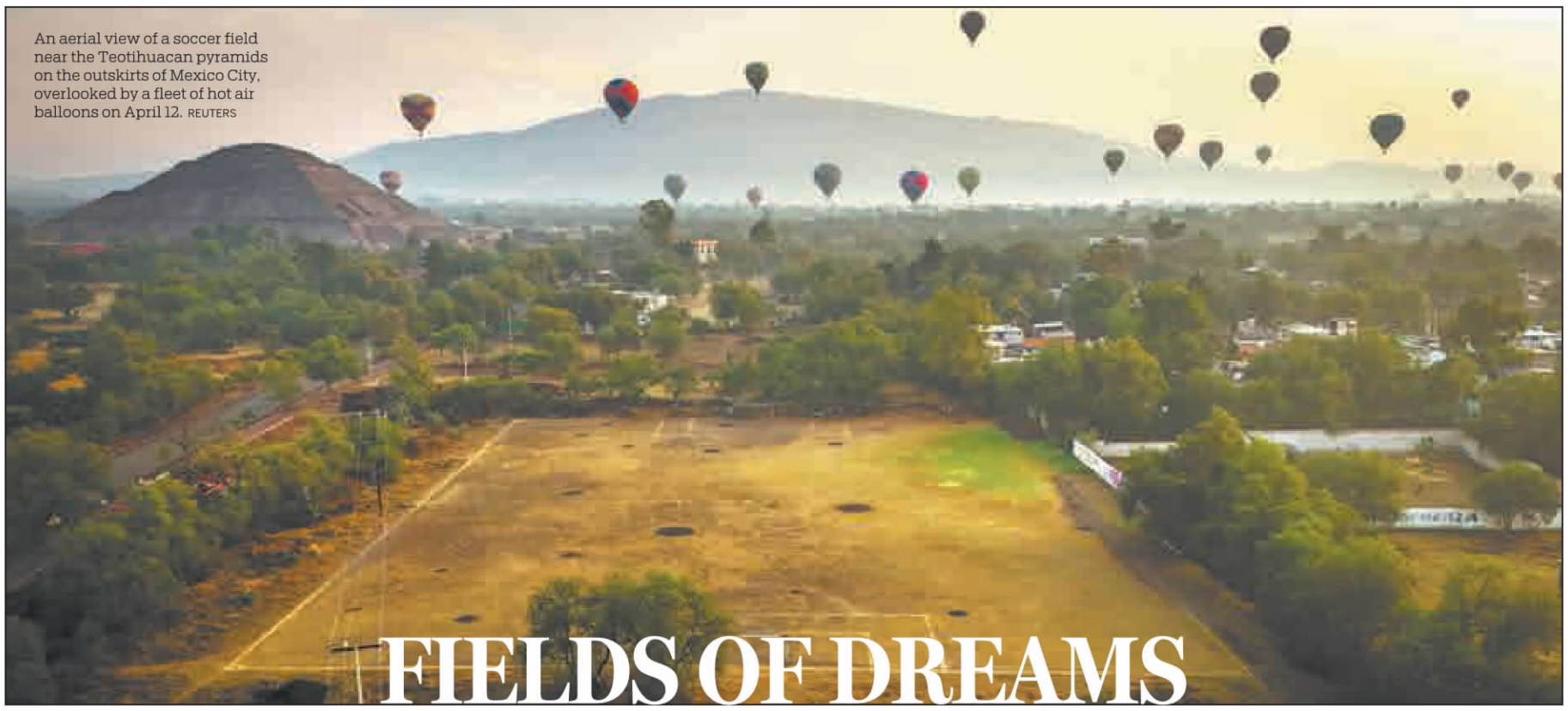
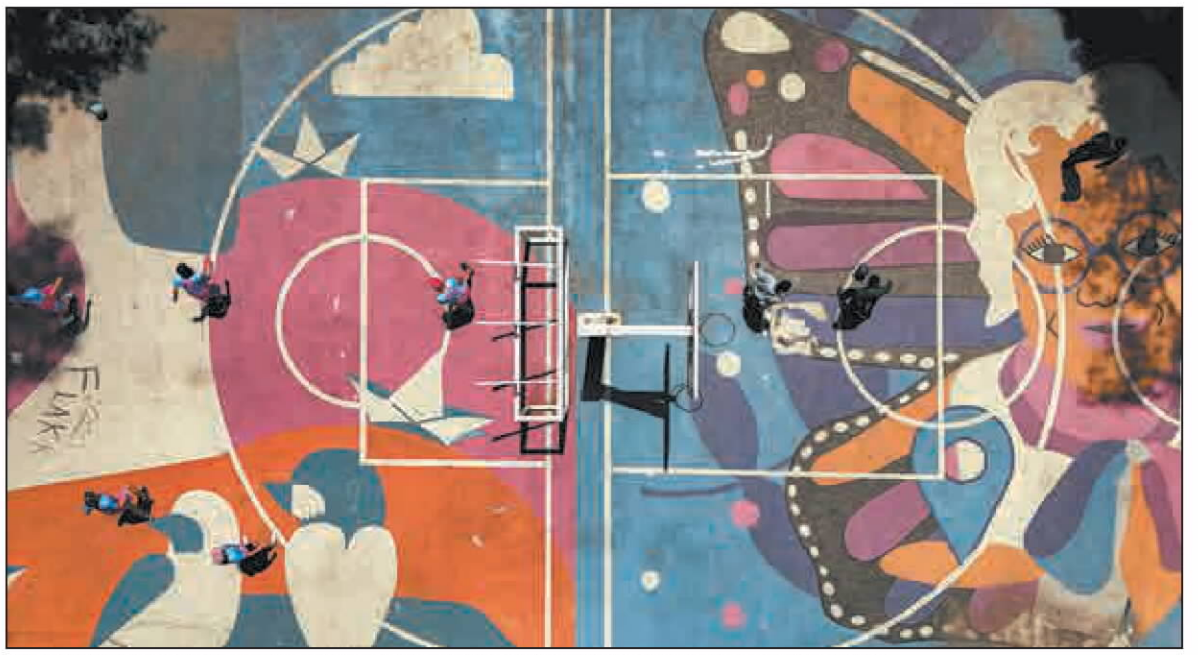


An aerial view of a soccer field near the Teotihuacan pyramids on the outskirts of Mexico City, overlooked by a fleet of hot air balloons on April 12. REUTERS

FIELDS OF DREAMS



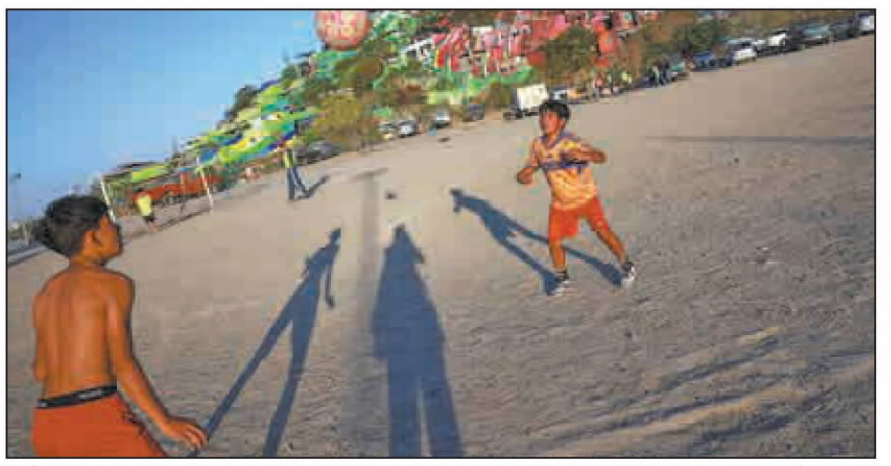
A painted soccer pitch as seen from above, located in Mexico City's Tlatelolco housing complex. REUTERS



"Pandilleros" players are seen warming up through a broken car window ahead of the Cerro de la Campana Ilanero championship semifinal in Monterrey, Mexico, on March 29. REUTERS



Locals play an amateur league game at the "Cancha de los Dioses" (Field of the Gods), a pitch located inside the crater of the dormant Teoca volcano in Mexico City, on May 24. REUTERS





Left: Humberto Guadalupe (left), 14, nicknamed "Messi", who dreams of being a professional soccer player, and Eduardo Reyes, 12, play a match in Monterrey, Mexico, on March 24. **Right:** Kids trade a Panini World Cup sticker of Brazilian player Vinicius Junior in Mexico City on May 24. REUTERS

Mexicans always find space to play

Across Mexico, currently co-hosting the World Cup with the United States and Canada, soccer pitches are laid out wherever communities can find the space.

On the edges of towns, in highway underpasses, and even in a volcano crater, spaces are cleared that allow the young and the old to share in the dream of the beautiful game.

In an impoverished neighborhood in Monterrey in northern Mexico, 14-year-old Humberto Guadalupe, called "Messi" by friends and family, spends his weekends on the community's only soccer field, surrounded by abandoned cars and dirt roads.

Just like the legendary Argentine player who inspired his nickname, he dreams of becoming a professional player one day, encouraged by his grandmother. "One way or another, it's going to happen," he says. "Even when we lose a match, we keep our heads up."

To the south, in a rural district on the outskirts of Mexico City, families arrive by car, motorcycle, bicycle and on foot to watch matches at the "Field of the Gods," a soccer pitch inside the crater of the extinct Teoca volcano.

Mist moves between pine trees and fruit orchards that frame the pitch, nearly 700 meters above the sprawling capital.

Built by the community more than 60 years ago, it is used by amateur local teams on Sundays.

In nearby Xochimilco, soccer players ride in traditional "trajinera" wooden boats along canals and cross chinampas, the ancient agricultural plots or floating gardens that helped sustain the Aztec capital centuries ago. They are heading to play on some of Mexico City's last remaining natural grass pitches. Located inside a UNESCO World Heritage Site, the pitches are an important social hub, but their creation can be damaging to the area's ecology and habitat of the endangered axolotl salamander, scientists say.

Though separated by landscape and distance, these matches share the same rhythm: communities building spaces around soccer in places shaped by hardship, geography and memory.

Reuters photographer Raquel Cunha spent around three months taking photos of amateur soccer matches across Mexico City and beyond; she mostly worked on Sundays, when players are out in force. She selected most of her subjects by closely examining the city on mapping apps and then choosing a short list of 15 to photograph with a drone. Of these, she chose two in the city plus one in the industrial north to also photograph on the ground, with contrasting environments: gritty Monterrey; a green, mountainous suburb; and a historic neighborhood of canals.

REUTERS



An aerial view of a synthetic pitch in the middle of a housing complex in Monterrey, Mexico. REUTERS

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